

# **Prayer in the Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ**

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## **Introduction**

Jesus' earthly career and ministry in the first century has no shortage of aspects that are all infinitely profound, but one theme that runs prominently throughout the entirety of the Gospel accounts was His emphasis on prayer, both in His teachings and in His own personal experience. Being that His teachings on prayer were not in a vacuum but surrounded by a cultural and religious context that often distorted the heart of true godly prayerfulness, it is of no wonder Jesus spent so much time teaching on the topic and exemplifying His teaching towards others around Him.

Where prayer oftentimes was accompanied by religious formality and suspect motives or intentions, Jesus' theology of prayer was far from whatever ideas may have come into the minds of His original audience at the time of His earthly ministry. He taught a heartfelt practical theology of prayer that was rooted in a personal identity as a child of God, which was ultimately only made possible by the substitutionary work He would do on the cross as the true Son of God to give us the right to approach God in prayer in this way.

The examples He gave to His disciples then, and to His disciples now in His inspired Word, not only encourage us to look at our own personal prayer life, but also point to the deeper theological truths that accompanied the work He condescended into human form to do in His incarnation. As we delve deeper into Jesus' teachings and practice of prayer in Scripture, it is of

utmost importance to remember the historical context it all falls into, as well as its ultimate purpose which transcends all human cultures and works for us the plan of redemption He and His Father put into place for all time for all those who would come to know the God they pray to as *their* Heavenly Father.

## **Prayer in Jesus' Historical Context**

Growing up in the era of Second Temple Judaism, Jesus was born in a highly religious context that was saturated with deep ritualistic traditionalism and holistic spirituality alike. At this point in time, there seemed to be something like a great spiritual revival in the nation of Israel's religious context. This was due to the emergence of groups like the Pharisees, who formed as an answer to the judgment of God the Jewish people fell under during the intertestamental period due to their lackluster dedication God's law in the Old Testament. Their mission was to right the wrongs of Israel's past and present in order to win back favor with YHWH and usher in a new era of spiritual vitality.<sup>1</sup>

As the influence of the Pharisees grew, so did the popularity of devout Judaism among the people of the land.<sup>2</sup> And with this new-found emphasis in spirituality among the populous growing, the culture around prayer in Jesus' day also experienced a resurgence. This was because the Old Testament in which the people of Jesus' day were recommitting themselves to was one in which held prayer to YHWH in the utmost of esteem, as the prophet Isaiah quotes YHWH in it speaking of His temple saying, "These I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings

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<sup>1</sup> Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 514.

<sup>2</sup> Calvin J. Roetzel, *The World That Shaped the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 60.

and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”<sup>3</sup>

Because of the dispersion of the Jewish people among the nations who oppressed them during the Hellenistic age, many local congregations of Jews spread abroad to meet in small communal congregations known as “synagogues.” These communities were so dedicated to Isaiah’s vision of the integral nature of prayer to the communal spirituality of the Jews that the earliest of these synagogue buildings would be nicknamed “places of prayer” by the people of the land.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus, then, would not be entering the world He created in a context that was unfamiliar with the concept of prayer. In fact, they had a very good grasp on it in general. What they needed to be taught then was not what prayer was. They instead needed to be taught how to do it in a way which was most effective and God-honoring. Where many of the Jews during this period in redemptive history had distorted views of the Father God they were praying to, Jesus had a perfect relationship and understanding of Him. And where many of the religious leaders among them had suspect motives to the methods by which they employed in their public prayer life, Jesus would come to reform their thinking about who it is they should seek to be heard from in their praying, whether it be God or man.

### **Jesus’ Teachings on Prayer: Praying to Your Heavenly Father**

One of the fundamental aspects of Jesus’ teaching on prayer centered not so much on the content of the prayers themselves, but on the recipient of the prayers Himself. Jesus, being the eternal Son of God, related to God the Father in a way that no other religious teacher in human history has before or since. He

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<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 56:7 ESV

<sup>4</sup> 1. Gary M. Burge, Gene L. Green, and Lynn H. Cohick, *The New Testament in Antiquity: A Survey of the New Testament within Its Cultural Contexts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2009), 75.

knew God as His very own Father in a personal way that was unique. While it is important to note that the Jewish people had been accustomed to giving YHWH the personal address of “Father” in their prayers on occasion, it seemed to be the way Jesus related to God in prayer almost always.<sup>5</sup>

It is no wonder, then, that the way in which Jesus taught His disciples to pray was to first orient their minds towards God as being first and foremost their “Heavenly Father.” The disciples watched Jesus do a great many things throughout His ministry, but there is only one occurrence in the Scripture where the explicitly ask Him to “teach” them how to do anything in particular, and it is found in the first verse of the eleventh chapter of Luke’s Gospel when they say, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”<sup>6</sup>

What is recorded next is mirrored in Matthew’s Gospel, where Jesus tells them to address God as their “Father in Heaven” when they pray, implying that this is the disposition of their heart towards God that is expected whenever they approach Him in prayer.<sup>7</sup> They are to primarily relate to God in prayer as their Father, first and foremost.

This theology of prayer that Jesus expresses in this teaching reminds me of a quote from twentieth century theologian A.W. Tozer, who once expressed, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”<sup>8</sup> If this statement is true, then the most important thing about Jesus was the fact that He related to God as His Father, and this is a view of God in prayer He desired for all of His disciples.

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<sup>5</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 62.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 11:1d

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 11:6.

<sup>8</sup> A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1978), 1.

But how was it that Jesus expected us to relate to God the same way in which He did? He was *the only* begotten Son after all.<sup>9</sup> To put it simply, Jesus was by nature the Son of God eternally and took on flesh to be humanity's substitute on the cross so that those who believed in the Gospel would be adopted into the family of God as well. In fact, every instance in Scripture where Jesus is seen personally addressing God in prayer, He does so by calling Him "Father" with only *one* exception. This exception is found at the cross, when Jesus fulfills the Father's plan for Him to die for the aforementioned adopted sons who would believe, quoting the messianic Psalm 22, addressing the Father as God in general terms, saying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"<sup>10</sup> Jesus took our place on the cross as those who were by nature sons of perdition rather than sons of God, so that we would relate to God as our Heavenly Father when we pray. This was essential in Jesus' theology of prayer.

### **Jesus' Teachings on Prayer: Praying with Faith**

Related to the concept of praying to God as primarily praying to our Heavenly Father is another vital component to Jesus' overall teaching on prayer throughout His ministry. This other essential component I am speaking of is praying with faith. The reason why the two concepts of praying to God as Father and praying with faith are related can be seen in Jesus' teaching on prayer to his disciples during the Sermon on the Mount:

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>1</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more

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<sup>9</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 27:46.

will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”<sup>11</sup>

Jesus is essentially arguing for the faith in which His disciples should pray that God would be willing to give them favorable answers to their prayers based on the logical presupposition that the God who they are praying to is their Heavenly Father whose disposition towards them is one of benevolence, wanting what is best for them. The logic goes like this: If the God we pray to is our Heavenly Father, and even evil fathers (like ourselves) desire to give good things to their children, then it stands to reason that God Himself would give good gifts to us as His adopted children who He has a perfectly good will towards as the epitomal Good Father.

Now, defining what a favorable answer to these prayers would be is another question entirely, as those of us who are parents ourselves know well enough that what we give to our children may not always be what they desire, yet it may just be what is best for them (a “good gift”). And that is the type of faith that Christ teaches throughout His earthly ministry that should always accompany our prayers and then serves as the paradigm by which we use as the interpretive key to understanding the plethora of other instances throughout the Gospels in which Jesus necessitates faith as the prerequisite to all of our prayers of petition and supplication.

It is of utmost importance to understand this dynamic of the role of faith in praying to God as our benevolent Heavenly Father that keeps us from falling into “Word of Faith” or other prosperity teachings that would imply that the more psychological certainty we can work in ourselves when praying then the more likely that we will receive exactly what we are praying for. This then becomes essential to thinking through what it means to be praying “in the name of Jesus,” which

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew 7:7-11.

would then be akin to praying in accordance to His will in faith in a Person rather than in a specific outcome.

When we apply this foundation of praying in the name of Jesus being praying in accordance to His will in faith that our Father will give us what is good, then the meaning behind Jesus' grandiose promises such as in John 14:13-14 become all the more encouraging when Christ taught, "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."<sup>12</sup> The role of faith in prayer according to Christ in His earthly ministry seems to give the impression that if we are double-minded in our belief that God would do something, then it is either something we ought not to be praying for because it is by nature malevolent, or it is not in faith that God is a benevolent Heavenly Father who would want what is best for us, whether it be the specific answer to prayer we desire or something that is a far better gift.<sup>13</sup>

### **Jesus' Teachings on Prayer: Praying with Persistence**

Another feature of Jesus' overall theology of prayer seen in His public teaching ministry throughout His life was the concept of persistent prayer. Like the last aspect of Jesus' teaching on prayer, this one has a logical connection to the others as well. One of the most frequent admonishments Christ had towards His own disciples during His three years of ministering to them was their lack of faith. In fact, Jesus rebukes them specifically for being "of little faith" over a dozen times throughout the four Gospels recorded in Scripture.

It goes without saying that the less faith a given person has in something that they are praying for, then the less likely that person will be to continue in prayer for it, whether it be a lack

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<sup>12</sup> See several other instances where similar promises concerning the role of faith and prayer are made by Christ (Matthew 17:20, 21:22, Mark 9:3, 11:24, Luke 11:9-10, 17:6, John 15:17).

<sup>13</sup> See James 1:6.

of faith in God's ability to answer such prayers or a lack of faith in God's character to provide a favorable answer to our prayer (keeping in mind aforementioned paradigm of what a "good gift" is and Jesus' concept of praying in His name).

If Jesus rebuked His disciples persistently for this lack of faith, then it also stands to reason that He would likewise encourage them to a persistent earnestness in their own prayer lives when applying His other teachings on faithful prayers to God as our Heavenly Father. He teaches on the necessity for persistence in prayer in a profound parable found in the Gospel of Luke, where He describes a proverbial widow who had a civil dispute to take up to a harsh and godless judge. This judge refused to hear the widow's case time and time again, but eventually give way to her persistent pleas for justice, not out of his own compassion or righteous inclinations, but simply due to the fact that the widow's bothersome endurance to continually come to him time and time again eventually won him over.<sup>14</sup>

It may seem contrary to Jesus' teaching on prayer being rooted in the fact that our praying is to a benevolent Heavenly Father to then compare the God to whom we pray to an unjust, wicked and godless judge. But this argument is not made by way of comparison, but rather Jesus argues from the lesser to the greater, implying that if even unjust judges are won over by enduring and persistent prayer, then how much more can we expect our Heavenly Father who has elected us unto salvation to hear our continual pleas made persistently at his throne of grace, putting in verses seven and eight:

"And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.

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<sup>14</sup> Luke 18:1-8.



Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

For Jesus, the logical overflow of God's Fatherly love for His elect and the onus put on those elect to pray in faith is that they would also pray with persistence and endurance. This idea is further expressed in another parable by Christ, where he compares the prayers of the fervent being like that of a friend who is willing to bother his neighbor in the middle of the night in order to borrow bread from them.<sup>15</sup> Seventeenth century theologian Matthew Henry comments on this parable in particular by saying Jesus' intentions were to "teach the disciples to pray...[and] to be fervent, instant, and importunate in prayer."<sup>16</sup> Again, the idea Jesus is getting across is not that God is like a begrudged friend who will finally give in to an inconvenient request out of annoyance, but rather that if a mere begrudging neighbor would answer the most inconvenient request than why wouldn't a loving Father who is eager to answer prayer give His answers to those who continually press in with persistence and fervency in their petitions? This, too, is an argument from the lesser to the greater.

Another instance where Jesus stressed the importance of persistence in prayer was when He said in Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Now there have been many preachers throughout the ages who have taken extreme measures to parse out each of these three qualifiers for prayer, giving particular meaning to what each step of prayer looks like, distinguishing between what it means to ask, seek and knock. These interpretations of this verse, while seemingly very practical as they give convenient formulas as to how to have our prayer answered, rely merely on more speculation in their application than what is readily seen in the text itself. The main

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<sup>15</sup> Luke 11:5-10.

<sup>16</sup> 1. Matthew Henry, *Matthew to John*, vol. 5, of *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, LLC, 1991), 558.

point that Jesus seems to be emphasizing here is rather that we should not stop praying for something after the first meager petitions to our Father about the given situation. We should be willing to continue in the labor of supplication more and more fervently, having faith that our Father in heaven is able to provide for us what is best for us.

### **Jesus' Teachings on Prayer: Praying with Humility**

One of the major points of contention that Jesus had with the religious authorities of His day and age was the pretense and conceit that accompanied their prayers. The Pharisees and scribes were the number one offenders in this manner. During the first century, prayer was a big part of the fabric of Jewish culture due to the influence that sects such as the Pharisees had on the common people, as we have already discussed earlier when looking at the historical context. They would often take any opportunity to pray publicly so that others around them would see them and give them praise. Jesus gives a harsh rebuke toward this type of proud and self-exalting motivation for prayer:

"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."<sup>17</sup>

While Jesus often made it His own habit to pray privately alone with His Father, this teaching was not a rigid condemnation to public prayer in general. We know this cannot be the case due to the fact that Jesus often prayed publicly on many occasions, whether it be in the synagogues, in His blessing of the bread He

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<sup>17</sup> Matthew 6:5-6.

miraculously multiplied to feed the five thousand, the blessing of the bread and wine during the paschal feast, His exemplary prayer when asked by His disciples how to pray, or even His final prayers He prayed to the Father on the cross in the midst of many onlookers. There are also many other examples in Scripture where public prayer is not only permitted but commanded, especially congregationally in the Old Testament assembly and in the context of the local church.<sup>18</sup> In fact, in the story of Daniel's obstinance towards the anti-Jewish forbiddance of public prayer, it was the very fact that he made his three daily prayers to be heard by others that he was commended for doing so.<sup>19</sup> Sixteenth century theologian John Calvin harmonizes this seeming contention in his commentaries by saying:

“We must not literally interpret the words, *enter into thy closet*: as if he ordered us to avoid the presence of men, or declared that we do not pray aright, except when there are no witnesses. He speaks comparatively and means, that we ought rather to seek retirement that desire a crowd of men to see us praying...this is not the present subject, which is only to correct the desire for vain-glory.”<sup>20</sup>

What made the public prayers of these hypocritical scribes and Pharisees sinful was not that other people were able to hear them. It was the motivation that lied underneath their desire for others to hear them pray. Jesus noted specifically that they did it because they loved to be “seen by others” in juxtaposition to those who pray to be seen by God. One may pray publicly, if it is in order to be seen by God and testify to His glory, but the moment the heart desire behind their praying shifts from this to wanting to be seen as holy in the eyes of other mortal men to

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<sup>18</sup> Acts 4:31.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel 6:10.

<sup>20</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Harmony of Mathew, Mark and Luke*, vol. 16 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 312-313.

glorify oneself, that is when they fall into the hypocrisy that Jesus condemns in this teaching.

The problem with their praying was the proud heart they carried with their prayers that caused them to have a perverted affection towards themselves and not God, as seen in the very words of Jesus in the passage under consideration which points specifically to their distorted “love.” Instead, it was Christ’s desire that one would come before God with their affections fixed on His glory and not their own.

### **Jesus’ Teachings on Prayer: Praying with Simplicity**

Shifting immediately from His rebuke towards the upper echelon of the religious elite among the Jews of His day, Jesus sets His sights on another group of people who erred mightily in their attempts at reaching the ears of the divine during the Hellenistic age He found Himself in. The Jewish people did not hold a monopoly on dedication to prayer during this time period, as many of the Gentile pagans also were adept in the spiritual discipline as well, or so they thought, as we will come to see. Jesus goes on to say:

“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”<sup>21</sup>

Further investigation of the historical context of these words in the ancient polytheistic paganism of the Gentiles of the time help us to get a better grasp at exactly what Jesus is condemning here in this passage. New Testament historian Dr. Craig Keener comments on this passage in his Background Commentary of the New Testament that the pagans would often

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<sup>21</sup> Matthew 6:7-8.

pray with great and lengthy prayers to their false gods during this time period. These prayers were so lengthy due to the fact that they would name as many deities as their minds could surmise when praying about a particular issue, just to make sure that they covered all of their bases as to which one of their many gods was the one in particular that could be responsible for the particular interest in question that they were praying about.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the Gentile prayers being of great length due to their naming of many different gods, the also were very long and repetitious due to the fact that they would often recall all of their past good works and sacrifices to each and every one of these gods in order to remind them of their own personal faithfulness that should, in their minds, merit a positive answer to their prayers that they would make to these gods.<sup>23</sup> This works-based vain and repetitive prayer style is why Jesus described their motives as being “to be heard for their many words.”

The way Jesus prescribed His followers to pray could not have been any more different than that of what was going on in these Gentile prayer sessions. There was no great plethora of various pernicious deities for His followers to pray to, but rather the one true God. And this one true God was not a forget and hard task masker that needed to be appeased by the futile works of the flesh in order for their prayers to be meritoriously answered. All of the prayers that would be answered by the followers of Christ would be answered on the basis of grace by an omniscient and loving Father who knows what his children need before they even begin to articulate it in their own words. A simple prayer from a humble posture of childlike faith is all that is required to be heard.

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<sup>22</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 62.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

## **Jesus' Personal Prayer Life**

Now that we have taken a deep dive into the teachings of Jesus surrounding the topic of prayer, it would also be worthwhile to consider the ways in which Jesus Himself lived out these principles in His own prayer life during His earthly ministry. If Jesus was anything, He was a man of prayer. One thing we can take away from the personal spirituality of Jesus was the sheer amount of time and energy He devoted to praying to His Father while He was on the earth. Besides from looking at a few of the more renown individual prayers of Christ, the first thing worth noting may be all of the private prayers in Scripture where we do not have a record of exactly what Christ said. What I am referring to is all the times in Scripture where Jesus retires unto Himself, apart from anyone else, to be alone with the Father in times of spiritual renewal and refreshment in prayer.<sup>24</sup> It seems that His place to practice this discipline was in solitude on a mountain, as the Gospels refer to His mountainside prayer sessions in several instances.

These occasions would certainly fit the mold of praying in one's closet to their Father who hears them in secret, as He taught His disciples to pray. Being that these prayer sessions would often last from evening until the next morning also implies that a great deal of persistence and faith would have been involved as well, which also coincides with how He taught His followers how to pray.

One of the more famous prayers whose content we do have recorded in Scripture is known as the Christ's high priestly prayer in John chapter seventeen. In the Jewish sacrificial system, it was custom that the high priest would intercede on behalf of the people every year before entering the Holy of Holies to offer the atoning sacrifice for the people of Israel on the Day of Atonement, or *Yom Kippur* in Hebrew. Jesus, being our Great High Priest and the fulfillment of this shadowy figure from the

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<sup>24</sup> Mark 1:35, Mark 6:46, Luke 5:6, 6:12, Matthew 14:23.

Old Covenant likewise went to intercede for His people shortly before He was to be crucified as the true atonement to cover the sins of all who would believe in Him.<sup>25</sup>

John MacArthur, in his book *One Perfect Life*, comments on this prayer as being a look beyond the veil to see the intimacy of Jesus and the Father in personal face-to-face communion and intercession which summarizes all of the main components of the Apostle John's account of Jesus' earthly ministry and purpose on earth, as it details Jesus' submission to the Father, His commitment to glorify His Father, the election and preservation of His disciples (current and future), their witness to the world, their unity in Christ, and the future glory which awaits them as a result of what He was about to do in fulfilling the plan of redemption He and His Father had from the foundation of the world.<sup>26</sup>

Moving on from here, as the Passion of Christ begins and He is soon to be betrayed by one of His very own disciples in Judas Iscariot, there comes another time of deep and intensive prayer that is worth noting. This would happen in the Garden of Gethsemane right before Christ's persecutors would illegally arrest Him and eventually condemn Him to death on the cross. What is interesting to note is that while Jesus oftentimes intentionally prayed in solitude for personal refreshment in communion with the Father, He actually desired His disciples to accompany Him, yet they fell asleep and abandoned Him in His most needful hour where this communion with the Father would come to its greatest test yet. During this prayer, Jesus is confronted with the anxiety of taking upon Himself the almighty wrath of His Father for all of those who would believe in Him.

He was so anxious and tormented in soul that He began to sweat drops of blood. This spiritual agony was so torturous

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<sup>25</sup> Hebrews 7:26-27, 8:5.

<sup>26</sup> John MacArthur, *One Perfect Life: The Complete Story of the Lord Jesus* (Nashville, TEN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 426.

that biblical theologian Robert D. Culver has suggested that if it weren't for the help of the Father sending angels to minister to Him for strength, He may have surely died there before ever going to the cross.<sup>27</sup> Not only is this spiritual anxiety seen outwardly, but Christ even goes as far as asking the Father to let the cup of this wrath pass from Him if at all possible, but nevertheless ultimately submits to the Father's will in willful obedience, which would ultimately end in the fulfillment of the greatest act of self-denial and sacrifice the cosmos had ever seen as He is shortly thereafter arrested, tried and sentenced to death on the cross.<sup>28</sup>

The last and final series of prayers we see by Christ in the Gospels before He completes His earthly ministry is found on the cross itself, as He is dying in the place of those who He prayed for in His high priestly prayer and whom He committed to taking the wrath of God for in His prayer at Gethsemane.

He begins by quoting the first verse of Psalm 22 in Aramaic, the common spoken language of the people during this time, saying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"<sup>29</sup> It is interesting to note that this is the only time in which God is not called "Father" by Jesus when personally addressing Him in prayer, indicated the fulfillment of the messianic prophecy of the Messiah's condemnation for His people in this sacrifice. He goes on to pray for the very people who are murdering and mocking Him, that His Heavenly Father would give them forgiveness, the very thing this death was meant to accomplish for them.<sup>30</sup> Lastly, He prayed one final time, declaring that His work on the cross had been finished and then cried with a loud voice, committing His Spirit to the Father and breathing His last

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<sup>27</sup> Robert D Culver, *The Earthly Life of Jesus, the Christ: A Life in Chronological, Geographical and Social Context* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2002), 210.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 26:39.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34.

<sup>30</sup> Luke 23:34.



breath<sup>31</sup> It seems fitting that Jesus, whose entire earthly ministry was saturated in prayer, both in the teaching on it and the personal experiential application of it, died praying to His Father who was in Heaven and would receive Him immediately thereafter.

## **Conclusion**

There are so many aspects to Jesus earthly ministry regarding His teachings and works, so much so that His beloved disciple, John, would say in his account of the Gospel, “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”<sup>32</sup> Among all of these, prayer has got to be one of the most worthwhile aspects of Jesus’ life one could devote to studying.

His emphasis on prayer being foundationally an activity of communication from a son too His Heavenly Father provided a paradigm by which all other doctrines of pray could flow from. The role of faith in a person’s prayer life stemmed from this foundational view, which also stirred one up to a degree of endurance and persistence in prayer that would otherwise feel futile. This genuine and Fatherly dynamic of one’s prayer life also provided freedom from any religious pretense and vain glory seeking and also put to bed any questions regarding the nature of eloquence and loftiness that one needed to ascertain before going to their Father with their requests.

Jesus did not just talk the talk either, but walked the walk and practiced all of the same principles He taught His disciples in His own personal prayer life with His Heavenly Father. Looking at the continual intimate private times of prayer that saturate His earthly life make the last few recorded instances of prayer so meaningful to read, as the Gospels chronicle some of the

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<sup>31</sup> Matthew 27:50, Mark 15:37, Luke 23:46, John 19:30.

<sup>32</sup> John 21:25

most vulnerable moments Christ had in prayer while interceding as our Great High Priest, submitting to the Father's will in spiritual agony, and fulfilling all of the messianic promises in His prayers while dying the death we deserved on the cross for our sin. Jesus was the ultimate Man of prayer.

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