

Marc Roby: We are resuming our study of theology today by continuing to examine soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. We are currently discussing the doctrine of sanctification and, more particularly, the means of grace. We have been discussing the topic of prayer for some time and are now examining the Lord's Prayer. Dr. Spencer, would you like me to begin by reading the Lord's Prayer again?

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that would be good.

Marc Roby: Very well, we are examining the version found in Matthew 6:9-13 which reads, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."¹

Dr. Spencer: And we have finished discussing this prayer as it is presented in the translation we are using. But there is a final line in the version with which most Christians are familiar. It says "for yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." In the 1984 New International Version that we are using, there is a footnote indicating that this ending appears in some of the late manuscripts.

Marc Roby: And that ending is very similar to parts of a prayer by King David. In 1 Chronicles 29:11-13 we read that David prayed, "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name."

Dr. Spencer: That is a wonderful prayer, and it includes all three elements of this last line; namely, that the kingdom, power and glory all belong to God. In fact, given that this last line is not in our oldest and best Greek manuscripts, it is highly likely that it was not part of the original text. In other words, it is quite likely that Jesus Christ did not give us this last line. Some have speculated that it was constructed by the early church for liturgical purposes, which may very well be true². And, if so, they may have used the passage you just quoted from 1 Chronicles.

Marc Roby: Yes, that would seem to be a reasonable deduction.

Dr. Spencer: I agree. And this last line is certainly perfectly consistent with the rest of the prayer that Jesus gave to us. In fact, I agree completely with what G.I. Williamson wrote in his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism. He said that "the very content of the prayer itself implies what is contained in this conclusion. For how could we make the six great requests

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² e.g., see G.I. Williamson, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1993, pg. 233

contained in the body of the prayer if God were not the all-powerful ruler who is able to give us all that is good? And how could we presume to ask these things if we did not know that to do so is for his glory?”³

Marc Roby: He makes a good point. The rest of the prayer does assume this concluding statement to be true.

Dr. Spencer: It certainly does. If God were not the sovereign ruler over all creation, we could never be sure of any of his promises. But because he *is* sovereign over absolutely all of his creatures, even the free-will decisions of human beings, he *is* capable of answering our prayers. And because the kingdom of God is his kingdom and the glory of that kingdom is all his, it is perfectly appropriate for us to ask for the things contained in this prayer. I also like what the Westminster Shorter Catechism has to say about this last line. The last question of the catechism, Number 107, asks, “What does the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer teach us?”

Marc Roby: And the answer given is, “The conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer, which is, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*) teaches us to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to him. And, in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen.”⁴

Dr. Spencer: I like the fact that this answer mentions encouragement. We should be greatly encouraged by the fact that God is the sovereign Lord of the universe. If that were not so we would have no firm hope. Not only no firm hope that he can answer our prayers, but as I said a moment ago, we could have no hope that his promises are true. If God is not sovereign over all, then how can we be sure that Satan doesn’t win in the end?

Marc Roby: Yes, that’s a horrifying thought.

Dr. Spencer: It is horrifying. But how could we be sure that he doesn’t somehow defeat God in the end if God isn’t sovereign? How could Jesus have declared on the cross that it is finished?

Marc Roby: I see your point.

Dr. Spencer: I also like the fact that this answer mentions the last word of the prayer, amen. It says, “in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen.” The word amen is actually a Hebrew word which is transliterated into both Greek and English.⁵ It is used, for example, in the original Hebrew of Deuteronomy 7:9, where we read in our translation, “Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.” Where it says “he is the faithful God”, the Hebrew word amen has been translated as faithful.

³ Ibid, pp 233-234

⁴ The Westminster Shorter Catechism, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2012, pg. 46 (English updated slightly)

⁵ W.E. Vine, F.U. Merrill, W. White Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Thomas Nelson, 1996, pg. 25

Marc Roby: That is very interesting. We normally only think of the word amen in its liturgical use at the end of a prayer.

Dr. Spencer: Which is, to be sure, a common use in the Bible. But in the Old Testament we also see the word used in Isaiah 65:16, where we read, “Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by the God of truth; he who takes an oath in the land will swear by the God of truth.” In the phrase, “the God of truth”, the Hebrew word amen is being translated by truth.

And in Psalm 19:7 we are told that “The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy”, or in the English Standard Version it says “the testimony of the LORD is sure”. The Hebrew word amen is rendered here as trustworthy or sure.

Marc Roby: Faithful, trustworthy, sure; there is a clear shared meaning in all those words.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, and just one more example will be useful. When King David decreed that his son Solomon should succeed him as king, we are told in 1 Kings 1:36 that “Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered the king, ‘Amen! May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, so declare it.’” That statement gives an implicit definition of what is meant by the word amen. It means, may the Lord God so declare it to be. Or, in other words, may it be so.

Marc Roby: We even see amen used as a name for Christ in the New Testament. In the book of Revelation, Chapter 3, Verse 14 we read we read the opening line of Christ’s letter to seventh church in Asia. It says, “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation.”

Dr. Spencer: And if we put all of this together, we have a pretty complete idea of what is meant by the word amen in its liturgical use. It expresses both our agreement with the prayer and our desire that God, in his great power as the sovereign Lord of the universe, would make it so. It expresses our confidence that if the prayer is in agreement with his will, he *will* make it so.

Marc Roby: And that is an appropriate way to conclude the Lord’s Prayer.

Dr. Spencer: It is an appropriate way to conclude all proper prayers. And, in fact, it is also the last word of the Bible! But it also means that we, as Christians, need to be careful in the use of the word. For example, if you are at some function, say a wedding, or a memorial service, or whatever, if there is a public prayer spoken that is improper in some way, you should refrain from saying amen at the end. Don’t ever think that saying this word is just a meaningless, socially polite thing to do. We need to be careful and serious.

Marc Roby: That’s a good admonition at all times. Do you have anything more you want to say about the Lord’s Prayer?

Dr. Spencer: Yes, just a couple of things. First, precisely because it is so familiar, and many Christians have it memorized, we need to carefully guard against ever saying it without thinking about what it means. And second, we should use the prayer the way Jesus intended us to use it.

Marc Roby: And how is that?

Dr. Spencer: Well, when Jesus introduced this prayer he said, as we read in Matthew 6:9, “This, then, is how you should pray”, or in the King James Version it says “After this manner therefore pray ye”. In other words, the prayer is a model. It isn’t that we are just to repeat the prayer, although there is certainly nothing wrong in doing that, it is a template we are to use to build our own prayers. And, in using it as a template, we need to remember at least some of the things we have pointed out during our discussion of this prayer.

Marc Roby: Such as?

Dr. Spencer: Such as the fact that the prayer is theocentric. The whole reason for praying is that we are finite, dependent creatures. We need God. He gives us life and every other good gift. We must keep the Creator/creature distinction firmly in mind as we go to God in prayer and we must have the lordship of Christ firmly in mind. Our purpose should never be to just indulge our every desire.

Marc Roby: And, as you pointed out, God knows our desires anyway. Christ said the same thing just before teaching his disciples this prayer. In the verse just before the one you read a moment ago, Matthew 6:8, Christ warned his disciples to not babble on like pagans. He said, “Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

Dr. Spencer: Which is an important point. As we said before, the purpose of prayer is *not* to tell God things he doesn’t already know. That would be impossible. He knows all of my desires, including the sinful ones. One of the purposes of prayer is for us to sort through our desires and motives and look at them biblically in order to weed out those that are improper. If we can’t in good conscience ask God for something in prayer, we shouldn’t desire that thing!

Marc Roby: Yes, that’s an interesting point. And it provides a very practical way of testing our own desires.

Dr. Spencer: Yes it does. A good way for children to decide whether or not a particular activity is proper is to ask themselves, would my parents be pleased if they saw me doing this? And a similar test is useful for us as Christians. We should live all of life *coram deo*, which means before the face of God. If we are thinking something, desiring something, saying something, or doing something that we would be embarrassed to have God witness, then we had better stop.

Marc Roby: If for no other reason than that God *is*, in fact, witnessing it!

Dr. Spencer: Very true. We have no secrets from God. If we pray the Lord’s Prayer thoughtfully, with understanding, it will help us to be humble, thankful, obedient, God-focused, forgiving children of God. It will make us better Christians in other words.

Marc Roby: Well, we’ve been on the topic of the Lord’s Prayer for some time now. Where do we go from here?

Dr. Spencer: I think it would be good to recap very briefly what we have been doing. These podcasts are organized around what are called the six loci of reformed theology. A locus is a central point or focus of something and the six loci are the headings under which we can organize almost all of systematic theology. And those six loci are: 1) Theology proper, meaning

the study of God; 2) Anthropology, which is the study of man; 3) Christology, which is the study of Jesus Christ the Redeemer; 4) Soteriology, which is the study of salvation; in other words, how sinful men can be saved; 5) Ecclesiology, which is the study of the church; and finally 6) Eschatology, which is the study of last things; in other words, of the final eternal state of everything.

Marc Roby: And we have completed theology proper, anthropology and Christology, and we are in the midst now of covering soteriology.

Dr. Spencer: And in looking at soteriology, we have gone over the reformed doctrines represented by the acronym TULIP, which stands for Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace and Perseverance of the saints. We then discussed union with Christ, which refers to the fact that when we are saved, we are united to Christ by faith. This union is not just symbolic, it is very real and is a marvelous topic.

Marc Roby: And in the New Testament it shows up very frequently in the expression “in Christ”. To say that we are in Christ is referring to our mystical union with him, which from man’s perspective, takes place at the moment we exercise authentic, saving faith in Jesus.

Dr. Spencer: And we have also discussed the fact that true saving faith has three elements, often referred to by their Latin names, *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*.

Marc Roby: *Notitia* refers to the fact that true, saving faith has content. In other words, there are specific doctrines that must be believed.

Dr. Spencer: That’s true. Although we were also careful to say that we cannot list a specific set of doctrines that we can say are the bare-bones minimal set necessary for a person to believe to be a Christian. In fact, we quoted the great 20th-century theologian J. Gresham Machen, who wrote with regard to specifying such a set of doctrines that “it is a question which I think no human being can answer. ... This is one of the things which must surely be left to God.”⁶

Marc Roby: Yes, I remember that discussion. You pointed out that the thief on the cross probably didn’t know a great deal of doctrine, and children can certainly be saved with very minimal understanding of doctrine.

Dr. Spencer: We finally boiled it down to saying that a person must trust that the biblical gospel is true. Different people may know more or less about that gospel, but there must be trust that it is true. Certainly, there must be some perception of the person’s need. In other words, we must understand that we are sinners and have a serious problem. And then, at some level, we must know that Jesus came and died to pay for our sins. Listeners who are interested in that topic should take a look at sessions 157 and 158, where we deal with it in some detail.

But, moving on to continue the discussion of saving faith, the second element, *assensus*, simply means that we give our assent, or agreement to the information we possess about the gospel. And the third element, *fiducia*, means that we trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation.

⁶ J. Gresham Machen, *What is Faith?*, The MacMillan Comp., 1925, pg. 155

Marc Roby: And this whole discussion of saving faith came up as we were going through the *ordo salutis*, or order of salvation, which simply refers to the steps involved in our salvation.

Dr. Spencer: And the Bible never gives us a complete list of these steps in one place, so there are small differences in how theologians handle the topic. We are using the list as given by John Murray⁷. He lists the following steps: effectual call, regeneration, repentance and faith, which together are called conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification.

Marc Roby: And we have already discussed the effectual call, regeneration, repentance and faith, or conversion, justification and adoption and we are in the midst of discussing sanctification.

Dr. Spencer: And sanctification refers to the process of being set apart for a sacred purpose or to being purified. There is a definitive aspect to it, which occurs when we are born again, and there is a progressive aspect to it, which continues throughout this life. In Philippians 2:12-13 the apostle Paul commands us to, “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” This shows that sanctification is something that God does, but it is a process in which we participate and are active.

Marc Roby: And we have been discussing the many so-called means of grace that God provides to help us in working out our sanctification.

Dr. Spencer: That’s right. A means of grace is defined by Wayne Grudem as “any activities within the fellowship of the church that God uses to give more grace to Christians”.⁸

Marc Roby: And we have said that the primary means of grace are prayer, personal Bible study and corporate worship, which includes the preaching of the Word.

Dr. Spencer: We have discussed how to study the Bible properly and we have looked at prayer. So far, we have noted that prayer is powerful; it is one of the means God has ordained for bringing about his will. Secondly, we noted that prayer is a blessing to us and we discussed at some length what blessings we receive. We also discussed the assumptions behind true prayer, for example, the personality of God, and we looked at the requisites of effectual prayer, for example, humility and reverence. And, most recently, we have gone through the Lord’s Prayer as the pattern given to us by our Lord.

Marc Roby: Well, that’s a good summary of where we are and I look forward to seeing what you have in store for us next time. But now let me remind our listeners that they can email their questions and comments to info@whatdoesthewordsay.org. We love hearing from you.

⁷ John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955, pg. 87

⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1994, pg. 950