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A Prayer For the End Time

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A PRAYER FOR THE END TIME

Many have said it, but few have noticed that
it addresses the core question of the Great Controversy.

Will those who live in end time understand best why Jesus taught us how to pray? He knew what His followers in all ages would face, but He especially identified with those living when the Evil One launches his last desperate assault. His target: those who “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17, KJV).

The Son of God began His model prayer with the One to whom all Christians should be looking:

Our Father

Not Our Almighty God, though that would be appropriate. Not Awe-



some Creator nor Our Heavenly Bookkeeper, nor Our Cosmic Policeman, though many think of Him that way. Not Tough Judge. Not even Soft-touch Grandfather (Grandpas rarely say No!).

No, we should call Him “Father.” Why? Because Jesus, who knows Him best, thought “Father” to be best. Admittedly, for many victims of an abusive parent, *father* does not evoke the happiest memories. We can assure them that our Father in

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heaven is different. In fact, He's like the best father we can think of, and much more.

With this introduction to His model prayer, Jesus gets to the core question of the war that convulsed the universe (Rev. 12:7-12): What is God really like? Satan convinced nearly half of the angels that God is the Super Cop, the Hard-nosed Bookkeeper, the Frowning Judge, the Supreme Ego who wants everything done His way. Ask for freedom to do it your way and out you go—Zap! Good-bye! Arrivederci! Ciao! Sayonara! Au Revoir! Auf Wiedersehen! Pow!

Every time we repeat this prayer, we testify to the character of the God we know to be running the universe. He is not what Satan has made Him out to be—severe, vengeful, arbitrary, exacting. Rather, God loves us with a genuine Father's love.

Yes, He *is* firm about what is right and firm about what is wrong—you know where He stands. He does His best to tell us why the yellow line is down the middle of life's highway. And just as a loving earthly parent does, He tells us to stay on the right side of the road. To buckle up our moral seatbelts. To observe the speed limit. You see, He wants us to come home, safe and happy.

And when we don't and suffer as the result, He suffers with us; sits by our hospital bed holding our hand; helps us take our medicine. And just

like my father did long years ago when I would scrape my knee, cut my chin, or do some dumb thing resulting in pain more acute than a physical hurt, He'll say, "Son, Daughter, it's OK. You'll make it." That's all I needed to hear! A father saying the right words at the right time.

Thank you, Jesus, for reminding us that we are not orphans in the universe, that we have a Father who loves to have us call His name.

But where is He, this One we are to call "Our Father"?

In Heaven

What a strange thought for most people today, whose "god" has no address. Many worship floating spirits that come and go here, there, and everywhere, but have no place to call home. Others seek communion with nature and find evidence of a reply in warm, fuzzy feelings. For the Luke Skywalker of the Empire, God is the Force. In none of these, however, is prayer directed to a place—let alone the address where the crucified Palestinian carpenter now resides!

How should we relate to our Father God who is in heaven?

Hallowed Be Thy Name

Hallowed means to regard God as holy—to honor Him. How do decent sons or daughters "honor" honorable parents? By respecting their wishes. By happily doing what they ask—even when disagreeing

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with them. By upholding their reputation. And the best way to do that is by becoming like them—reflecting their values. Until people who know their child say admiringly, “There’s a chip off the old block!”

Jesus told some very religious people in His day that their father was not His Father. “Your father is the devil, and what you are wanting to do is what your father longs to do” (see John 8:37-44, Phillips). Chips off the old block! What do people think about our spiritual father when they see us acting devilish against a spouse or children or neighbors? Or when they see us playing games with our tithe or income tax?

When we truly pray **Hallowed be thy name**, we pledge that we will reflect God’s moral likeness. By doing this, says the Revelator, we “give him glory”—that is, we permit Him to demonstrate His genuine goodness through us (see Revelation 14:7, NIV). God will recognize this total commitment by writing His name on the foreheads of His end-time people. Even their thinking will receive His seal of approval. Because they honor His name, He

will honor them with His name.

A television ad for Hanes clothing assures potential customers: “The quality goes in before the name goes on.” That is the assurance God is giving the universe when He writes His name in the forehead of the living redeemed in the last generation. “Listen to them,” He is saying, “You can trust them. They have my seal of approval—‘The quality goes in before the name goes on.’”

The prayer has just begun:

Thy Kingdom Come

Kingdom talk was the theme of our Lord’s teachings. How many times does He begin a story with these words—“The kingdom of heaven is like. . . .” When Jesus sent out His disciples, He told them to “preach the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:2, 60). In those days before Calvary, they had no thought of a “second” coming! But after the Resurrection they understood the full meaning of “Please, Lord, hurry back!”

On this side of the Advent, Jesus reigns in the minds of His people, even as He will after He returns. That is why we must pray, “Thy kingdom

come *now*—into our lives today.” But most of humanity has another father. So we must pray also: “Please Lord, hasten the day when Your kingdom will come and Your will be done in this rebel world.” No more Bosnias, Rwandas, drive-by shootings, wrecked homes, suicides! Can anyone think of anything nicer than all families and all communities and all nations everywhere doing the will of God? No wonder Paul told Titus that the coming of the kingdom is the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13). What a world that will be!

Thy Will Be Done on Earth, as It Is in Heaven

“Not my will, but Thine, . . . O Lord”. . . Really? Do we seek God’s will before we spend our money and spare time, or choose friends? Do we seek God’s will as to what we put into our mouth and into our mind? Or do we write off talk about conduct as legalism? After all, some say, behavior doesn’t count; only relationship matters. (Try that out on your spouse!) No! Clear-thinking Adventists know they keep the Sabbath, as well as all other expressions of God’s will, not to impress God, but to honor Him!

The Adventist prayer, in the light of the Great Controversy, is that God’s will, not Satan’s, be done. Your will, Father, be done on this rebel world—right where I am—just as joyfully and compliantly as angels

do Your will in heaven. Though God loves rebels, rebels will never be citizens of His kingdom, now or ever! The most important question that all must face sooner or later is: When am I going to give up being a rebel? How do we stop? By praying, “Your will be done in my rebellious heart.”

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

In the first part of our prayer, God directs our attention to His Fatherhood and to His kingdom, where former rebels have become cheerful sons and daughters. In the second part, He instructs us to pray for our temporal and spiritual needs, including everyday responsibilities. In a way, this is exactly how the Ten Commandments are divided.

For many of our Lord’s listeners in old Palestine, employment was uncertain. Fisherman, farmers, day laborers—these workers never knew from year to year whether all the bills would be paid. Families lived with anxiety because of drought, economic slumps, and higher taxes, as well as common illnesses and accidents.

So what’s new? For many of today’s workers, jobs are no longer as secure as they once seemed. Downsizing companies means eliminating jobs by the tens of thousands. No call-backs! Loyal, hard-working people who have earned steady wages and sizable paychecks for decades, suddenly find themselves out of work and told by

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employment agencies that they are “too old for the position.”

Have you ever sunk to your knees, wondering how to make the next rent or mortgage payment? Wondering how you would keep your children in church school? Take heart. Take *bread!* “Bread” signifies whatever we need to survive. Whatever we need to maintain health or to acquire necessities for our families—food, clothes, shelter. As a young day-laborer in old Nazareth, Jesus knew how uncertain the future seems when someone is sick or when the economy sinks and there's no money to pay bills. That is why He wants us to remember that He understands our needs and will help us acquire daily necessities. Just pray as He prayed for daily “bread.” He *knows* what His Father is eager to do—“My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19, KJV).

Forgive Us Our Debts as We Forgive Others

What do we mean by “forgiveness”? Why are there so many ideas

about what forgiveness means? The only way we will ever know is to watch how God Himself forgives and what He expects out of those who want to be forgiven.

I'm sure Lucifer would have accepted a forgiveness that said merely “Let's bury the hatchet.” But God couldn't give him a forgiveness that acts as if nothing had happened and that found no profound change of attitude on his part. God isn't tough or insensitive; He's realistic. Real forgiveness happens only when the past is made right and there is a change of heart that offers hope for the future.

Real forgiveness, then, is more than saying the right words. Word games don't reconcile anything! Attitudes and actions must change. God, the Great Forgiver (watch Jesus on Olivet as He laments Jerusalem's hardness, listen to Him on the cross), can't bury the hatchet when rebels choose to reject Him.

The model prayer is very clear: God will forgive us only as we have a willing heart to forgive those who have wronged us, and—the acid test—to do so even when they do

not ask for forgiveness. Our hearts should be as open to fellow sinners as God's heart of loving forgiveness is open to each of us stumbling Christians, who need forgiveness every day.

Jesus moved quickly into the other half of the forgiveness equation. Please, Father—

Lead Us So That We Don't Fall Into Temptation

Without our Heavenly Father leading us every step of the day, we'll fall into temptation just as surely as water flows downhill. So Jesus advises us: Stay close to Me, and I will keep you from falling (Jude 24); stay close to Me, and I will help you quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One (Eph. 6:16).

Thank God the prayer doesn't stop here—because we all have deep-rooted sin weeds. So Jesus goes on:

Deliver Us From Evil

If and when we do fall, Jesus is at hand to urge: Stay close to Me, and I will help you overcome, even as I have overcome (Rev. 3:21). Stay close to Me, and I will not only lead you away from temptation, I will also deliver you from those evil habits that rob you of your peace, strength, and happiness. Stay close to me because if you don't overcome self-indulgences, they will ultimately overcome you. Stay close to Me because the kingdom of heaven will

be populated only with overcomers (Rev. 2:7).

For Thine Is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory Forever, Amen.

The only kingdom, power, and glory that really matter are our Heavenly Father's. Glory on earth, someone has said, is for 15 minutes. On our deathbed, how much of our own glory will matter? Or, a year after we pass on, how much about it will people remember? How about power? Most of us love power, but how long does it last? The only power we should covet is the Holy Spirit's power in our life. "To Thee, our Father, be the power and the glory."

And so let us pray daily in the spirit of this end-time prayer. Pray because we have a Heavenly Father who loves to supply our every need. Pray because we need His help to be worthy candidates for citizenship in the kingdom He will soon set up on earth. Pray because it has become our delight to meet with Him for counsel, the agenda for our day, and a pat on the back. Pray because our greatest desire is to become like Him. Pray because without prayer we don't have a prayer of a chance of meeting our loved ones on the other side of the river. Pray because He said prayer changes things. Pray the prayer He taught us in the name of the One who is just like the Father. Amen. □