**Calvin’s *Institutes of Christian Religion***

Lesson 26: Prayer, Pt. 2 (Book 3, Chapter 20, Sections 34-52)

**Chapter 20: prayer, which is the chief exercise of faith, and by which we daily receive god’s benefits**

*The Lord’s Prayer*

1. In the Lord’s Prayer, God Himself gives us the form of prayer itself that ought to characterize all of our prayers. “For He prescribed a form for us in which He set forth as in a table all that He allows us to seek of Him, all that is of benefit to us, all that we need ask.”
2. By staying with this form, we steer clear of praying for things that displease Him and prove unacceptable. “We cannot even open our mouths before God without danger unless the Spirit instructs us in the right pattern for prayer [Rom 8:26].” “The Only Begotten Son of God supplies words to our lips that free our minds from all wavering.”
3. The Lord’s Prayer consists of 6 petitions.
4. “Even though the whole prayer is such that throughout it God’s glory is to be given chief place, still the first 3 petitions have been particularly assigned to God’s glory, and this alone we ought to look to in them, without consideration of what is called our own advantage. The three others are concerned with the care of ourselves, and are especially assigned to those things which we should ask for our own benefit.”

(“Our Father, who art in heaven”)

1. Father – When we address God as Father, we pray in Christ’s name as children of adoption according to God’s grace. 2 Corinthians 1:3 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.” God is the loving and forgiving father in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15). Calvin calls God, “the best and kindest of all fathers.” Galatians 4:6-7 – “And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ **7**So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.” Romans 8:15 – “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’”
2. Our – By saying “our” we are reminded of the communion of saints and “how a great feeling of brotherly love ought to be among us” for we are all children of the heavenly Father by the same source of divine mercy and His free liberality. We all have the same Father in common (Matt. 23:9). Even our individually focused prayers are directed to a communal end.
3. Who art in heaven – “God is set beyond all place, so that when we would seek Him we must rise above all perception of body and soul. God is lofty, being above all chance of either corruption or change.” It also testifies to God’s sovereignty because He “embraces and holds together the entire universe and controls it by His might.”
4. **WLC Q. 189** **What doth the preface of the Lord’ s prayer teach us?**

The preface of the Lord’ s prayer (contained in these words, Our Father which art in heaven, (Matt. 6:9)) teacheth us, when we pray, to draw near to God with confidence of his fatherly goodness, and our interest therein; (Luke 11:13, Rom. 8:15) with reverence, and all other child-like dispositions, (Isa. 64:9) heavenly affections, (Ps. 123:1, Lam. 3:41) and due apprehensions of his sovereign power, majesty, and gracious condescension: (Isa. 63:15–16, Neh. 1:4–6) as also, to pray with and for others. (Acts 12:5)

(The First Petition - “Hallowed be thy name”)

1. “We should wish God to have the honor He deserves; men should never speak or think of him without the highest reverence. To this is opposed the profanity that has always been too common and even today is abroad in the world. Hence the need of this petition, which ought to have been superfluous if even a little godliness existed among us. But if holiness is associated with God’s name where separated from all other names it breathes pure glory, here we are bidden to request not only that God vindicate his sacred name of all contempt and dishonor but also that he subdue the whole race of mankind to reverence for it.”
2. **WSC Q. 101 What do we pray for in the first petition?**

In the first petition, (which is, Hallowed be thy name, (Matt. 6:9)) we pray, That God would enable us and others to glorify him in all that whereby he maketh himself known; (Ps. 67:2–3) and that he would dispose all things to his own glory. (Ps. 83)

(The Second Petition – “Thy kingdom come”)

1. There are 2 parts to God’s kingdom: 1) “that God by the power of His Spirit correct all the desires of the flesh which by squadrons war against Him;” 2) “that He shape all our thoughts in obedience to His rule.”
2. “Included in this petition is a call for all to be surrendered to and shaped by the royal scepter of God’s Word, and for God to humble the whole world. It calls, too, for God to spread and increase His church in all lands, and to bless His church with all things needed for its well-being wherever it exists.” –J. Mark Beach
3. **WSC Q. 102 What do we pray for in the second petition?**

In the second petition, (which is, Thy kingdom come, (Matt. 6:10)) we pray, That Satan’ s kingdom may be destroyed; (Ps. 68:1,18) and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, (Rev. 12:10–11) ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; (2 Thess. 3:1, Rom. 10:1, John 17:9,20) and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened. (Rev. 22:20)

(The Third Petition – “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”)

1. The “will” in reference here is God’s revealed will, not His secret will of decree. “God will be King in the world when all submit to His will.” “We are therefore bidden to desire that, just as in heaven nothing is done apart from God’s good pleasure, and the angels dwell together in all peace and uprightness, the earth be in like manner subject to such a rule, with all arrogance and wickedness brought to an end.
2. **WSC Q.103 What do we pray for in the third petition?**

In the third petition, (which is, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven, (Matt. 6:10)) we pray, That God, by his grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, (Ps. 67, Ps. 119:36, Matt. 26:39, 2 Sam. 15:25, Job 1:21) as the angels do in heaven. (Ps. 103:20–21)

(The Fourth Petition – “Gives us this day our daily bread”)

1. We now turn to those things which are to our benefit, yet “We seek nothing for ourselves without the intention that whatever benefits He confers upon us may show forth His glory, for nothing is more fitting than that we live and die to Him.”
2. “But by this petition we ask of God all things in general that our bodies have need to use under the elements of this world [Gal. 4:3], not only for food and clothing but also for everything God perceives to be beneficial to us, that we may eat our daily bread in peace. Briefly, by this we give ourselves over to His care, and entrust ourselves to His providence, that He may feed, nourish, and preserve us.”
3. “this day” and “daily” – These terms teach us to bridle our “uncontrolled desires for fleeting things.” It is fitting that we simply ask for what meets our needs from one day to another, knowing that God the Father who takes care of us today will not fail to take care of us tomorrow.

(The Fifth Petition – “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”)

1. “Here Christ begins with forgiveness of sins, then presently adds the second grace: that God protect us by the power of his Spirit and sustain us by His aid so we may stand unvanquished against all temptations. He calls sins ‘debts’ because we owe penalty for them, and we could in no way satisfy it unless we were released by this forgiveness. This pardon comes of his free mercy, by which he himself generously wipes out these debts, exacting no payment from us but making satisfaction to Himself by His own mercy in Christ, who once for all gave Himself as a ransom [cf. Rom. 3:24].”
2. **WSC Q. 105 What do we pray for in the fifth petition**

In the fifth petition, (which is, And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, (Matt. 6:12)) we pray, That God, for Christ’s sake, would freely pardon all our sins; (Ps. 51:1–2,7,9, Dan. 9:17–19) which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by His grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others. (Luke 11:4, Matt. 18:35)

1. Our forgiveness of others does not mean we remit their guilt, but that we willingly cast from our minds “wrath, hatred, desire for revenge, and willingly banish to oblivion the remembrance of injustice.” We will not be forgiven our sins if while we pray this prayer we are plotting revenge or think of harming others.

(The Sixth Petition – “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”)

1. “Because we obey God not without continual warfare and hard and trying struggles, here we seek to be equipped with such armor and defended with such protection that we may be able to win the victory. By this we are instructed that we need not only the grace of the Spirit, to soften our hearts within and to bend and direct them to obey God, but also His aid, to render us invincible against both all the stratagems and all the violent assaults of Satan.”
2. **WSC Q. 106 What do we pray for in the sixth petition?**

In the sixth petition, (which is, And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, (Matt. 6:13)) we pray, That god would either keep us from being tempted to sin, (Matt. 26:41) or support and deliver us when we are tempted. (2 Cor. 12:7–8)

(Conclusion – “Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, amen.”)

1. “This is firm and tranquil repose for our faith. For if our prayers were to be commended to God by our worth, who would dare even mutter in His presence? Now, however miserable we may be, though unworthiest of all, however devoid of all commendation, we will yet never lack a reason to pray, never be shorn of assurance, since His Kingdom, power, and glory can never be snatched away from our Father. At the end is added, ‘Amen.’ By it is expressed the warmth of desire to obtain what we have asked of God. And our hope is strengthened that all things of this sort have already been brought to pass, and will surely be granted to us, since they have been promised by God, who cannot deceive.”
2. **WSC Q. 107 What doth the conclusion of the Lord’s prayer teach us?**

The conclusion of the Lord’s prayer, (which is, For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen. (Matt. 6:13)) teacheth us, to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, (Dan. 9:4,7–9,16–19) and in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to him. (1 Chron. 29:10–13) And, in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen. (1 Cor. 14:16, Rev. 22:20–21)