

We bow our hearts in prayer: Dear Lord, teach us why we are to pray. Forgive us for our failures to call upon You in our troubles and to glorify You in our deliverance. Answer us speedily when we pray, in Jesus name. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Why do we pray? That is question #233 in our Catechism & Explanation book.

Later this year, our catechumens will learn that the reasons we pray can be broken down into 4 simple reasons:

1. God commands us to pray.
2. God promises to hear us.
3. We constantly need His help. And
4. We want to thank Him for His blessings.

In our Catechism, it is the practice to offer proof passages from Scripture for the answers given.

Normally, you would expect to need 3 – 4 passages to prove a 4 part answer, but that's not true about this question. You only need 1 passage.

And that one passage is our text for meditation this morning/evening taken from Psalm 50:15.

... We read as follows in Jesus' name:

Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me. ^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. ^(John 17:17)

Let us consider then, briefly, how it is that this one verse answers all 4 parts of the question

"Why do we pray?"

1. *God commands you to pray:* "**Call upon Me,**" He says.

This is not a suggestion or an encouragement. This is an imperative.

Don't call upon idols. Don't ask saints or angels to intercede for you.

You have a direct line to the loving God who not only commands you to speak to Him, but also

2. *Promises to hear you:* "**I will deliver you,**" He guarantees.

Your needs will not fall on deaf ears.

He does not toy with you, telling you to pray but then ignoring your prayers.

He answers your prayers according to His great mercy and wisdom and at the proper time.

It is not as though He needs your prayers to know what you need or desire.

Jesus tells us, "**Your heavenly Father knows ... what you will eat... what you will drink, ... what you will put on...**" ^{Matthew 6:32,25}

It is not as though He needs your prayers to stroke His ego,

so that He can feel good and loved by you because you acknowledge your need of Him.

Actually, your prayers to Him are a service to you, because by praying to Him, you acknowledge

3. *You constantly need His help.*

Prayer is a humbling thing, because the one who prays recognizes he is in need and that he is not in control of all things. That he is not God.

This is especially true "**in the day of trouble,**" when your helplessness becomes all too apparent.

As you pray, you call out to the One you know can help and trust that He will do as He promises.

Of course, prayers of petitions (or requests) are not the only kind of prayers you pray.

4. You also pray because *you want to thank Him for His blessings.* "**You shall glorify Me,**" He says.

This is often and especially true after you have recognized a particular deliverance from trouble.
After He spares you from a worse accident.
Or when He sends blessings that you recognize you neither desired nor deserved.
This was the type of prayer the widow and the crowd prayed in our Gospel text that day
when Jesus had compassion and raised her son from the dead.
We heard that “**fear seized them all, and they glorified God...**”

So these are the reasons why we can and ought to pray:

1. God commands us to pray.
2. God promises to hear us.
3. We constantly need His help. And
4. We want to thank Him for His blessings.

But it's a struggle, isn't it?

... Even when we have the direct command like, “**Call upon Me.**” ... It's easy to forget about praying,
especially when you don't already have a habit of praying at specific times or occasions.

It's a struggle to pray...

... Even when we have all these great promises of deliverance... It's easy to wonder if God
is really listening to you when you have been praying for relief for awhile,
but you haven't felt any such relief.

It's a struggle to pray...

... Even when we are constantly surrounded by our needs... It's easy to think
that you can take care of the “small stuff,” and don't need God's help with just the daily grind.

It's a struggle to pray...

... Even when we have been so blessed we don't even know where to begin counting them...
It's easy to forget to thank Him for all the blessings He showers upon you,
especially when you take credit for the “small stuff.”

But, you know, there is more to this prayer thing than just praying for yourself.

There's even more to praying on behalf of your loved ones.

God tells us to **call upon Him in the day of trouble**,

but He doesn't mean that you should only pray for yourself and your deliverance.

Consider Jesus' admonition: **Pray for those who persecute you...and abuse you.** Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:28

On that day of trouble, those who cause you suffering are also in trouble, spiritual trouble.

They are not only sinning against you, but they are also sinning against their Savior
whom you represent and who lives in you.

And not only are we to pray for those who would be our enemies, St. Paul, inspired by the H. Spirit
writes: **First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings
be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions,
that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.**

And then he gives us the reason for this:

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,

who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 1Timothy 2:1-4

The idea that we are to pray for the salvation of our neighbors, both friend and adversary,
is reinforced by Jesus' own words:

Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Matthew 9:38

and St. Paul's admonishment that the Thessalonians "**Pray for us,**" 1Thessalonians 5:25 their missionaries.

But if it is a struggle to remember to pray for yourself, how much more to pray for others, especially those oppose you and desire your hurt and harm.

But if we forget, or worse yet, ignore God's command to "**Call upon Me,**" what do we deserve?

Wouldn't it be just for our Father to forget or ignore us?

To not only not deliver us, but even to send us more troubles, more adversaries?

Until finally we depart this temporary life of suffering for the eternal place of torment.

If we won't trust Him with "small things," if we think we are "god enough" to handle small things, why should He listen when we pray for "big things"?

And yet, God does not treat you as you deserve.

Instead, He has sent One to intercede on your behalf.

And not only intercede on your behalf,

but also fulfill this command to pray on your behalf.

The Father commands: "**Pray without ceasing.**" 1Thessalonians 5:17

And throughout Jesus' life, we see Him constantly in prayer, in conversation with His Father...

Constantly *fearing, loving, and trusting in God for all things*, big and small.

Praying for His enemies, even as some of them hung Him on the cross, "**Father, forgive them.**"

Praying for you, who was His enemy, that you would believe in Him through His apostles.

Praising and thanking the Father who always hears & answers prayers for the good of His people.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

We always need God's help. We always need Jesus' forgiveness and righteousness.

And therefore we always have reason for unceasing prayers of thankfulness

as God promises always to hear our prayers of confession and to deliver us with forgiveness earned by the blood of His Son spilt upon the cross.

We can also thank Him for the many opportunities we have to pray for not only ourselves, but also for our neighbors in need, on their days of trouble.

These opportunities are constant throughout your week as you hear the struggles they have or experience the troubles they bring upon you.

Consider the great privilege you are given to pray for them,

knowing your prayers are heard by a gracious and loving God, who also desires their salvation.

When you struggle to remember to pray, or have difficulty knowing how to pray for them,

consider the prayers that you are familiar with already from the Divine Service,

because one of the things we do as we gather together is to *pray for all people according to their needs*.

Consider how the Lord's mercy is constantly requested "*upon us,*" not just "*upon me.*"

That "*us*" is not just those assembled here, but upon all of humanity

and particularly those on whose behalf we are praying it at that time.

Consider the various petitions of the Prayer of the Church as we pray it in a moment.

Consider how it is that the special petitions are introduced by the phrase,

The prayers of the Church are requested for so-and-so.

Consider why it is that Jesus taught us to pray “**Our Father, who art in heaven...**

Give us this day our daily bread, Forgive us our trespasses, and deliver us from evil”

And rejoice, knowing that your prayers, through the blood of Jesus, glorify God.

Even your petitions glorify Him whom you trust to fulfill His never-failing promises. Amen.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria