

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 11- Luke 11:1-13

209- Lord, Teach Us to Pray- Part 2

July 7, 2013

Luke 11:1-13

1 It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."

2 And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.

3 'Give us each day our daily bread.

4 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'"

5 Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him';

7 and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you *anything*.'

8 I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

10 For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

11 Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he?

12 Or *if* he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?

13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

To the Glory of God

Now I want to deal with the first four verses of **Luke 11** today and so let's read these verses again together:

1 It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."

2 And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.

3 'Give us each day our daily bread.

4 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'"

Now most of you will recognize these Words as being part of what many people call, "The Lord's Prayer". I really think that that is *not* a very good name for this prayer because Jesus told *us* to pray this way- so it should really be called, "The Believer's Prayer" or "The Disciple's Prayer". There is no record that I am familiar with anywhere in the Bible that tells us that Jesus actually prayed this prayer. So in reality- this is a prayer that Jesus taught *us* to pray. The Prayer that Jesus Himself actually prayed is over in **John 17**- which most people call, "The High Priestly Prayer of the Lord Jesus".

I also do not think that we are simply supposed to *memorize* this prayer and then repeat it word, for word. I think the more Biblical approach to this prayer is that we comprehend the issues and the subjects and the concepts that Jesus teaches here and then pray about those things- using our *own* words and phrases and thoughts so that this prayer does not descend into some powerless ritualistic formality- but is always a living breathing part of our ongoing prayer life as believers.

Now the expanded version of this prayer is found over in **Matthew 6**- which is another reason why I think that Jesus does not want us to simply repeat this prayer- but to understand the concepts that are

addressed here- because the versions of this prayer differ between Matthew and Luke.

Now if God is pleased- over the next several weeks- we will examine the prayer that Jesus taught here and hopefully make the issues and the subjects that Jesus deals with here- a part of our own ongoing communication with God.

Now first of all- we need to establish that it is crystal clear that the New Testament commands us to pray. It commands us to pray without ceasing. It commands us to *continue* in prayer. It commands us to pray always and in whatever state we find ourselves. It commands us that in everything by prayer and supplication to make our requests known unto God. And that is to say that prayer is to be a way of life for us. It is to be constant and it is to be relentless.

This is what believers do- we pray. And we do not pray as a last resort- we pray as a first choice. Prayer is not something that we turn to after everything else has failed- but prayer is so much a part of our lives- that we are in a state of prayer all the time- constantly praying and seeking God's Will and asking for help and strength and wisdom- and forgiveness- all during the day as we face the trials of life.

So it is correct to say that prayer is second nature to a genuine believer. We pray all the time and in various ways for various reasons. And we really don't even have to think about it. For example- anytime we make a decision- we want that decision to be pleasing to God and in accord with Scripture and so we ask God to help us make that decision according to the revealed Will of God.

And as we go through the day- we fail at some effort or we entertain a sinful thought; or we commit a sinful act or we rebel against what God has said to do and God the Holy Spirit brings that sin to our minds and we are convicted about it and so we pray- we ask God to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and then we pray to learn from that sin so that we do not continue to repeat it.

Or we sow seed into somebody's life and we want then to know the glory of serving Jesus Christ and so we ask God to save them; to forgive them; to pardon them and to rescue them for His Own Wrath through the finished Work of the Lord Jesus.

We want the Word of God to have great success in this community and so we ask God to open doors that no man can shut and

to open up avenues for the Gospel to be preached and taught throughout this Gulf Coast area.

We see areas of our lives that are falling short of what the Bible actually teaches and we desire to be a godly husbands and fathers and sons and brothers and so we pray- we ask God to add to our lives whatever it takes to make us more like Jesus and we ask God to remove whatever is hindering that.

We see war and injustice and crime and evil being perpetrated on other people's lives and we ask God to stop it- we ask God to intervene to allow children and babies and the weak and the aged and the helpless to find safety and calm so that they may have an opportunity to hear the Gospel and repent and be saved.

So saved people pray and we pray a lot and we pray about a lot of things and God has been good to give us glorious Promises that whatever we ask in the Name of Christ that is consistent with His Purpose and His Will- He will *always* answer us- so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

And so our struggle should never be that we don't pray- it is unconscionable that any believer would cease his prayers- but our struggle is that we don't always know what the Lord's Will is about a particular subject and so many times- we pray amiss and our prayers go unanswered- that is our struggle.

We need to know that it is as normal and as natural for believers to pray as it is that we breathe. Prayer goes on all the time- not always in words formed by the lips- but perhaps most often in the cries upward of the heart. You can never pray too much- since you're commanded to pray all the time. You can never pray about too many things- since you're commanded to pray about everything. There is no limit put on your prayers. There are no confining elements to your prayers. You cannot say too much to God- you can only say too little. You cannot speak too often with Him- you could only speak too seldom with Him. You cannot rush into His presence and lay out your needs so that He becomes tired or wearied of your coming- that's impossible- He has commanded us to come all the time.

Conversely- it is as normal and natural for believers to read and study the Bible as it is that we eat. You eat to receive nourishment so that you can do what God has called you to do. Eat junk- and your body will eventually suffer- eat correctly- and your body will respond with

strength and vitality. So if you are feasting on spiritual junk food- or spiritual fast food- which are things designed to do nothing but tickle your ears- then your spiritual life will be marked by disease and weakness and failure. But if you taste and see that the Lord is Good- and you take the time to sit down to a good nourishing spiritual banquet that takes much longer to prepare and that requires much more time to get right- then you will be healthy and productive and filled with energy and desire.

So if you can understand the pleasure and the necessity to eat and breathe properly- then you should understand the pleasure and the necessity that we have as believers to pray and study God's Word.

So prayer for us is a constant, unending, daily way of life. In fact, in **Proverbs 15:8b** it says,

... The prayer of the upright is His delight.

... which means that God Almighty loves our prayers. He delights in our prayers. And that is why James wrote:

James 4:2b

... You do not have because you do not ask.

So the only thing you really can do to limit your prayers is not ask enough or not pray enough or not let your heart desires rise before God enough. So prayer is a privilege for believers as well as a command. It is a passion based upon the realization that we totally depend on God for everything. We depend upon His Wisdom and His Power. We depend upon His Purpose and His Provision. And our deepest longings rise up in our hearts out of the internal compulsion that God knows best and that God supplies everything and that God's Plan is infinitely better for us than anything we could image and so it is the Perfect Plan for us.

So praying is absolutely critical to our existence as well as being both a privilege and a duty. And since prayer is all of these things- we need to know *how* to pray. We need to have our prayers answered and so we need to know how to pray. And I saw this need several years ago and began to teach in our Prayer Meeting nights what the Bible actually said about prayer and have now compiled quite a collection of

real solid teachings on prayer that hopefully will be posted to the Church website sometime this week.

So learning how to pray is a very serious and real issue in our day. And because there are so many aberrant teachings about prayer that are being circulated among the people of the modern Church- prayer is an area where there is now a need for us to return to the Bible and see what God Himself has revealed about this important issue.

And evidently there were real bad teachings on prayer and wayward concepts about prayer back in the 1st Century- because here in verse 1- the disciples ask Jesus,

"Lord, teach us to pray... "

Now we need to know that all of these men had been raised in an apostate religion of Judaism. They had been raised with heresy. They had been raised under the leadership of unredeemed rabbis and scribes and priests and Pharisees and Sadducees- men who, for the most part- did not know or love God at all.

Now I know it is difficult for us to comprehend this and if you're not careful- you will get the wrong idea about what I am saying- but we need to know that there is nothing about the Jews religion of the 1st Century and the religion that we have all been familiar with over the last 2,000 years that bears any resemblance at all to what the OT actually teaches.

Judaism as we know it today is entirely apostate; it is a man-made false religion that cannot and that does not save anyone. Like every false and man-made religion- Judaism is antichrist; it fights against the Truth of the Gospel; and it enslaves its followers into a false sense of security that keeps them blind and hostile to the Truth.

Listen to me- there is no human on earth who can enter into Heaven based on trusting in what Judaism teaches. Judaism is not any closer to the Truth of Salvation by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone than is Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism.

The Bible teaches that every single OT believer- who was truly saved under the Old Covenant- utterly abandoned every aspect of Judaism at the appearing of Jesus Christ- 100% of them. Dr. Luke gave us six examples of that in Zacharias and Elizabeth; Mary and Joseph;

and Anna and Simeon. And at the completion of the Biblical Canon- especially the Epistles of **Galatians** and **Hebrews**- every truly born again Jew- was called upon to leave Judaism with its priesthood and Temple Worship and animal sacrifices and shadows and types and symbols to fully embrace the final full and completed Revelation of God in the New Covenant.

Jesus was absolutely brutal in His rejection of the leaders of Judaism. They are the only group of people that He never said anything good about. Jesus did not treat these people as being sincere but wayward men- but the living breathing Son of God- Who was God's Love Personified treated each and every one of these Jewish religious leaders as being utterly lost; completely deceived; and propagating a false and dangerous man-made religion.

The leaders of the Jewish religion in the 1st Century had taken the inspired OT Scriptures and twisted them beyond any recognition. They invented a false kind of praying- a ritualistic vainly repetitious kind of praying that was purely external and ceremonial and that was used for hypocritical purposes to demonstrate one's supposed self-righteousness publicly.

So the men who followed Jesus here had been cheated out of any example of what it was to really pray. And so as they watched Jesus pray; as they saw Him cry out to His Father; as they saw God answer His Prayers- they were witnessing something they had never seen before and hearing a kind of prayer that was very different from anything they had ever heard in the Judaism in which they were raised.

And so it is understandable that one of them says,

"Teach us to pray..."

... in fact Dr. Luke records that they said,

Luke 11:1

... teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.

So even in this- even in the issue of prayer- John Baptist was a true forerunner of Jesus Christ. Not only was John's baptism a form of what Christianity would promote; not only was his message a form of

what Christianity would promote; but evidently the way John himself prayed and the way he taught his followers to pray was also in line with God's Will to the degree that it stood out from all the other religious men of his day.

So this request here in **Luke 11:1** gives us a wonderful insight into John Baptist- as being a true man of God and a true servant of God and a true saint of God and a true believer in God and so even in the midst of apostate Judaism- there were true believers- like John- who *did* know how to pray.

And John's disciples evidently had the same problem that Jesus' disciples had- they had been raised in that apostate environment and all they knew was the environment of false and hypocritical prayers and they also needed to know how to pray the right way. And So evidently John Baptist had instructed his followers how to pray and how to truly love and serve God to the point that even the hypocritical Pharisees comment on that in **Luke 5:33**, when they said,

And they said to Him, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the *disciples* of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink."

... and so here the disciples of Jesus bring up the question...how are we to pray?

Now what is interesting about this is that Jesus had already taught His apostles to pray. He had already given this prayer back in the Sermon on the Mount- so one way to understand this passage here is that this was a completely different group of disciples who evidently weren't there to learn that time.

But another way to look at this is that since prayer is such a vital issue- Jesus was simply teaching the same people all over again. But however that is- what we do know is that it is really important to know how to pray the right way- according to God's Will. And so if it is true that genuine believers have access to all of the supply of heaven and if we have entrance given to us and if the gates to the treasure house of heaven have been kicked wide open and God has invited us to come and put no constraints or limits on our coming- then it is only reasonable that we understand how to conduct our time with God in prayer.

So these men heard the way Jesus prayed and saw God the Father move on Jesus' prayers and this was radically different than the way

they were used to hearing people pray and they knew that they needed Jesus to teach them.

Now only one of them asked the question- but verse 2 says that Jesus gave this Teaching to all of them- so this shows that what Jesus taught here is to be *universally* accepted and *universally* used by *all* believers- not just the one who initiated the subject and not even to only those who stood with Jesus on that day.

Now before we look at what Jesus actually taught here- I want you to see what Jesus did *not* teach here. I want you to understand what He did not tell them. When they said, "Lord, teach us to pray," there were some things that Jesus did not say- things like:

1. The correct physical posture when praying
2. The correct place to pray
3. The correct time to pray
4. The correct attitude in prayer

Let's look carefully at these.

1. There is no Particular Physical Posture for Prayer.

It is interesting that Jesus never got into anything about their physical posture when they were praying. Many people today teach that we are supposed to take a certain posture or position when we are praying. You hear this all the time and see it with the various kinds of man-made religions. Even the Jews believe there's a certain posture in prayer. For example- if you go to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem today you would see them take that special posture and genuflect in a certain way. You might also see them on other occasions in other postures which they think are critical to one degree or another for God to hear and answer their prayers.

You see, some false religions teach that in order for God to hear you- you have to go prostrate on the ground and put your lips on the earth and that God is more likely to hear your prayer in that posture than any other. That kind of posture is good for our own humility and we are free to "go low" in our prayers during certain times and for certain reasons- especially when there is terrible agony and great sin. The Apostle Paul wrote in **Ephesians 3:14**

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

... so there is certainly nothing wrong with humbling yourself before God when you pray.

But when you study the Bible- you will find that the single most common way that people prayed was to stand upright with their eyes open. Some people who prayed in the Bible prayed with their hands up or even their hands down and there were people who prayed sitting while some kneeled and others prayed looking down- refusing to look up while still others prayed looking up refusing to look down.

The Bible gives us illustrations of people who prayed bowing low, people who prayed on their face, people who prayed with their face between their knees, people who prayed facing the temple, people who prayed smiting the breast, and on and on. So in the Bible- there is no limit to our posture of prayer. So if you're going to pray all the time about everything without ceasing- then common sense would tell you that posture can't be a primary issue.

So what we must know is that God will deal with His people about whether they should kneel or bow low or look up or look down or close their eyes or raise their hands. Different times demand different responses from God's people and we should be content to leave those things between the individual believer and God.

2. There is no Particular Place to Pray

Also notice that Jesus didn't say anything about the place of prayer. He didn't limit prayer to the temple, or the courtyard. He didn't limit prayer to the synagogue. He didn't even limit prayer to the closet which He does refer to in rebuttal of hypocritical praying in public places to be seen. And, in fact, if you look at the Scripture you will find people praying everywhere. Some of them were praying in battle or in a cave. God's people prayed in a closet and in a garden, as our Lord Himself did along with His disciples. Sometimes they prayed on a mountain and in a valley. Sometimes they prayed by the sea or by a river. Sometimes they prayed in the streets and sometimes they prayed in bed. Sometimes they prayed at home and sometimes on the top of their homes and sometimes in a prison. One man prayed in a fish.

Sometimes they prayed in solitude and at other times- they prayed with a group. Sometimes they prayed in the wilderness and sometimes in the city. Jesus prayed on a cross and so did the thief.

So there's no limit to where you can pray. Because of the finished Work of our Lord Jesus- we may pray everywhere at all times in any posture and be assured that God will hear us.

3. There is no Particular Time to Pray

And notice that Jesus also didn't say anything about the times we are to pray. In the Bible you will find people praying in the early morning- way before dawn and much later morning after the sun has already risen. You will find people praying three times a day and praying in the evening and praying before their meal and praying after the meal like in **Deuteronomy 8**. You will find people praying at three o'clock in the afternoon and at bedtime and at midnight and all day and even all night.

Now it is true that every man that God used in the Bible got up early in the morning to pray. That is just a fact of the Bible. And that habit was so noticed that it reached out past the Bible and into the lives of the Puritans- who also took on that way of prayer. And that manner was also the preferred way that the men whom God used to found this nation- both politically and business wise- they all got up early and prayed and read the Bible before they started their day.

But the point here is that getting up early to pray is not a requirement for God to hear you. God hears His people when they pray- not simply because they pray at a certain time. So in the Bible- there are no limits in prayer about any particular posture or any particular place or any particular time. And I think that this even spills over into a proper attitude for prayer as well.

4. There is no Particular Attitude in Prayer

Now I want to say something here. I absolutely believe that the Christian life is a life of great joy- in fact I do not believe that lost people can know the joy that believers have. I do not think it is possible for a lost man to know the great joy of having his sins forgiven and

making peace with God. So whatever joy that an unsaved person has- it pales in comparison to that of a true believer.

But that doesn't mean that you experience this great joy at every moment of your walk with God. There are times that God has willed that His children taste of great sorrow and unbelievable disappointments and terrible sadness and deep hurt and pain. It is sometimes God's Will that we are persecuted and that we have our physical bodies beaten and abused and that our material possessions are confiscated.

And during those times- we are to continue in our prayers and we are to continue to obey Christ and to love and serve God- even though the pagan world will tell you that somehow you are exempt from loving and obeying Christ during those times- we are not. We are to love and serve God *in* our sadness and *in* our pain and *in* our troubles and *in* our grieving and *in* our disappointments and *in* our sicknesses and *in* our discouragements.

And that will spill over into our prayer life. So as we study God's Word- we find some who prayed when they were very sad- they came to God manifesting terrible sadness and unspeakable grief. There are prayers of penitence and prayers of grief over sin and in **Job**- we find that sometimes people who just experienced very traumatic episodes prayed wearing sackcloth- sitting in ashes- sometimes putting ashes on their forehead- sometime shaving their head- sometimes smiting their chest and weeping bitterly and throwing dust on their heads- ripping their clothes.

People prayed as they were fasting and sighing and groaning and even crying out loud- agonizing over something. People prayed with a broken heart and a broken spirit- sometimes making oaths and sometimes offering sacrifices. So there are all kinds of attitudes that come in the heart that prays.

And then on the other hand- we find how many prayers were made at the epitome of great joy and in wonderful celebration. They came singing their prayers out of this abounding joy.

So like the other three aspects- there are no Scriptural limits to the attitude of the one who prays either. You might come in an attitude of brokenness and penitence or you might come in an attitude of celebration and joy. All of that is acceptable in your prayers.

So there are really no boundaries in terms of your prayers. You pray in all kinds of postures. You pray in all kinds of places. You pray at all times and you pray in all attitudes and all circumstances- but you pray. You pray without ceasing at all times in everything.

So prayer is really an all- inclusive way of life. It is our spiritual breathing. You don't breathe once in the morning and then once again at night and then stop. No, you breathe all the time- all during the day- and so you should pray like that too.

Now these prayers may not get verbalized all the time- even though some people verbalize them more than others- but it's that kind of heart that rises up and offers its longings and desires and even its disappointments to God.

So these men asked Jesus to teach them to pray. So that means that there has to be prayer in whatever the circumstance and in whatever the posture and in whatever the attitude and in whatever the circumstance and in whatever the time and place. And so by default- that also means that there has to be a *way* to pray that is acceptable to God which will access what it is that's on our hearts. And that's what they're asking here.

And so Jesus begins to teach in verse 2 by saying,

Luke 11:2b

... When you pray, say: "Father"...

Now in Levi's account over in **Matthew 6**- Jesus says,

"Pray in this way..."

Or,

After this manner pray...

... which means to pray along this pattern- pray in this manner. And as I have told you many times- Jesus is not giving us a prayer to memorize and then just repeat- although this prayer is prayed beautifully and sung. But that is not the limit of this. Jesus is not giving us a prayer to repeat- He's giving us a framework and an outline and a skeleton for all

our prayers. And the focus of this praying is on the glory of God. Please turn with me to read David's prayer in **Psalm 86**

- 1** Incline Your ear, O LORD, *and* answer me; For I am afflicted and needy.
- 2** Preserve my soul, for I am a godly man; O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You.
- 3** Be gracious to me, O Lord, For to You I cry all day long.
- 4** Make glad the soul of Your servant, For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
- 5** For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.
- 6** Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; And give heed to the voice of my supplications!
- 7** In the day of my trouble I shall call upon You, For You will answer me.
- 8** There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord, Nor are there any works like Yours.
- 9** All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name.
- 10** For You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God.
- 11** Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.
- 12** I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And will glorify Your name forever.
- 13** For Your lovingkindness toward me is great, And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.
- 14** O God, arrogant men have risen up against me, And a band of violent men have sought my life, And they have not set You before them.
- 15** But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.
- 16** Turn to me, and be gracious to me; Oh grant Your strength to Your servant, And save the son of Your handmaid.
- 17** Show me a sign for good, That those who hate me may see *it* and be ashamed, Because You, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

Now this is a prayer rising out of the heart of David and he's asking God to save him and to be gracious to him. And in verse 3 he's crying out to God all day long. In verse 4 he's lifting up his soul to God. And in verse 6 he says this,

Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; And give heed to the voice of my supplications!

And then notice that beginning in verse 8- David launches into the appropriate “hallowing” of God's Name.

8 There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord, Nor are there any works like Yours.

9 All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name.

10 For You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God.

So now David is worshiping and hallowing the Name of God. And then he continues in verse 11 to say

11 Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.

12 I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And will glorify Your name forever.

13 For Your lovingkindness toward me is great, And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

... so this is all worship. This is the heart of all prayer. And even though David was dead 1,000 years before Jesus was born- he is praying along the pattern or in the manner or along the subject lines that Jesus taught in Luke 11- which simply shows us that this was always the pattern and the was always the manner in which God’s people were to pray.

Now I want us to just look again at the foundation of our prayers in verse 2.

"When you pray say, Father...

God is very rarely called “Father” anywhere in the Old Testament and he is never called “Father” when He's addressed in a personal prayer by an individual. God is only called “Father” in the creative sense as being the progenitor of the nation Israel. No individual in the OT ever goes to God and calls Him “Father”- that would have been

viewed as some level of presumption or even blasphemy. But when you come into the New Testament- God is called "Father" sixty-five times in Matthew, Mark and Luke and a hundred times in the Gospel of John.

So all of a sudden- there's an explosion of this idea that God is Father and Jesus always called God, "Father" except for one single time- in **Matthew 27:46** and **Mark 15:34**, when Jesus cried out

"Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani,"

... which means: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

So the only time Jesus didn't call God "Father" was when God had abandoned Him to die as He was bearing our sin on the Cross.

Now the Greek word for "father" is *pater* but the Jews spoke Aramaic and the Aramaic word for father was *abba*. And that was the most intimate term used by children toward their own father. And this is the model and the pattern and the format where prayer begins. It begins with an intimacy with God in which we are allowed to call Him *abba*. **Romans 8:15** and **Galatians 4:6** says that we're to go and say "**Abba, Father.**"

So under the glorious New Covenant- we come and we are allowed to speak to God Almighty as though we were His born children, as if we were the tender children of His Own Heart, as if we shared His Own Life because in fact spiritually speaking- we do.

God is the great Creator and He is the dreadful Sovereign and He is the transcendent Eternal Spirit. But because of the finished Work of our Lord Jesus Christ- we address God- not as Creator and not as Sovereign and not as Eternal Transcendent Spirit- but we rush into His Presence and the first thing out of our lips is Father, *abba, abba*, our Father.

Now what we must also know about this is that God is not everybody's Father. There is no such thing as the liberal teaching of the universal fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all men. God is not everybody's Father, He's *our* Father. But He is not the Father of all human beings. The Bible says that every single human being who is lost is a child of the devil. Jesus said that in **John 8**.

You can't legitimately lay claim to God being your father and then just stop. If you are a child of God- then you will love and serve your

Father-God. You will obey your Father; you will follow your Father; you will seek to be near to your Father. If you love sin and self- if you mind the things of the flesh- if you have not been born again- then God is not your Father- satan is.

God is the Father of humanity only in the sense that He created humanity. He's the Father of Israel only in the sense that He gave life to that nation. But in the relationship sense- God is only the Father of those who are His children- those who possess His Life which is granted only through faith in His Son.

So we are to say this, "Our Father," because God is our Father. And the word, "our" is a deathblow to the notion of the universal fatherhood of God. God is not the Father of everyone. That is why Jesus praying the magnificent High Priestly prayer in John 17 says very clearly, "I do not pray for everybody." He says, verse 9, *"I ask on their behalf, I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me for they are Yours. I'm praying for Yours, I'm not praying for the world. I'm not praying for everybody. I'm praying for the ones that belong to You and Me."*

So if you're not in the family- you have no access to the Father. And you can pray till you're blue in the face and God has no need to even hear your prayer. If you're not His child by faith in Jesus Christ, then God is not bound to answer any prayer you pray. You can pray all you want with all the passion you can muster, with all the concern, with all the grief or sorrow or whatever it is that generates that prayer, but if you are not a child of God- then God is not your Father and that means that you have no premise on which God is going to answer your prayer.- unless you are praying for forgiveness and mercy and salvation.

So the phrase, "Our Father" is an affirmation that we live in God's eternal family. "Our Father" is an affirmation that we bear His Life and that we possess His Nature- which is to say, that we belong to Him; we have been bought and paid for; we have been purchased; we have been redeemed.

So even though we are sinful- we are His beloved and redeemed children and He has given us eternal life. And this is the foundation of all our prayers. We now have a right to go to God. We now have access through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are God's children.

And your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. You're rushing into His presence, you've got all these issues in your life, you're

glorifying and honoring Him and asking only what's consistent with His will and His purpose, you're rushing in with all the aches and hungers of your heart and all the passions of your soul, you're delivering your soul to God and He already knows everything.

And so you come to One Who is fully informed. He knows more about the issue you are praying about than you do. And He knows all the contingencies that you don't understand and He knows the end from the beginning and the future as well as the past and the present, and it's all in perfect harmony in His mind and yet we're told to come, pour out our hearts and watch how He hears and answers our prayers when they are consistent with His will and weaves all the little issues of our lives into the ultimate fulfillment of His own eternal purpose.

Every believer celebrates the idea that God is our Father. We understand that. He gave us life. He sustains life. He cares for us. He supports us. He deals with us in compassion, tenderness, lovingkindness. He is near to us. He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. He will never leave us or forsake us. All of His limitless resources are at our disposal without limit. He gives us out of the riches of the abundance of His grace, all we have to do is ask.

But if God is going to be a Father to you- then you need to show Him the respect that you should show a father. So if you expect God to respond to you in a fatherly way then you better respond to Him as a son would respond to a father whom he respected and loved.

The fact that God is a loving Father and a gracious, merciful Father never gives license to sin.

Now this concept that God is our loving Father which is the basis of our prayers also settles the matter of fear. Missionaries will tell you that one of the greatest gifts that Christianity brings to the heathen world is the end of fear. Our God is the God who is the God of love, a God of mercy, a God of grace, a God of tenderness, a God of compassion, a God of kindness, a God who seeks to provide for His children all that they need.

No such God exists in the history of world religion because all the gods of the nations are demons, the Bible says, they're demon impersonations of gods and no demon is going to manifest that kind of fatherly, loving, compassionate, tender-hearted attitude. So all heathens live in a horrible kind of religious environment in which their gods are either absolutely indifferent, or threatening and fearful. They

live, for the most part, in the terror of their gods, haunted by them not helped by them.

That's the heathen idea of God. But that's not the God that we know. When we talk about fearing God- we're only talking about reverencing Him for His grace and mercy. We rush boldly into the throne of grace in the time of need to receive grace when we need it. So having God as your loving Father is the end of fear.

It's also the end of the matter of hope, or hopelessness. The world lives in utter hopelessness. The very best that you could hope for out in the world is that life won't be as bad as it could be. You have no hope for anything beyond that. But having God as your loving Father is the end of hopelessness.

God's Fatherhood also settles the issue of loneliness. I sometimes wonder how lonely people really are in this world. And I'm talking about a kind of eternal loneliness. But we don't live like that. We have a God Who rides to our help. We the God Who is our refuge, the God in whom we hide and find our comfort, the God who said, "Lo, I am with you always."

God being our Father also settles the matter of resources since our Father is in heaven, all of the eternal riches of glory are at His disposal on our behalf. We fly from this world into His presence. About 100 years ago -AW Pink said,

"If God is in heaven then prayer needs to be a thing of the heart and not of the lips for no physical voice on earth can rend to the skies, if we are to pray to God in heaven, then our souls must be detached from all of earth. We pray to God in heaven, then faith must wing our petitions. Since we pray to God in heaven, our desires and aspirations must be heavenly."

So it's not a matter what you say with your lips, it's what rises before the awareness of God out of your heart, petitions of your heart.

Dewar friends- all the issues are settled. Fear is gone. Hope is established. Loneliness is eliminated. And all the resources of Heaven are available for us simply because God is our Father. And every time we say, "Our Father Who is in Heaven," we know we are not lost in the crowd. He knows us by name because He is our Father

Let's pray.