

Empire Church of the Brethren

## *Sunday Service Sermons*

**03 September 2023**

Our Father

Text: "After this manner therefore pray: Our Father which art in heaven Hallowed be thy name." *Matt. 6:9*

If we are to come boldly to the throne of grace to receive help in our time of need, we must know who sits on the throne loving and caring for us.

We must know who God is, and we must know what kind of person he is.

We can learn much by considering our Lord's most basic instruction on prayer.

What we have commonly called the Lord's Prayer contains some of the most profound thoughts on prayer found in all the Bible.

Every word in that model prayer is important.

The prayer was given again in Luke's gospel in response to a specific request from the disciples concerning prayer.

They felt their inadequacy in prayer and wanted Jesus' aid.

He responded by giving this beautiful pattern to follow.

How are we to understand the prayer?

It was not given just to quote as a prayer to God, even though it is useful for this.

All of us have experienced some beautiful moments with God as we utter these words to him.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones contends that the prayer is actually meant to be an outline for prayer.

It is to guide us in our prayers as an outline guides a speaker in his talk.

The prayer presents two major concerns that we may present to the Father.

The first three petitions are concerned with the glory of God; his name, his kingdom, and his will.

The last four are concerned with our needs.

This should always be the order of our concern when we come to present ourselves to the Father in prayer.

First, we gather from it the light it gives about the God to whom we pray.

He is to be addressed, according to our Lord Jesus, as "Our father which art in heaven."

We must know that God is our Father.

There were a few scattered references to God as Father in the Old Testament; but it was Jesus, our Lord, who really gave meaning to this address.

Jesus came from the bosom of the Father, speaking of God as Father in very personal terms.

What are we admitting or affirming when we address God in prayer as "our heavenly Father"?

First we are addressing the resourcefulness of God.

This address is an acknowledgment of the resourcefulness of God.

The root of this word translated "Father" includes the idea of originator.

It points to a source, a cause, a point of origin.

God is the Source; of all.

The God who is the source of our physical life is also the God of all mercy and grace.

As such, he is the source of our eternal life.

The relationship we have with him is at his initiative.

He is the originator of the relationship.

Every address of God as Father, by a person in worship, should be acknowledgment of this.

It is an affirmation that the relationship that each has with him is his work, his creation.

Second is the responsibility of God.

This address also indicates that since God is our heavenly Father, he is the one who is responsible for us.

None of us would have dared to push off on God this responsibility, but fortunately he himself made it so.

Since God has revealed himself as the one who accepts responsibility for us, it is not presumptuous for us to bring our joys and our needs to him.

This is exactly what he expects and even encourages. Third is the responsiveness of God.

This is suggested by this title of God, he is responsive to us as his people.

To address God as Father is to affirm that he is the responsive God of love whom we know him to be.

Do you remember that helpful word about the Father that Jesus gave?

He assured Thomas that "he who has seen me has seen the Father".

It is safe to assume that God is just as responsive to our needs as Jesus was to needs wherever he met them.

If you will read the Gospels with discernment, you will be reassured that Jesus was always accessible and responsive.

We must know our Father in heaven.

The phrase that our Lord added to "Our Father" is significant.

It reveals some things about the God to whom we pray, things that we need to know if we are going to pray confidently.

His position.

First: Jesus saying that our Father is in heaven is surely an affirmation that God is separate from all earthly fathers and personalities.

Some people mistakenly approach deceased human beings in prayer.

They select great saints of the past and address prayers to them.

This is surely a mistake.

There is no need to come to some mere mortal, a deceased one at that, when you can come before the living God himself.

Furthermore, it separates him from all living fathers.

He is the one in heaven in contrast to all of those on earth.

Prayer is not to be addressed to our physical or spiritual fathers.

Second, related to this, is the affirmation that God is sovereign.

The heavens were understood to be the very seat of God.

God is seen as the Ruler over all things.

All things are under his control.

So, to approach God as the heavenly Father is to approach the one who has the right to do whatever pleases him.

There is no other one in all the universe who has this kind of authority.

His power.

"Our Father which art in heaven" addresses God as the one who has the power to do whatever needs to be done.

"Father" would indicate that he would want to do it, but his position indicates that he has the power to do it.

Some of the titles with which people approach God today fail to acknowledge this.

Some refer to him as the "man upstairs."

This is not the same thing as saying, "our Father which art in heaven."

The apostle Paul surely caught hold of this truth.

He affirmed in a prayer, "Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to him be glory, forever and ever!"

When you address God as "Our Father which art in heaven," this is what you are acknowledging.

Your prayer life will grow as your knowledge of God grows.

Prayer has no meaning apart from this personal knowledge of him.

The great essential in a growing knowledge of God is fellowship with him.

One of the greatest means of fellowship with God is prayer.

Do you see where this leads?

If you want to become more effective, bolder, and more confident in your prayer life, then pray more.

The more you pray, the better you will know the God who answers prayer and the more your position in his family will mean to you.

The more he means to you, the more you will enjoy the experience of prayer.

This will be true for eternity.

So let's pray without ceasing!

And see what our Father God can do with such as us.