

Place Lurgan Baptist 17:5:2009

## THE PATTERN PRAYER

Reading: Matthew 6:5-15

### 2. HOW DO WE APPROACH GOD ?

I heard about a soldier who was caught one night returning to his quarters from the nearby woods and he was charging with holding communications with the enemy. The soldier pleaded that he had gone into the woods to pray. The commanding officer skeptical of his defense shouted at him, “ *Then down on your knees and pray now. It may be your last.* ” The soldier knelt down and prayed so fervently that even the skeptical commanding officer was touched. When the soldier had finished praying, the officer said, “ *You may go, I believe you. If you hadn’t drilled so often, you couldn’t have done so well at review.* ” My .... if our prayer life was placed under review, how would we do ? Perhaps of all areas of our Christian life, the one we struggle in the most is our prayer life. It is the one area that is most neglected and ineffective. Yet the Lord Jesus assumed that prayer would be a regular practice of our life. Twice in this passage He says, “ *when thou prayest,* ” ( 6:6-7 ) not “ *if thou prayest,* ” you see, Christ did not look at prayer as a neglected practice, but one that was habitual and important to the believer. Therefore, we need to learn how to pray.

So the Lord gives us in this “ *Pattern Prayer,* ” an example, a skeleton, a model on which to fashion our prayers. In many ways it cover all the ground we need to cover in prayer, not exhaustively, but suggestively or representatively. It introduces us to categories of praying patterns of thought in prayer that, properly understood, will cover all our earthly experience. According to the example Christ gives us in this “ *Pattern Prayer,* ” there are three parts to a prayer.

**1. Invocation:** An invocation is a solemn address to God to call Him into the situation about which we are praying.

**2. Supplication:** For when we pray we bring all our spiritual, physical and material needs to the Lord to plead with Him to grant us “ *grace to help in time of need.* ” ( Heb 4:16 )

**3. Adoration:** for did you notice the glorious ascription with which the Model Prayer ends.

But the question that concerns this morning is this. ***How do we approach God in prayer ?*** Dr. J. K. McClure tells about going to Lincoln Park in Chicago. And as he sat there on a park bench he saw a splendid gentleman approach the statue of Abraham Lincoln. For a moment this man stood gazing into that rugged face so full of strength and tenderness, so marked with the deep lines of care. Then he reached up and removed his hat and allowed his white hair to be blown in the wind as he respectfully stood before the statue of this courageous statesman, Meanwhile, there was another man sitting at the base of

this same statute, writing obscene verses and staining it with tobacco juice. *You see, the difference between these two men was great and this story illustrates how different people approach God.* Some approach Him with reverence and respect. Others have no apparent regard for God at all. How do you approach God ? Do you pause and consider what you are doing ? Do you recollect Who it is you are addressing ? Does the first sentence in the **“Pattern Prayer,”** not establish this point ? Look at ( 6:9 ) if you will. Here there is no request. No hasty entrance into God’s presence with petitions spilling over as God’s throne is approached. No, here is a prayer that starts with adoration, invocation, worship. Indeed this single statement speaks of,

#### (1) A RELATIONSHIP THAT IS INTIMATE

“ *Our Father,* ” ( 6:9 ) That speaks of the **mercy** of God. “ *Which art in heaven,* ” that speaks of the **majesty** of God. The one begets confidence, the other produces reverence. The Rabbis told the story of a girl who was brought up by a good and faithful guardian. The day came when she was to be married. The Scribe who was making the necessary arrangements for the wedding asked her, “ *What is your name ?* ” And she told him. Then the scribe asked, “ *What is your father’s name ?* ” The girl was silent. “ *Why are you quiet ?* ” asked her guardian. The girl answered, “ ***Because I know none other than you as father, for he who brings up is father, not he who begets.*** ” My .... when we say to God “ *Our Father,* ” its not simply paternity that is in our minds, it’s the far closer relationship of fatherhood. You see,

#### (a) “ *Father,* ” indicates our **Spiritual Relationship:**

The prayer which begins “ *Our Father,* ” is distinctively Christian, that is, only believers can pray it. “ *Your Father,* ” is how the Lord Jesus described God. “ *Our Father,* ” is what He told us to say when we pray. Now this is the first time these words are addressed to God in the Bible. The notion is unique to the New Testament, but sadly the concept seems lost to a great part of contemporary Christianity. When Christ prayed He said “ *Father.* ” ( Matt 27:46 ) Paul’s prayers were addressed to “ *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ” ( Eph 1:3 ) Here then is the requirement of all prayer. Prayer is a family matter and only those who can say, “ *Our Father,* ” can truly pray. Do I hear someone protesting, “ *Wait a minute, God created everyone and so God is the Father of everyone.* ” ( Mal 2:10 Acts 17:28 ) I beg to differ. God is not the Father of everyone. God does not become Father by creation. He created cats and dogs and flies and frogs, but He is not their Father. He is only their Creator.

The Bible makes it clear that some human beings are not the children of God. The Lord Jesus said of the unsaved Pharisees, “ *Ye are of your father the devil.* ” ( Jn 8:44 ) You see, we become children of God and can only call Him Father, when by faith we receive Christ as our Saviour and Lord are born into His family. John says, “ *But as many as received Him to them gave He power .....* ” ( Jn 1:12 ) Father refers to the special relationship that God has with those who are redeemed and reconciled to Him by the blood of Christ.

My .... can you come into His presence this .... and say “ *Our Father,* ” ? Is God your Father ? Are you His child through the “ *new birth* ? ” For as Paul said, “ *ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* ” ( Gal 3:26 )  
Now,

- As our Father: **God Comforts us:**

Are you in trouble this .... ? Are you encountering physical weakness, mental weariness, and spiritual wickedness ? Well, David says, “ *Like as a father pitieth His children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him,* ” “ *He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust.* ” ( Ps 103 :14 ) E. W. Bullinger says in his Companion Bible, says “ *God remembers what man forgets, our infirmities, and God forgets what man remembers our sins.* ” What a lovely thought, and what a comfort.

- As our Father: **God Disciplines us:**

You see, chastening is part of child rearing. “ *We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live ?* ” ( Heb 12:9 ) The picture is of the Lord acting as our Father, producing in us an image of Himself.

- As our Father: **God Keeps us:**

For this word Father teaches us about our eternal security.

My .... we my backslide or grow cold, but He will at length draw us back, by chastisement if necessary, and we will never be lost. After all, you can never cease to be your father’s child. People speak about their ex-wife, or ex- husband but no one talks about an ex child. If you should move away, even to the furthest end of the globe, you remain your father’s child. My .... are you not glad this .... as our Father God comforts, disciplines and keeps us ? A Roman Emperor was enjoying a great victory. He had the privilege which Rome gave to its great victors, of marching his troops through the streets of Rome. So through the streets lined with people, the Emperor marched with his victorious armies and with the spoils of battle. At one point on the triumphal route there was a platform where the empress and her family were sitting to watch the emperor go by in all his glory. *On the platform with his mother there was the emperor’s youngest son.*

As the emperor came near, the little boy jumped off the platform, ran through the crowd, tried to dodge between the legs of one of the guards and ran out on the road to meet his father’s chariot. The soldier stooped and stopped him. He lifted him up in his arms and said, “ *You can’t do that boy. Don’t you know who that is in the chariot ? That’s the emperor. You can’t run out to his chariot.* ” And the little boy exclaimed, “ ***He may be your emperor but he’s my father.*** ” Isn’t that the way you feel about God ? The might, and the majesty, and the magnificence of God are the might, majesty, magnificence of One whom Jesus Christ taught to call “ *Our Father.* ” (a)

**(b) “ *Our,* ” indicates our Mutual Fellowship:**

What a blow it is to the liberal teaching concerning the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, for the word “*our*,” refers to believers, and ends all claims to exclusiveness. You see, when the Lord Jesus prayed He said, “*My Father*,” ( Jn 10:30 14:11 ) For He stood absolutely alone in the great work He came to do. There was no one who could help Him bear the sin of the world. But in our work and experience we are never alone. For once we are saved, we are adopted into God’s family and become a member of the household of God. ( 1 Tim 3:15 ) Do you ever feel like Elijah ? ( 1 Kings 19:10 ) Isolated, feeling that you are the only believer left ? Or that somehow your suffering and circumstances are unique ? My .... that feeling of isolation is based on a lie. For the Word of God declares, “*there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.*” ( 1 Cor 10:13 ) We are never placed in a situation in which we stand alone. That’s why the Saviour reminds us to pray, “*Our Father*,” for we are part of a vast fellowship of saints who have proved God under the very circumstances that cause us so much concern.

My .... are you failing to appreciate your privileges ? Are you not glad that you belong to the family of God ? That you never stand alone before God. That you are never left without the prayer support of an army of His people who collectively can come into the presence of God and say, “*Our Father.*” (1)

## (2) A REVERENCE THAT IS IMPORTANT

For notice what Christ says, “*Our Father which art in heaven*,” Or “*Our Father who art in the heavens.*” You

see, God is just not our Father but “*our Father in heaven.*” This reminds us of God’s infinite greatness, and our need to approach Him with “*reverence and godly fear.*” ( Heb 12:28 ) My .... is there not a cheap familiarity, almost a chumminess, that marks some present day praying ? ( Ex 3:5 Is 6:5 Acts 4:24 ) Arthur Pink says, “*We scarcely recognize Him, He seems to have lost His identity.*” Now what do the words “*in heaven*,” mean ? Alan Cairns says “*the simplest answer to this question is that heaven tells us where God is and what God is.*” In his prayer at the dedication of the Temple Solomon prayed, “*Hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place.*” ( 1 Kings 8:43 ) But these words suggest more than a mere identification of the Father’s whereabouts. For these words “*in heaven*,” tell us something about,

### (a) **THE AUTHORITY OF GOD:**

Our Father is in heaven. His authority extends over all creation. The psalmist says, “*The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens and His kingdom ruleth over all.*” ( Ps 103:19 ) So when we pray, “*Our Father, which art in heaven*,” we are simply saying that God is omnipotent. That He is on the throne, that He not only has the right to rule, but He has the power to exercise that right. The phrase “*which art in heaven*,” reminds us of the greatness of God and the insignificance of man. It makes us feel like the grasshoppers of ( Isaiah Ch 40 ) and as mere specks of dust before our God. He therefore becomes to us, our mighty and glorious God. My .... do not we live in a day when we have lost sight of the

majesty of God ? Sometimes folk come in and out of this sanctuary as if it were a circus. They come and go forgetting that it is Lord's presence they are entering and leaving. What informality and superficiality abounds today. Believers often stride into God's presence in prayer, lacking all sense of occasion, and with a small awareness of God's majesty and power. "*In heaven,*" reminds us of the authority of God. My .... is this not a powerful incentive when we come to prayer ? For we are coming to One who has said, "*Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is there anything too hard for me ?*" ( Jer 32:27 ) Absolutely not. It was this truth that burned in the heart of William Carey, the father of the modern missionary movement, and that led him to embrace the motto, "*Attempt great things for God and expect great things from God.*"

My .... As Carey launched his mission in a heathen land, he was gripped, by the thought that his God was omnipotent. Are you gripped by this thought when you bow before God in prayer ? As you contemplate that ministry that has to be exercised, that relative that has to be saved, that godliness that has to be revealed, do you do so in the realization that "*with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.*" ( Matt 19:26 ) (a)

### **(b) THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD:**

The psalmist cries, "*Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*" ( Ps 115:3 ) Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon's greatest monarch, confessed this, having found it out the hard way. He said, "*He doeth*

*according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou ?*" ( Dan 4:35 ) My .... often we cannot explain what is happening in this world and why it is happening, but is it not good to know that our Father is in total control ? That He does what He pleases and what He pleases is good and right. My .... do you see the confidence with which we can come to God ? For we are addressing the One Who operates from a lofty throne.

### **(c) THE PURITY OF GOD:**

For this phrase "*which art in heaven,*" communicates the holiness of God. "*Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.*" ( Is 57 :15 ) That is, with those who have a deep sense of His holiness and of their own sin. My .... have we not lost sight of the holiness of God, and as a result lost power in prayer. You see, in order to approach "*our Father in heaven,*" we must first pause to search our hearts, to repent of all our sin, because He is enthroned in the place of sublime purity. If we did this every time we pray we would much more concerned about dealing with our sins. I mean, if there is no concern for holiness, how can we expect a meaningful audience with the Holy God ?

Do the words of Robert Murray McCheyne not need to be often on our lips, "*O God, make me as holy as it is possible for saved sinner to be.*" "*Our Father,*" (1) "*Which art in heaven,*" (2)

### (3) A RESPONSIBILITY THAT IS IMPLICIT

You see, with every privilege there comes a responsibility. When we pray “ *Our Father*, ” we are professing to be His children. My .... if God is our Father we are to,

#### (a) **DEPEND UPON HIM:**

You see, one of the responsibilities of fathers is to provide for their children. This is God’s law. He tells human parents that “ *the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.* ” ( 2 Cor 12:14 ) In doing so, they act according to the manner of our Heavenly Father toward His children. Parents, does it matter to you that your children have sustenance ? Of course it does and it matters to God about you. Indeed the Lord Jesus tell us here that our Father,

- **KNOWS OUR NEED:**

Do you see how He puts it ? “ *Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.* ” ( 6:8 )

- **SUPPLIES OUR NEED:**

He says, “ *Therefore take no thought saying, What shall we eat ? or What shall we drink ? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed ? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek, for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added*

*unto you.* ” ( 6:31-33 ) You see, this fatherly care of His people is practical. Have you a need this .... ? Material, physical, spiritual, or emotional. Are you giving way to anxious care ? Well, listen to the teaching of Christ. “ *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings ( pennies ) and not one of them is forgotten before God ?* ” ( Lk 12:6 ) In Palestine a purchaser could buy two sparrows for one penny, but if he was prepared to spend two pennies, he got not four, but five sparrows. The extra sparrow was thrown into the bargain, it was quite worthless, it had no value at all, it mattered to no one, but even that extra sparrow matters to God. And Christ says, “ *ye are of more value than many sparrows.* ” ( Lk 12:7 )

**Said the robin to the sparrow  
Friend I’d really like to know  
What makes these human beings  
Rush about and worry so  
Said the sparrow to the robin  
Friend I that it must be  
That they have no heavenly Father  
Such as cares for you and me**

#### (b) **SPEAK WITH HIM:**

I mean what kind of son is he who does not speak with his father ? And what kind of father is he who would deny his child ? The Lord Jesus says, “ *Or what man is there of you whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ? Or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent ? If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how*

*much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him ?” ( 7:9-11 )*

**(c) LIVE LIKE HIM:**

Imitate Him. Paul says, “ *Be ye followers of God as dear children.*” ( Eph 5:1 ) Do you imitate God,

- ***In Forgiving Injuries:***

( Is 44:22 ) “ *Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*” ( Eph 4:32 ) My .... if God treated you, the way you are treating other believers you would be hell this .... ! For the Christian who is nursing a grievance, bearing a grudge, possessing an unforgiving spirit, is so unlike the Lord.

- ***Works of Mercy:***

The psalmist says concerning the Lord, “ *Thou openest thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.*” ( Ps 145:16 ) Are you like God in this respect ? Are you relieving the needs of others ? Are you rich in good works ? ( Lk 6:16 1 Tim 6:18 ) My .... we are God’s children, what a privilege. We are God’s children, what a responsibility. A young Prince went to a philosopher one day and asked him, how he should conduct himself. The philosopher said, “ **Never forget you are a King’s son, do nothing but what becomes the son of a King.**” (1) (2) (3) Can you join with so many of us here and say “ *Our Father which art in heaven ?*” Is God your heavenly Father ? Maybe you’re thinking, “ *But will God*

*be a Father to me ? I have rejected His Son, I have resisted His Spirit, I have refused His Word.*” Yes, God will be a Father to you, if you repent of you sin, and by faith receive the Saviour. You know, when the prodigal, the Bible says he came to his father. “ *But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.*” ( Lk 15:20 ) What a picture of God. Someone says, “ *preacher, do you think God would save me ?*” Look at this picture. Look at the God of the universe running, running to greet his boy coming home. Is that what you need to do this .... ?

**I’m tired of sin and straying, Lord  
Now I’m coming home  
I’ll trust Thy love, believe Thy Word  
Lord I’m coming home**

Will you do that this .... ? Then leave this place, saying “ *Our Father which art in heaven.*”