

PP Fatherhood and Prayer: Becoming a People of Prayer series

6/8/2008

I will trust that last week's sermon will be sufficient to show that Christ's teaching on prayer revealed the importance of coming to the Lord with Biblical fellowship in mind

God is 'our' God, He is 'our' Father, and the fact that there is no 'I' or 'me' or 'my' is very significant

But Who is it that we pray to?

You know there are dozens of names that God gives for Himself in the Scriptures

Have you ever thought on how significant it is that Jesus chose the name Father to teach us how to pray?

Illus In India, the word for father is Pita (with an it sound). The important thing to know however is that you do not call your father Pita even though that is the correct word. You always add the suffix *jee*, *Pita-jee*. Because *jee* denotes respect and reverence. The closest parallel in the U.S. is the southern upbringing of 'Yes, sir' while also calling him daddy. That which is dearest is also revered.

The first phrase of the Lord's teaching on prayer captures this thought with '*Our Father in heaven.*'...

PP What are the great teachings of this phrase 'Our Father'?

PP 1-If God is our '*Father*' then we are in close personal relationships with Him

Father is very much different than fatherhood

A man can be a *father* in the paternal sense of the word, but then abandon his child

Or a man can raise up his children in a relationship of love and intimacy and demonstrate *fatherhood*

It is this sense of the word father here in this prayer and the same in the 7 occurrences in the first letter of John

The fatherhood of God was supremely dear to the Jews

PP "You are the sons of the LORD your God." Deuteronomy 14:1

PP "I am a Father to Israel" Jeremiah 31:9

PP "Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?"

Deuteronomy 32:6

The Jews believed '*it was an honor to children to be near their father, and an honor to a father to be near his children, therefore make a house for the Father that he may dwell near his children.*'

But in spite of the Jewish idea of the fatherhood of God, they understood it mainly in terms of a sovereign Creator-Father

The aspect of God's character which was stressed most in the Old Testament was captured in the word 'holy'

He is holy, separate and set apart from all His creatures

Over and over, the people of God must keep their place and their distance from their holy God

God is referred to as Father 14 times in the Old Testament, always impersonally, as the father of Israel, not persons

Not one individual spoke of God as his personal heavenly Father

By the time of Christ, the Jews so focused on the sovereignty and transcendence of God that would not even repeat His covenant name...Yahweh
They invented the word Jehovah, a combination of two separate names of God in order to guard the distance between God and man
But Jesus infused God's title of Father with new meaning, using that title more than 60 times
While the OT emphasized God's holiness, the NT stressed God's fatherhood
God is not now less holy; His holiness is inherent all through the NT
But the stress in the NT is now on the boldness and confidence we can approach God the Father through the Person of His Son, Jesus

PP *"This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him."*
Ephesians 3:11-12

So in what way does Jesus infuse new meaning into the use of **'Father'** in this prayer?:
Jesus, Who spoke in Aramaic, more than likely used the Aramaic word for father which is Abba

This was a common word children used of their earthly fathers, and means 'Daddy' but with a more reverent touch to it

PP The best way to translate Abba is probably 'Dearest Father'

This was revolutionary to the ears of the Jews, because nobody spoke of God in this manner of familiarity and intimacy

PP Jeremias wrote: *"...in the Lord's prayer Jesus authorizes His disciples to repeat the word abba after Him. He gives them a share in His sonship and empowers them as His disciples to speak with their heavenly Father in just such a familiar, trusting way as a child would with his father."*

This knowledge of our special relationship with God is to undergird our every prayer

PP2-If God is our 'Father', then we are loved by Him

Friends, do you have a theological smite button?

PP *Illustration of God with His smite button*

It is always a concern of mine when speaking on the Fatherhood of God that some, whose earthly fathers are/were very poor examples of fatherhood would be bothered by this title of God
Overly harsh, distant and unloving human fathers can create a barrier to understanding the glory and freeing knowledge of having a heavenly Father

There are many who view God as harsh, joyless, and distant and who is ready to punish at the slightest provocation of disobedience or failure

Illus "There's a Spanish story of a father and son who had become estranged. The son had run away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read: "Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father." On Saturday 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers.

This concern however has moved some to amputate the Fatherhood of God from their Ministry

In Honest to God, Bishop Robinson was hailed as brilliant because he did not talk about the Fatherhood of God due to that generation's reality of family having largely broken down

This is a terrible overreaction

We need now, more than ever, clear and passionate teachings of the fatherhood of God to renew the minds of those who have been hurt terribly by their own fathers

How different is the picture in both Old and New Testaments of our loving Father

PP *"As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear [reverence] Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust."*

Psalms 103:13

Friends did you know, that the Word of God tells us that God our Father loves us no less than He does His own Son Jesus Christ?

PP *"The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."*

Jn 17:22-23

'even as' means in the Greek 'to the same degree that'

PP The love of God has an unbreakable grip on us for nothing in all creation *"will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* **Romans 8:39**

PP *"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."* **1 John 3:1**

Jerry Bridges translates it as John writing: 'Stop! Consider this astonishing fact: God loves us so much that we are called His children. And it's true. We really are His children!'

PP 3-If God is our 'Father', then we are adopted as His sons and daughters

PP *"If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all...Father is the Christian name for God."*

In the ancient world, adoption was ordinarily confined to wealthy, childless couples

Those adopted were not normally infants, as in our culture, but young adults

It is by nature an act of choice, not compulsion, but an expression of free love

God adopts because He chooses to, not because He is bound out of duty

The truth that we are adopted into God's family as sons and daughters is the highest privilege and blessing that gospel offers

Some of you may argue that justification-God's forgiveness of our sins and restoring us to peace with Him through Christ-is the highest privilege of the gospel

Justification is the most fundamental and primary blessing of the gospel because it meets our deepest need...peace with God

But it does not in itself imply any deep or intimate relationship with God, while closeness, affection and generosity are at the heart of the Scripture's teaching on adoption

J.I. Packer argues that 'the entire Christian life has to be understood in terms of it [adoption]'

Our Father always desires the company of His children

Our Father is always accessible to His children

Our Father is never too preoccupied to listen to His children

Our Father loves to out give His children's expectations

Our Father always knows what is best for His children

The children of God want to imitate their Father

They want to glorify their Father

They want to please their Father

The New Testament gives two yardsticks to measure the love of God

One is the death of Christ on the cross and it is the one which grabs most of our attention

Yet, lesser known, but no less powerful is adoption

PP *"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God."* **1 John 3:1**

It's popular today to say that we are all God's children, but is that really true?

Not all people have the right to call God *Abba*

Only the one who has put his faith in Christ can claim God as his Dearest Father

PP *"for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith."* **Galatians 3:26**

We only become the children of God through what the Bible calls adoption

The Bible is crystal clear that every human being is born 'the children of the flesh' (Rom. 9:8); 'the children of wrath' (Eph. 2:3); 'the children of the devil' (1 Jn. 3:10); 'children of the slave' (Gal. 4:31)

We have to be taken out of that realm of 'family' before we become the children of God

PP *"But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."* **John 1:12-13**

PP *"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!'"* **Ro 8:15**

Illus We recently have adopted a dog that we named Rusty. Our little 2 ½ year old Andrew comes to about the same height of Rusty's head. As gentle as this dog is though, he sees Andrew as a three foot high lollipop. During one particular licking, Andrew and Rusty were in the kitchen and I was out of sight in the front room, when all of sudden he starts yelling out, 'Dadda, dadda'

This is the sense of this verse that instead of slavery to fear and being overwhelmed and

controlled by it, we can now call out to our Daddy as His sons and daughters

It is this family relationship that can help us overcome fear and anxiety in our lives

PP *“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”* **Matthew 10:29-31**

Sparrows were cheap birds of little value, two for a penny

In Luke 12:6, Jesus says 5 sparrows were worth 2 pennies

In the market, you could buy two sparrows for one penny, but if you were willing to spend another penny, they would throw in one sparrow for free

A penny was the smallest coin in Jesus’ day and sparrows were often roasted and used as cheap finger foods as appetizers

The extra bird was nearly worthless, mattering very little

This insignificant of all birds could not even fall to the ground without God’s knowledge

How priceless in comparison is the Father’s knowledge and care for His children

Finally, and briefly...

PP *4-If God is our ‘Father’, then we are His heirs*

In the Roman culture of adoption, a wealthy, childless couple would adopt a young man to carry on the family name and who would inherit the family’s resources

PP *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,...”* **Romans 8:16-17a**

The unsaved cannot claim an inheritance from God

It is exclusively a right to the sons and daughters of God

When a brand new believer comes into the family of God, she does so with the full rights of an adult daughter of God

We inherit the entire estate of God’s immeasurable wealth

PP *“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.”*

1 John 3:2

One day we will enjoy the full experience of the heavenly life that is now enjoyed by our elder brother Jesus Christ

There awaits for the children of God the surpassing glory and grandeur of our inheritance Audacious as it seems, true nonetheless, it is our inheritance no less than Christ’s

And the Holy Spirit is the down payment or Divine deposit, that guarantees us of our inheritance

There is so much more that could and should be said about our heavenly Father, but what confidence, assurance, boldness and encouragement the children of God have

when they pray to their Father in heaven
For we have a relationship with our Father that is unlike any other religion
We have a God Who loves us as a Father and has chosen to adopt us into His family and
blessed us and granted us an incredible inheritance

Friends, if you are a child of God, you pray to One Who longs for you to know the power
and extent of His Fatherly love