

### The Blessed Benefits of Having God as Our Father!

I am in conference, preaching in Greenville, SC today. The Lord gave us a great service last night and we look forward to the meeting this evening. This morning I enjoyed breakfast with three other preachers. Evangelist Milton Taylor was asked to lead us in prayer. In his prayer he said something that brought tears to my eyes. He said, "Dear God, I am so glad we can call you Father, not in name only, but really our Father..." I have taught what it means to hallow, honor and praise the name of God. I love to cherish and meditate on the fact that our Lord is the Mighty Jehovah-Jireh, the "I Am Your Provision," Jehovah-Nissi, the "I Am Your Banner," Jehovah-Shalom, the "I Am Your Peace" and should I enter into praising God for His many names and lifting Jesus with His magnificent name I would not have room to write what I want to write about in this vignette. Today, I want to discuss what it means to have the Lord in all reality as our Father and not in name only. What do we benefit from having God as our Father?

#### **1. "Our Father" speaks to us of relationship.**

In commenting on the opening line of the Model Prayer, Andrew Murray in his wonderful book, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, said this: "Our Father which art in heaven! To appreciate this word of adoration aright, I must remember that none of the saints had in Scripture ever ventured to address God as their Father. The invocation places us at once in the centre of the wonderful revelation the Son came to make of His Father as our Father too. It comprehends the mystery of redemption—Christ delivering us from the curse that we might become the children of God." We don't see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel calling God, "Our Father." The closest we seem to come is in Malachi, the very last book of the Old Testament, when the Lord says, "*A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is mine honour?*" (Malachi 1:6a). In the Old Testament, we don't witness the patriarchs or prophets calling God their Father. Even Malachi emphasizes the point, as God says, "*...if then I be a Father, where is mine honour...*," in other words, God is saying He would love to be a Father to us and have us treat Him like one, but we do not honor Him as a Father. Something wonderful happened in the New Testament. All through Christ's ministry He spoke of His Father. After the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, Christ said to Mary Magdalene, "*...I ascend unto my Father, and your Father...*" (John 20:17b). Christ's shed blood has made it possible for His prayer of John 17 to be answered when He prayed, "*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us...*" (John 17:21).

If it were not for the blood of Jesus and the vicarious substitutionary death of our Savior we would not be able to say, "Our Father." Paul confirmed it further when he wrote, "*For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but*

*ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*" (Romans 8:15). Several years ago I had some church members who were formally adopting their son. They asked me if I would come and witness this adoption. I was deeply moved when I heard the judge proclaim from henceforth this child would be called, and he declared the first name and the family surname as part of his own name. The judge also declared this act irrevocable; the parents from that day onward could not disown or disinherit this child. What a great reminder to us who belong to God through the new birth and adoption! There is not a perfect equivalency for the word "Abba" in the English language. A closer tongue to the Greek language is Italian. A word that the Italians use for their father is "papa." In the same way a little Jewish child says "Abba," the Italian child says, "Papa." So we see it holds the idea of intimacy. Yet, if you are uncomfortable as I am at calling God, "Daddy" there is a reason. When we think of "Daddy" we do not always see the whole picture. We say, "My daddy let me ride the horse on the merry-go-round! My daddy gave me some ice cream, or my daddy said my boyfriend could come over tonight." You will not hear someone say, "My daddy spanked me or my daddy grounded me." The expression changes and we say, "My father spanked or grounded me." Our use of "daddy" includes intimacy but not huge honor. In Italian, this word does both. With all that is in the air these days from Rome, a perfect example is found in the word "Pope." In Italian they say "Papa." No devout Roman Catholic would think of using our English word "daddy" when referring to the pontiff. It is the same word, but when placed on an individual of great honor, it carries the double meaning of tender intimacy and great honor. By the way, that is what Jesus meant when He said, *"And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven"* (Matthew 23:9). Jesus was not saying stop calling your dad "Father"; Our Lord was saying, "There is no one in heaven or earth with whom you shall have greater intimacy or hold in higher esteem than your Father who is in heaven!" What a relationship!

## **2. "Our Father" speaks to us of truthfulness.**

Paul said, *"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"* (Galatians 4:6,9). Paul was saying that since God is your Father, He knows you and who you are; receive from Him what you need, but if you try to earn His favor like an employee to an employer, you are reverting to weak and beggarly methods. He is your Father; be honest before Him. Charles Simpson wrote, "This pastor, in the Washington, DC, area, had among his members a professional football player. The player was well-known with many fans. The pastor went to a game and afterwards many fans were calling the player's name. Some fans wanted to go to the dressing room, claiming to know the player. In all the clamor, the player looked up and saw his pastor. He knew his pastor, called him by name, and invited him to walk with him. The real question in prayer is not, "Do we know God?" It is, "Does God, our Father know us?" How can He know us? Of course,

He does know us, but He also calls us to open ourselves—our innermost self—to Him. The effective people are the open and honest people. Effective intercessors do not hide themselves from their Father in Heaven. Effective intercessors are not always the most personally or outwardly righteous. The Publican was not; Peter was not; David was not, and Paul was not. But, they all had one thing in common: when they prayed, they told the truth about themselves. They were not afraid to be known of God. Therefore, they had power with God. Anyone who prays as though they were talking to someone who does not know them will be ineffective. Anyone trying to impress God or others will be ineffective. And anyone who doesn't approach God as the Father will be ineffective. There are no substitutes for openness, humility, the laws of God, sincerity, and faith.

### **3. "Our Father" speaks to us of favor.**

The father of the prodigal son is an example. When the wayward, but returning son said, *"...Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son"* (Luke 15:21), the father's immediate response was, *"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found..."* (Luke 15:22b-24a).

How blessed we are to have this kind of Father in heaven! He is more willing to give us favor than we are to claim it! One by one, pastors who were in a prayer meeting together offered up prayers to God. The closing minister was most humble in his approach and after he prayed, it was said by those in attendance, "Heaven came down." When the meeting was over he was asked, "How is it that your prayers seem to touch God?" "Well," he said, "When you prayed, you pled your case; when I prayed, I just threw myself on the mercy of the court." In truth, God wants to show us favor. If we repent of our sins, and talk to Him as a Father, He will give us unmerited grace and favor!

-Pastor Pope-