

PRAYER: OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

PROPOSITION:

- YOUR LIFE WILL BE TRANSFORMED, AND YOU WILL EXPERIENCE INCREASING JOY by praying the way Jesus taught us to ... beginning with the realization that we are adopted children speaking to a loving Father

INTRODUCTION

- What is a Christian? How do you describe the man, woman or child who professes to be a genuine Christian?
- While there are many answers that can be given, the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as his or her Father
- A Christian is one who has placed their faith in Jesus Christ
- Scripture makes it perfectly clear that all who believe in Jesus Christ become children of God

Galatians 3:26

26for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

- But the reality is that no one can simply decide to become a Christian on their ownat least not according to Jesus
- It would be like a young orphan walking down your street and stopping in front of your house. "Ah, this looks like a nice place to live ...I think I'll just knock on their door and let them know that I'd like to be adopted by them"
- That would be ludicrous; the orphan can't just decide that he wants to be adopted
- If someone chooses to adopt an orphan they do it because they want to do it, not because the orphan wants to be adopted
- There is only one way for anyone to become a child of God....they must be born again of the Spirit of God

John 1:12-13

12But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

- All who are born again have been born again through faith in Jesus Christ

John 14:6

.... "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

- But there's kind of a catch to coming to Jesus

John 6:44

44No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

- The bottom line is that we cannot come to Christ without the Father drawing us
- Sonship to God is a gift of grace and a gift of the Father's love for us

1 John 3:1

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

- If you're here and you're born again of the Spirit of God, it is because your Creator has dearly loved you and has decided to become your Father
- If you are born again, "Father" is the Name you can call God
- If you're a Christian, you have been chosen and adopted by God
- If you're a Christian, the Father has a deep love and affection for you
- If you're a Christian, you did not decide that God would become your FatherIf you're a Christian, God decided that you would become His child
- If you're a Christian, you are privileged above all other men to experience and enjoy an intimate relationship with Almighty God
- God has a wonderful purpose to be fulfilled in this relationship
- His purpose is to perfect our relationship with Himself during the course of our lifetime
- Think about your present relationship with Godhow deep is it really?
- How much communication exists in your relationship with God? How much joy do you really experience in your relationship with God?

- How well do you really know God?
- Paul described his ever-growing relationship with Christ in these terms

Philippians 3:8

8Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... Philippians 3:10

...that I may know him ...

- We cannot know God in a greater way without experiencing personal transformation and increasing joy
- And we cannot experience this relationship with God and come to know Him in a greater way apart from prayer
- Why? Because prayer is the expression we give to our relationship with God ...Our prayers reveal the extent of our relationship with God

LET'S GET DEEPER

- In Old Testament times God gave his people a covenant name that they were to use to speak to Himthe Hebrew name Yahweh meaning "the Lord"
- God announced Himself as "the great I AM"
- J. I. Packer presents this brilliantly on the pages of his now classic, "Knowing God." Let me quote him

"He is the reality behind all reality, the underlying cause of all causes and all events. The Name (I AM) proclaimed God as self-existent, sovereign, and wholly free from constraint by or dependence on anything outside himself.

Though Yahweh was his covenant name, it spoke to Israel of what their God was in himself rather than of what he would be in relation to them. It was the official name of Israel's King, and there was something of regal reserve about it. It was an enigmatic name (mysterious or puzzling), a name calculated to awaken humility and awe before the mystery of the Divine being rather than anything else.

In full accord with this, the aspect of his character on which God laid most stress in the Old Testament was his holiness. The angels' song which Isaiah heard in the temple, with its emphatic repetitions -"Holy,

holy, holy is the Lord Almighty" (Is 6:3) - could be used as a motto-text to sum up the theme of the whole Old Testament.

The basic idea which the word holy expresses is that of separation, or separateness. When God is declared to be holy, the thought is of all that separates him and sets him apart and makes him different from his creatures: his greatness and his purity.

The whole spirit of the Old Testament religion was determined by the thought of God's holiness. The constant emphasis was that human beings, because of their weaknesses as creatures and their defilement as sinful creatures, must learn to humble themselves and be reverent before God.

Religion was "the fear of the Lord" - a matter of knowing you own littleness, of confessing your faults and abasing yourself in God's presence, of sheltering thankfully under his promises of mercy, and of taking care above all things to avoid presumptuous sins. Again and again it was stressed that we must keep our place, our distance, in the presence of a holy God. This emphasis overshadowed everything else.

BUT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WE FIND THAT THINGS HAVE CHANGED. God and religion are not less than they were; the Old Testament revelation of the holiness of God, and its demand for humility in man, is presupposed throughout.

BUT SOMETHING HAS BEEN ADDED. A new factor has come in.

New Testament believers deal with God as their Father. Father is the name by which they call him. Father has become the covenant name - for the covenant which binds him to his people now stands revealed as a family covenant.

Christians are his children, his own sons and daughters, his heirs. And the stress of the New Testament is not on the difficulty and danger of drawing near to the holy God, but on the boldness and confidence with which believers may approach him: a boldness that springs directly from faith in Christ, and from the knowledge of his saving work.

To those who are Christ's, the holy God is a loving Father; they belong to his family; they may approach him without fear and always be sure of his fatherly concern and care. This is the heart of the New Testament message.

Who can grasp this? I have heard it seriously argued that the thought of divine fatherhood can mean nothing to those whose human father was

inadequate, lacking wisdom, affection or both, nor to those many more whose misfortune it was to have a fatherless upbringing

The thought of our Maker becoming our perfect parent -

faithful in love and care,

generous and thoughtful,

interested in all we do,

respecting our individuality,

skillful in training us,

wise in guidance,

always available,

helping us to find ourselves in maturity, integrity and uprightness -

is a thought which can have meaning for everybody, whether we come to it by saying, "I had a wonderful father, and I see that God is like that, only more so," or by saying "My father disappointed me here, and here, and here, but God, praise His name, will be very different

or even by saying , "I have never known what it is to have a father on earth, but thank God I now have one in heaven."

The truth is that all of us have a positive ideal of fatherhood as revealed to us by the Father of all Fathers

Ephesians 3:12

12in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

Hebrews 10:19-22

19Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20by the new and living way that he opened for us... 22let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- We are Christians because God has adopted us as his own children
- He initiated a relationship with you and me that is going to endure throughout eternity
- And throughout eternity, this relationship will be of unimaginable joy

- But how do we relate with God right now in this life? How do we communicate with God in the here and now when we can't see Him or hear His audible voice?
- Communication is essential to any relationship ... imagine any relationship you have with another person ...now imagine it without any communication by either person
- Without communication, there is no relationship!
- If you're married, imagine what your relationship would be like with your spouse if neither one of you ever communicated with the other
- If you are a child, imagine what your relationship would be like with your parent if you never communicated
- Imagine a friendship without communication
- Imagine what your relationship would be like with your boss if there was never any communication between the two of you
- In order for a relationship to be enjoyable or productive In order for a relationship to grow and deepenthere must be regular, two-way communication
- How do we communicate with God?
- First of all, God has taken the initiative to communicate with us
- He communicates to us PRIMARILY through His Word
- But God also communicates to us by means of His Spirit
- Since His Spirit lives within us, He can easily speak to our minds
- His Spirit can speak to us through the gift of prophecy, when another person is being used by the His to speak words of comfort and encouragement
- God has chosen to communicate with us in these two ways
- We only have only one way of communicating with GodPRAYER
- In PRAYER we can praise the perfections of God
- In PRAYER we can thanks God for His many blessings

- In PRAYER we can confess our sins and failures
- In PRAYER we can call up God for His provision
- YOU AND I DETERMINE THE QUALITY OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
- BECAUSE YOU AND I DECIDE HOW MUCH WE'RE GOING TO PRAY
- Little prayerLittle relationship and little joy
- Growing prayer Growing relationship
- Great prayer Great relationship and great joy
- Jesus promised that as we pray according to His will...as we pray in His Name two things will happen:
- (1) Jesus will answer the prayer so that our Father will be glorified

John 14:13

13Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

- (2) We will experience a fullness of joy

John 16:24

24Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

- When there is wonderful communication in a relationship, there will be joy
- Living the Christian life without a growing and joyful relationship with God through prayer is like being married without experiencing intimacy
- If a man and a woman are married, and rarely experience real heart-to-heart communication ... if they rarely experience joyful physical intimacy, the marriage degenerates into one of dull duty
- A marriage without the joys and satisfactions of emotional and physical intimacy becomes silent and boring

- Spouses drift from one anotherand they find themselves being attracted to other people
- THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD BECOME ATTRACTIVE TO US BECAUSE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD HAS BECOME DULL
- We love the things of this world because we have a dull relationship with God ...
- A husband and wife must communicate in order to experience joy in their relationshipthe more emotional communication and the more intimate their physical relationship with one another, the greater the joy
- That's the way it is with our relationship with God If we enjoy communicating with God our relationship will be fulfilling
- If we enjoy hearing God speak to us through His Word, and we speak often to Him in prayer, our relationship with Him will deepen
- We can't even keep the commandments of God if we're not communicating with Godlisten to what John Piper has to say about the reality of our communication with God

Prayer without meditation on the Word of God will disintegrate into human spirituality. It will simply reflect our own fallen ideas and feelings - not God's.

Meditation (on the Word), without the humility of desperate prayer, will create proud legalism or hopeless despair. Without prayer we try to fulfill the Word in our own strength and think we are succeeding and so become proud Pharisees; or we will realize we are not succeeding and give up in despair.

*These are the only alternatives for those who try to live the Word of God without the Spirit of God - that is, those who try to separate the discipline of meditation from the **DEPENDENCE ON PRAYER***

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP

- Jesus began teaching us how to pray by beginning to think about the relationship that He purchased for us with his Father
- His first instruction in teaching us to pray is to begin with the words: "Our Father in Heaven"
- What does it mean to be adopted by God?

- What does it mean to be able to call your Creator “Father”
- What are the privileges that you have been granted as a child of God?

YOU HAVE ACCESS TO HIM AT ALL TIMES

- You are no stranger to God ...He has chosen you as His adopted child
- Think of it ...the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe...the Great I AM.... has become your Father
- James calls God the “Father of lights” because He is the Creator of the sun and the stars and the moon
- God is sustaining the universeruling all nations.....yet he knows you by name and will always draw near to you when you choose to draw near to Him in prayer
- When Jesus died on Calvary, the curtain in the Temple was ripped apart ...no longer would anything keep us from entering the holy of holies
- There is no barrier between ourselves and our Father who dwells in heaven
- God is never an absentee fatherwe are only absentee children
- The only thing that spoils the relationship is sin
- God doesn’t even reject us when we are stubbornly sinning and He is displeased with us
- One of the most beautiful verses in the Old Testament in which God expresses His Father heart is

Jeremiah 31:20

20 Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the Lord.

- If you have been born again of God’s Spirit and have become God’s child, your Heavenly Father will always be merciful to you
- As we confess our sin in prayer, God will restore the relationship fully

YOU HAVE A FATHER WHO WILL NEVER REJECT YOU

- We all desire a loving and caring earthly father
- If we've had fathers who have been unloving, unconcerned and unavailable we may struggle with feelings of rejection
- Even if you are fatherless ...even if your earthly father has rejected youyou have a loving Father in heaven who will never reject you
- He is always loving, kind, compassionate and caring
- The psalmist praised God as being the helper of the fatherless

Psalm 10:14

14... You have been the helper of the fatherless.

- Hosea tells us that God is merciful to orphans

Hosea 14:3

In you the orphan finds mercy.”

- And David assures us that God will always care for the one whom is rejected

Psalm 27:10

10For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.

YOU HAVE BEEN ADOPTED INTO A DIVINE FAMILY

- It is the greatest privilege in life to have been chosen by the Father to become a son or daughter through faith in Jesus Christ
- Yes ... we have forgiveness but we have so much more!

John 1:12

12But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

- God hasn't just removed His condemnation and declared us to be righteous
- God hasn't just brought us out of bondage and destitution into a place of safety and peace
- We have these things and so much more!

- We have been granted an even closer relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ
- Early in Jesus' ministry He once said:

Mark 3:35

35Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”

- Both Matthew and John noted how after Jesus' resurrection, He referred to His disciples as His brothers

Matthew 28: 10

10Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

John 20:17

17Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

- And if might think that He was only referring to His disciples who lived with Him for the three years of His public ministry, the writer of Hebrews takes out all uncertainty

Hebrews 2:11-13

11For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, 12saying, “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.” 13And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Behold, I and the children God has given me.”

- The Savior loves you with such affection that He is not ashamed to call you his brother
- You and I have become heirs with Christ

Galatians 4:7

7So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

CONCLUSION

- What joy is ours as children of God
- What grace we have been given by our heavenly Father
- How privileged we've become

- The Great I AM has become our Father
- The Father of Lights, the Creator, has become our Father
- The Savior has become our brother
- We are members of the family of God!
- We have a relationship with God in which He speaks to us and we can speak to Him
- We have the great privilege of speaking to Our Father any time we desire ... day or night, 24/7
- We have a promise to be rewarded by our Father when we speak with Him
- We have a promise that requests made according to His will be fulfilled so that the Father will be glorified
- We have the promise of fullness of joy
- Church, why then would we not pray without ceasing?
- The door that we shut when we go into our private place of prayer becomes a door opening to the throne room of heaven
- In this place our lives will be transformed and we will find our greatest joys
In this place, we will find our greatest joy