

# Praying to God Our Father

*Lord's Day*

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**Bible Text:** Psalm 103

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Tonight we are going to look together at Jesus' instruction in the first petition of the Lord's Prayer where he says, "Pray... Our Father which art in heaven."<sup>1</sup> Not the first petition, in the introduction to the Lord's Prayer.

And in connection with that, let's read from the Heidelberg Catechism. You can find it in the back of the Psalter immediately following the songs and it is Lord's Day 46, questions and answers 120 and 121. This is the catechism's explanation of the introduction to the Lord's Prayer. Lord's Day 46, question and answers 120 and 121.

Why has Christ commanded us to address God thus: "Our Father"? That immediately, in the very beginning of our prayer, he might excite in us a childlike reverence for, and confidence in God, which are the foundation of our prayer: namely, that God is become our Father in Christ, and will much less deny us what we ask of him in true faith, than our parents will refuse us earthly things.

Why is it here added, "Which art in heaven"? Lest we should form any earthly conceptions of God's heavenly majesty, and that we may expect from his almighty power all things necessary for soul and body.

Now we read from the Scriptures in the book of Psalms, Psalm 103. And as we read it just remember this that the instances in which God is called our Father in the Old Testament are very few, less than you can count on two hands. And this is one of the instances in verse 13. And it is in the midst of this beautiful psalm on the mercy of God.

Psalm 103.

Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Sho satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2

The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.<sup>2</sup>

As we come to the beginning of the Lord's Prayer tonight, let us be reminded that we need instruction in prayer. The disciples, we saw last week in Luke chapter 11, saw Jesus praying and they came to Jesus and they said to Jesus, "Teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples [to pray]."<sup>3</sup>

And last week we looked at our need of prayer. We need to pray because we are dependent on God not only for all things, but also because of sin, because our great need is the forgiveness of our sin, but also because in our sin we forget God. We are not conscious of God as we should be. And so God has given us the ability to communicate with him, to think about him, to talk to him and he opens his hear to us through prayer. But we need to be taught to pray because as the Bible says we should pray without ceasing and it is not true of us that we do this.

But as we learn about prayer we should not only learn what prayer is and we should not only learn how to pray, but it is also something that we should put into practice. It is something that we must do. No one of us should say, "I am satisfied with my prayer life and I have arrived as far as prayer is concerned." In fact, the more the believer the prays the more he feels the need of prayer.

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 103:1-22.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 11:1.

And so Jesus teaches us in the Scriptures to pray. And he gives to us the Lord's Prayer as a model prayer. It is a prayer that can be prayed. It stands alone as a prayer, but it is also a model prayer, a perfect prayer after which we should pattern all of our prayers. And in this prayer Jesus teaches us especially the content of prayer, the petitions that we should have in our prayers. And as we are going to see next week there is a big emphasis in the Lord's Prayer on God and the worship of God more than on our own needs.

But Jesus doesn't only teach us in the Lord's Prayer what we should pray, the content of prayer, but he also teaches us the manner of prayer, how we should pray. And that is here in the beginning of the Lord's Prayer when he teaches us to approach God as our Father, to say, in the beginning of our prayers, "Our Father which art in heaven."<sup>4</sup>

And this evening we want to look at that under the theme, "Praying to God our Father." And we will notice three things. First, God as Father and then in the second place approaching God as Father and then in the third place praying for the family of God.

First of all, we want to know what does Jesus mean when he says we should call God our Father. And the word "Father," you know, is a family term. It refers to the head of the home, one of the members of the family, the one that God has put as the care giver in the home.

And the biblical idea of fatherhood is quite different than the way that the world today will view a father. Some in our society simply view as father as one who fathers children, the biological connection. But the Scriptures mean much more than that by father.

And as we come tonight to look at what it means that God is our Father, there is a sense in which we do need to look at the earthly relationship of father and children. But there is also a sense in which we ought not to limit ourselves to that.

The catechism says that we should form no earthly conceptions of God. And some people don't really know what a good earthly father is. Maybe that is some of your lives' experiences as well. And so it is important tonight as we think about God as Father, that we look first at him to understand what Father is and look at the Scriptures to understand what Father is and see that the earthly is merely a reflection of the heavenly.

There is no perfect earthly father. The best fathers are still weak and sinful, but God is the perfect God and Father. And that is important for us to begin with God because then we can be comforted as we understand that we should approach God as Father. And then also we learn what a true father is and we learn to pattern ourselves in our homes after God.

Now to understand what it means that God is Father we must begin with God's relationship to his own son Jesus Christ. The Bible calls him the Father and Jesus the only begotten Son. And over and over in his ministry Jesus calls God his Father. This is his favorite name that he uses in reference to God. And that is quite different than what

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2

you find in the Old Testament. And that is because the truth of God as Father becomes apparent and is most clearly revealed in the Scripture only as you come to God through Jesus Christ. And God is the Father of his people in and through the merits of Jesus Christ.

We are the children of God, but we are the adopted children of God. Jesus is the eternal and natural Son of God.

Now this is important because it was popular, especially about 50 years ago to speak of the brotherhood of men and the fatherhood of God. And it was popular in Christian circles even for people to join hands with others of other religions. It didn't matter if you were a Jew or Muslim. And the teaching was we are all brothers because we are all human and we all have one God and we all have one Father. And so the fatherhood of God became understood as this universal relationship of God to man.

Now it is true that father does include the idea of giving natural life, a biological connection, That is true in earthly fatherhood. But fatherhood is much more than that and God as Father—in the way that Jesus uses the terms—doesn't refer to God giving life to all men. And just because we are human, God is our Father. And that has cheapened Christianity. It has denied Christ as the necessity and the way, the only way to the Father.

Instead, if we look at the Scriptures we find that this idea of the Fatherhood of God creates a distinction among humans. And we learn as we look at the Scripture that God is only the Father of those who, by faith, come to him through Jesus Christ. And you see that in John chapter one, in John chapter one verses 12 and 13. And you remember that John chapter one is really the introduction of the Savior, the Word that became flesh.

And then in John one verse 11 it says this. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."<sup>5</sup> That's the Jews.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.<sup>6</sup>

And those verses make it very plain that not everybody has the privilege of being called a Son of God, but these are the ones who are the sons of God, those who received him. That is, John says, those who believed on his Son, on Christ. And these were born not of flesh, not natural sons, but these are born of God, born of the Holy Spirit. And it is through the work of regeneration that God gives his people the capacity to believe. And as they believe and receive Jesus Christ they come into this relationship of being the sons and daughters of God.

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<sup>5</sup> John 1:11.

<sup>6</sup> John 1:12-13.

You see that same distinction created in 2 Corinthians chapter six. And the apostle Paul here is talking about the spiritual separation of the people of God from the world. 2 Corinthians chapter six, he begins in verse 16 by saying:

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.<sup>7</sup>

So is God the Father of all? No. God is a Father of a holy people who separate themselves from the world.

Romans eight verses 14 and following, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”<sup>8</sup>

And it is a dangerous teaching to say that God is the Father of all men because then there is no need to preach the gospel. There is no need anymore to preach Jesus as the Savior and as the only way to the Father. Then it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if you are Muslim or Roman Catholic or whatever you are. You don't need to believe in Jesus because God is your Father.

But the Scriptures teach that it is only through faith and only by the work of the Spirit, being born again, that we are the children of God. Not everyone has the right to be called a son or a daughter of God.

And so that is the first thing. We must understand the biblical idea of God as Father in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ.

And then the second thing to understand about the word father in Scripture is this, that it is a term of intimacy. We read Psalm 103 and here the psalmist is talking about the mercy of God and the pity that God has towards his people and he says, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.”<sup>9</sup>

And he is talking about one of the characteristics of a good father. And this is that he is tender towards his children. He shows affection. He shows compassion. He has a deep love for his children.

That is what a father's relationship should be to his children. That is what God's relationship is to us. The God whom we address in prayer is the high and the holy and the just and the sovereign God. But he is a God who loves his people with a deep, eternal

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<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:16-18.

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:14.

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 103:13.

love and he sees us in our misery and he pities us and he comes in his pity to do something for us, to rescue us from our misery because he delights in us.

That is what the word father means, the God of affection, a God who condescends to us in our low estate.

Now how does that affect our prayers? Well, of course, it affects our prayers in this way, that we can come to God. If I know that somebody cares about me and loves me, then there is a willingness to go to that person. And so it is with God. We can think of him as an affectionate, compassionate God as we pray.

But God as Father also teaches us in the Scriptures that God is a God who chastens his children. In Proverbs chapter three and verse 12 it is put this way that he chastens every son in whom he delights. In the book of Hebrews chapter 12 verses five and following really fills out that idea. God doesn't chasten the sons in whom he is disgusted, but he chastens the sons in whom he delights. And Hebrews 12 puts it this way, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."<sup>10</sup>

And God being Father means this, that sometimes he is going to chasten us in our life, send us through difficult times to increase our faith and our obedience. And when we go through those difficult times in life we shouldn't think that God doesn't care, but we should remember that God loves us and that it is in his love that he puts us through these circumstances in life. It is because he desires for us to share in his holiness that he chastens us as a Father, just as an earthly father would to teach us so that we grow in obedience and faith. He delights in us.

Then also the biblical idea of Father speaks of the intimate involvement of God in our lives. And I mean by that not just that God is a God of affection, but that God knows, God as Father knows our situation and our needs. And that is exactly what Jesus is teaching in the gospels in Matthew chapter six and Luke chapter 11 which we read last week.

He says, "You earthly fathers, if your son asks for bread you don't give him a stone. If he asks for a fish, you don't give him a scorpion. If he asks for an egg you don't give him a snake." And then he said this. "So with God, for your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask."

That is the idea of God as Father. He is involved in the lives of his children. He knows their needs. And because he knows their needs he is a God who will also meet the needs of his people. And those needs are physical as well as spiritual and Jesus says God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to them that ask him. God meets the needs of his people as a Father.

And so there is great promise in this name that Jesus gives to us, Father. Call God your

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<sup>10</sup> Hebrews 12:6.

Father when you pray. And be sure that he will receive you in love, that he knows your needs and that he will minister to your needs.

One other idea in Scripture with regard to God as Father is that God is a Father who teaches us. Ephesians six verse four speaks of earthly fathers and it says, “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”<sup>11</sup>

And, again, the earthly father is patterned after God the heavenly Father and this is what God does. He teaches his children in many different ways that God teaches and corrects us. He encourages us. He consoles us. He charges us as an earthly father. He does that in the experiences of our life. He does that out of his Word. He does that primarily in the preaching of the gospel where Christ the herald speaks and God comes and speaks to us and prepares us spiritually to live in this world.

And so these are some of the biblical ideas related to God as Father. And all that bears on our approach to God in prayer. That is what Jesus is teaching us here. He is teaching us how we should think of God when we come to him in prayer, how we should approach him, the kinds of attitudes that we should have as we come to him in prayer. And so if we think of God as our Father that will bear on our attitude as we approach him in prayer.

And that means, in the first place, that we can be intimate with God and confident as we come. We can go to God as we would go to a friend, as we would go to a husband or a wife, a loved one because we can know that God will receive us.

In Galatians chapter four it says, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”<sup>12</sup> And the word “Abba” it is an Old Testament word which is the intimate way in which children would refer to their fathers like a little child today would say, “Daddy.”

And God taught his people to use a term of intimacy, “Abba,” when they came to him in prayer.

Think of that joyful sound of a child at the end of the day and father has been gone all day long and he comes home and maybe nobody else in the house is very excited about his coming home, but the little child is so excited and runs, Daddy. God is teaching us, Jesus is teaching us that we should think of God in such a close intimate way. God is interested in us as his children and so we can be intimate with him.

He is not withdrawn. Sometimes earthly fathers are withdrawn. They don't have time. They are bored. They are not interested and then the children withdraw themselves from the father, but that is not true of our Father. And so we can approach him with intimacy.

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<sup>11</sup> Ephesians 6:4.

<sup>12</sup> Galatians 4:6.

And then confidence. The Scriptures say in Hebrews chapter four and Hebrews chapter 10 that we can come boldly to the throne of grace, boldly.

Now if the Scriptures didn't say that I wouldn't dare to tell you to do it, to come boldly to God, but the Scriptures say come boldly to the throne of grace. That doesn't mean we come presumptuously, that we come with a full, hearty, brazen, attitude, but boldly means this. We have access to God. We can be confident that he will receive us as we come to him. We don't have to be afraid when we come to God in prayer that he is going to turn us away from him.

We talked last week about a king, a king you need to make an appointment to get in with the king, with the president. But if he is a family man his little child can come running in and he won't turn the child away. So it is with us and God. We don't have to fear when we come to him in prayer because he is our Father.

That is what the apostle Paul is talking about in the book of Ephesians chapter two. He says, "For through him," that is through Christ, "we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."<sup>13</sup>

And then in chapter three verse 12 he says, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."<sup>14</sup>

Think of all the words that he uses there. He says we have boldness and access with confidence as we believe in Jesus Christ. John one. And as we being born of the Spirit have the right to be called the sons of God, we don't have to be afraid as we come to God. We can come with confidence in our prayers that he will hear us, that he will receive us and it is the saving work of Christ to give us this access to God.

We don't think of that often enough. We think of the saving work of Christ as the forgiveness of sins. We get beyond that and we understand that the saving work of Christ is the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the ability to discern between right and wrong and to desire to live in godliness and to fight against sin, sanctification, justification, sanctification.

But now the saving work of Christ is also this that he gives us access to God. He opens the way for us to come and have this intimate relationship and reception with God.

And the question for us tonight is this, for you tonight is this. Do you enjoy this intimacy with God? When you say, "Our Father..." These are things are that come into your mind or, perhaps, you are thinking that is too good to be true.

"I can't come with that boldness. I can't come with that confidence to God."

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<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 2:18.

<sup>14</sup> Ephesians 3:12.



And then if that is what you are saying, what is it that keeps you back from that? Sometimes it is sinful doubt. Then the Word of God says to look away from yourself and your sin even though you may understand it and it may be great and you may mourn over it, look away from self because that is what faith does. It looks to Christ. The greater your sense of sin, the greater should be your confidence in Jesus Christ. Or sometimes in our lives it is this that our sinfulness stands between us and God. That is what the prophets had to say to Israel. "Your sin has separated from your God."

Think of an illustration, a child. Children will come with confidence to their parents. Sometimes they will come with too much confidence and ask for too many things from their parents. But now think of a child that has done something wrong, he broke the window. How does he come to his father? He comes cowering. And it may be that your own sin and your living in sin and your lack of repentance stands between you and God. And then in faith, too, you need to look away to Christ in repentance and trust.

And so, first, we can come to God with intimacy and confidence. And then also we can come to God and we should come to God through humility and reverence.

Jesus taught us to pray not only our Father, but our Father which art in heaven. And the catechism reminds us that he said that so that we shouldn't form any earthly conceptions of God. Yes, he is our Father. Yes, we should think of him in that relationship of a father to his children. But let's not limit him as we would limit an earthly father.

God is our Father which is in heaven.

When the Bible says, when Jesus says he is our Father in heaven Jesus doesn't mean by that, that, well, that is where he is and he is nowhere else. He doesn't mean to limit God to one place. But he wants us to think of the heavenly majesty of God.

We read about that, as well, in Psalm 103 at the end of the psalm, verse 19. After it has talked about all the mercy of God and his forgiveness, he doesn't remember our sins. He removes them from us as far as the east is from the west, his compassion is so great, he has a pity like a father and he does that even though man is so nothing. His days are like the grass and the wind passeth away, passeth over it and it is gone. That is man. And yet God looks on him.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him."<sup>15</sup>

And the psalm, Psalm 103 ends this way. "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all."<sup>16</sup>

And the psalmist is saying the same thing that Jesus is saying. You may think of God as Father and you may understand his mercy and his compassion and his pity, but don't forget that he is a Father in heaven.

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<sup>15</sup> Psalm 103:13.

<sup>16</sup> Psalm 103:19.

And perhaps the best explanation in all of the Scriptures for what that is and the best response recorded in all of Scripture for to that is in Isaiah chapter six. This is the chapter in which Isaiah is called to be prophet. And Isaiah sees a vision in Isaiah chapter six.

He says:

I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain [that is, with two] he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.<sup>17</sup>

The Scriptures don't very often describe for us the appearance of God because no man can see God and live. Remember, Moses saw just the back parts of God and his face was shining bright for the rest of his life. And here you have a vision of God.

In the book of Revelation you have some as well. And God is presented simply as a shining light, a sapphire stone. It is something like that here in Isaiah chapter six only Isaiah sees the response of the angels, sinless angels. And these angels have six wings. With two they covered their face and with two they cover their feet and with two they fly. And then they cry to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God of hosts."<sup>18</sup> This is God in heaven.

And look at Isaiah's response in verse five. "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."<sup>19</sup>

And Jesus is saying, "Remember, your Father is in heaven."

And you need that kind of an attitude, that kind of a respect, that kind of a reverence, that kind of a humility as you come to God in prayer. Yes, he is our Father, but he is God. Don't forget it.

And so we come to God with reverence, with respect, with awe in prayer.

We should let the Bible, let God's Word shape our thinking about God. God is God and we should have no earthly conception of him.

And the catechism when it says that means we should not reflect our bad experiences which maybe we don't understand what a father is really like. We shouldn't let from our

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<sup>17</sup> Isaiah 6:1-4.

<sup>18</sup> Isaiah 6:3.

<sup>19</sup> Isaiah 6:5.

earthly experiences, that reflect on our relationship to God. God isn't like an earthly father.

The catechism also means this. We shouldn't let our bad attitudes towards earthly fathers be carried over into our attitude towards God. God is worthy of our respect and honor. And so we should approach him with reverence and humility whether in public prayers or private prayers. We must let the teaching of Scripture form our conceptions of God.

A child who, out of love, respects his parents, respects his father, will treat his father differently to the way he would treat others. He recognizes that there is an intimacy, that there is a closeness. But the child understands as well there are certain lines that you don't cross in your relationship to your dad.

You don't talk to your dad like you would talk to and treat your little brother. He is your dad. He is your father. And our Father in heaven is worthy of all respect and reverence.

And the way that we show the highest respect for God as Father in heaven is this. That we believe the gospel of his Son. Because one who doesn't believe in Jesus Christ doesn't confess and doesn't pay respect to God as Father. We believe and through faith we become the sons of God.

Well, there is one more thing that Jesus teaches us in this petition and that is in that first little word in the Lord's Prayer, "Our... Our Father," he teaches us to pray. And he means by that that when you pray, as that quote in the bulletin has it, you never pray just for yourself. But you pray as part of the family of God. God is the Father of many sons and daughters. And what we pray, Jesus teaches us, to remember the family of God, to pray not just for ourselves, but also for others.

Now what the catechism has in mind and what Jesus has in mind is especially this, that we pray for others of the family of God, other believers in their needs. Now, it is important for us to understand before we talk about what that means that we do have to pray, as well, for the ungodly. We are commanded to do that in the Scriptures.

In 1 Timothy chapter two the apostle teaches us to, "For kings, and for all that are in authority."<sup>20</sup> And what we are praying for there is for their salvation because God, he says, "Will have all men to be saved."<sup>21</sup> He doesn't mean all men head for head, but God will save men from every walk of life.

And so we ought to pray for the ungodly. Jesus says, "Love your enemies and... pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 1 Timothy 2:2.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Timothy 2:4.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 5:44.

Think of what Paul himself did before Agrippa. He said to Agrippa, “I would that not only you, but all of these who hear me were altogether as I am except these bonds,” That is they were believers.

And he says in Romans nine verse three and 10 verse one his heart’s desire toward God was that Israel, his fellow Jews, might be saved.

Now we don’t pray those prayers for the ungodly simply for our sake. There is a benefit for us in praying them. But we pray them for the sake, for the salvation of the ungodly. And as we pray them we learn to live as we should towards them as a living testimony and in love toward the neighbor.

But Jesus, and the catechism as well, teaches us to pray especially for the family of God. Or, as the apostle Paul puts it, “especially [those] who are of the household of faith.”<sup>23</sup>

And it is important for us as we go to God in prayer and think of him as a Father to remember that we are part of the family, that we have spiritual brothers and sisters. We don’t come simply as individuals. It is wrong to come independently to God. We are part of a body. And so when I pray to God I must remember before God others and intercessory prayer, prayers for others, the important part of every prayer of the child of God.

Paul makes that very plain in his writings, too. If you study the writings of the apostle Paul in almost every one of his epistles he makes reference to his prayers for those to whom he writes, intercessory prayers. And he says to the believers, “[And] brethren, pray for us.”<sup>24</sup>

And Jesus says, “Pray... Our Father which art in heaven.”<sup>25</sup>

That is important for members of the Church. Sometimes a member of the Church will say, “Well, what can I contribute to the life of the Church? What can I give for the life of the Church to support and to help others?”

I spoke at a woman’s conference and a lady there said that she visited her grandmother in the nursing home and her grandmother said this. “I can’t do anything anymore for anyone but pray for them.”

What can you do? You can pray for fellow believers, for the work of God and for the Church of God in the earth. That is good. There is a unifying effect as we pray for one another, unifying even in this sense that there is peace between believers.

A brother in the Church is angry with you and he is going to come to you in anger. He is

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<sup>23</sup> Galatians 6:10.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2.

reacting to something. How are you going to respond? Will you begin with a prayer for him? Will you pray for him? That will help you in your response to him.

So we pray for one another in the Church of God.

We say, “Our Father, I am one of the family and my prayers are weak and my prayers are feeble, but I pray for others. I pray as part of the Church of God and my prayers become a part of the mighty stream of prayer that goes up to God in heaven.”

But not only should we pray for others, we should pray with others. And there is nothing more encouraging for a discouraged believer, than that other believers will come and pray with him or with her.

If you look at the ministry of Jesus you see this. There were many times that Jesus prayed on his own. There were many times that Jesus prayed with his disciples. But there were also other times when Jesus in the hour of greatest temptation asked his disciples to come with him and pray with him for his encouragement and strengthening.

And James says, “If you are sick and you can’t pray, call for the elders and let them pray with you.”

Believers, as believers, we ought to do this with one another and we do this in our families. We do this in our homes. We do this in our marriages, but it ought to be something that we are willing to do with one another in our life together. We do it in our congregational prayers. We do it in our Bible studies and we should do it more.

The prayers that we pray are really an opening of our souls to God and there is nothing that will bring greater intimacy between believers in that they pray together, “Our Father...” Jesus teaches us to pray, “Our Father which art in heaven.”<sup>26</sup>

And so as we think about these things let us have the proper approach and attitude towards God in prayer and let us come with confidence, but also with reverence, remembering others in our prayers. Amen.

*Our Father in heaven, we thank thee for Jesus’ instruction to us in prayer. We pray, Lord, that as we put the instruction of Jesus into practice we may grow in this important not only duty, but this important privilege that we have of prayer. May it be used for our spiritual growth as well. Forgive, Lord, our sins and hear us we ask for Jesus’ sake. Amen.*

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.