

GOD THE (OUR) FATHER

The Lord's Prayer directs us to pray to our Father who is in heaven, whose name is to be revered. We are to pray for the coming of his kingdom and that his will be done in this earth just as it is done in heaven. When we pray to our heavenly Father, we are to ask for provision of our daily bread – physical sustenance. The Prayer seeks forgiveness of our debts as we are to forgive our debtors. Here is Matthew's rendition of the Lord's Prayer, together with probative context from Matthew chapter 6, verses 1-15, and take note of the frequent references to God as our heavenly Father:

1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

¹³ **And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.**

¹⁴ **For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:**

¹⁵ **But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

We serve a triune God – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Let us look a bit closer at our God in his capacity as our Father.

The Bible describes God as a father to his children in multiple ways, including love, compassion, guidance, protection and provision. Some have earthly fathers who are MIA. But even **fathers of our flesh** are only in action **for a few days [] after their own pleasure.** (Hebrews 12:9, 10). Our heavenly father is what counts.

Let us consider some of aspects of God the Father as revealed in the Bible for our benefit and understanding:

Love and compassion: Scripture says: **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.** (Psalm 103:13, 14). God often compares himself with a father, and it is by considering what enters into the parental character that we get our best conceptions of this aspect of the character of God. What we need to grasp is the natural affection of the parent for the child, the tender love that is borne by the parent for his offspring and the disposition to care for the child's needs. A natural father, under ordinary circumstances, pities his children when in any affliction, disorder or distress. A sample of this powerful love is presented at Luke 15:17-25:

¹⁷ **And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!**

¹⁸ **I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,**

¹⁹ **And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.**

²⁰ **And he arose, and 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.**

²¹ **And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.**

²² **But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:**

²³ **And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:**

²⁴ **For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.**

Guide and Protector:

Bible verses are legion revealing that God the Father is our guide and our protector.

As a guide, God the Father is our shepherd that causes us to lie down in green pastures and leads us in paths of righteousness beside still waters. (Psalm 23:1-4). **The meek will he guide in judgment[.]** (Psalm 25:9). **I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.** (Psalm 32:8). And Deuteronomy 31:8 tells us that **he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee[.]**

As our protector, in addition to numerous passages in the Psalms, here are but a few samples: **The God of my rock; in him will I trust; he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my savior; thou savest me from violence.** (2 Samuel 22:3). And this hidden gem as Paul was wrapping up his second letter to Timothy: **And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.** (2 Timothy 2:18).

Provider:

Scripture clearly tells us that God the Father provides for his children, mirroring the earthly father's responsibility to care for his family. I recognize this is an obligation no longer respected by many in this fallen nation and world. But that doesn't lessen that responsibility of old. **But if any man provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.** (1 Timothy 5:8). Here is what our heavenly Father promises in this regard:

²⁵ **Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?**

²⁶ Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

²⁷ Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

²⁸ And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

²⁹ And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

³⁰ Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

³¹ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

³⁴ Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:25-34).

Discipline:

Like faithful earthly fathers, God the Father disciplines those he loves for their good and growth. **For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.** (Hebrews 12:6-8). It is a universal rule that God the Father sends trials on those whom he truly loves. Indeed, *by his chastisements he shows that he has a paternal care for us. He does not treat us with neglect and unconcern, as a father often does his illegitimate child. The very fact that he corrects us shows that he has toward us a father's feelings, and exercises toward us a paternal care. If he did not, he would let us go on without any attention, and leave us to pursue a course of sin that would involve us in ruin. To restrain and govern a child; to correct him when he errs, shows that there is a parental solicitude for him, and that he is not an outcast.* (Barnes). **For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.** (Proverbs

3:12). **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.** (Revelation 3:19).

God the father is the father of our Lord:

Not only is God the Father all of those things previously discussed towards his chosen people, but he is the father of our Lord, Jesus Christ. While on this earth, Jesus took Peter, James and John into a high mountain, and while there, **a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.** (Matthew 17:5-8).

Peter speaks to this event and to this role of God the Father: **For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.** (2 Peter 1:16, 17). God the Father, speaking from heaven, bore witness to his precious son and directed that we hear him. This is that same entity referred to in Deuteronomy 18:15 to whom we are to hearken as our very bread of life: **The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken[.]**

God as the Father of this prophet-son was part of the plan of salvation from its inception. Remember, the emphasis of that voice from heaven was affirming Jesus' status as God's Son. This heavenly declaration solidified the unique relationship of our Savior with the Father and his divine identity as the Son of God. *This implies not only that Christ is peculiarly the Beloved of the Father, but that all they that are adopted to God by faith in Christ, are beloved, and graciously accepted, in and through him[.]* (Poole). **O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.** (John 17:25, 26).

A uniquely close relationship exists between God the Father and God the Son. There is nothing in the universe that can compare to this amazing and largely incomprehensible twosome. Here is a flavor as we can glean from Scripture:

The Son often refers to the Father using the term “Abba”, a term of affection highlighting this relationship of unity. **And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.** (Galatians 4:6).

God the Son is God the Father’s only child. **And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.** (John 1:14).

God the Father has generously and mercifully bestowed all things on God the Son. **The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.** (John 3:35, 36)

God the Father has given God the Son insight into the mighty works and machinations of the Father. **For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.** (John 5:20-23).

The works of God the Son are (and were) done in the Father’s name as an undeniable source of reliability and credibility. **[T]he works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.** (John 10:25). This is so to such an extent that there is no apparent distinction between the two. **I and my Father are one.** (John 10:30). This indivisible relationship is amazingly described by John, out of the mouth of Jesus himself, this way: **Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And**

whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (John 14:10-13).

The Son was (and is) obedient to the Father, even to the point of death. **And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.** (Philippians 2:8).

Elect are Heirs of the Father through the Son:

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (Galatians 4:7). The people of God have this amazing access to salvation and God the Father through and by virtue of this harmonious and indivisible relationship between God the Son and God the Father. The sheep are joint heirs with Christ. Paul describes this unfathomable reality as follows: **For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 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. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.** (Romans 8:14-17).

So, the children of God are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. An “heir” is one who is entitled to the estate (real, personal or title) of a deceased individual. An heir is often the child of that individual, but not always. An heir inherits valuables by virtue of the death of another. As heirs of Christ, the children of God benefit from all his promises, spiritual blessings through the Holy Spirit, eternal life and sharing in God’s glory, redeemed and glorified bodies and the Word.

In this context, Ephesians 3:6 is an interesting verse: **That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.** The Old Testament overflows with God’s promises to the ancient Jews. But we are assured those promises apply equally to the Lord’s sheep, Jew or Gentile. Stated otherwise, the Gentiles *have an equal right to the heavenly inheritance with the believing Jews.* (Poole). Dr. Gill provides a rather comprehensive presentation of the scope of this passage: *That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs,.... With the Jews, of all the blessings of grace, of lasting salvation, and of the eternal, incorruptible, and never fading inheritance in heaven; that they should be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus, and inherit all things: and heirs they are by being Christ's, and on account of their special adoption through him, and their justification by his*

righteousness; and which appears by their regeneration to a lively hope of the inheritance reserved for them in heaven:

and of the same body: coalesce in one and the same church state, with the believing Jews, under one and the same head, Christ Jesus, and participate of the same grace from him, being all baptized into one body, and made to drink of the same Spirit, and enjoy the same privileges and immunities.

Presently, God has not fully **cast away** (Romans 11:1) the Jews but a remnant remains **according to the election of grace**. (Romans 11:5). We close with this admonition to the Gentile sheep during these closing days from Romans chapter 11:

¹³ For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

¹⁴ If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

¹⁵ For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

¹⁶ For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

¹⁷ And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

¹⁸ Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

¹⁹ Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

²⁰ Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

²¹ For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.