

"YOUR FATHER KNOWETH"

**"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of."
– MATTHEW 6:8.**

SHORTLY after the beginning of our Lord's ministry, He gave the discourse commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount. The disciples had not yet become sons of God in the full, proper sense of the word; indeed, they could not be received into sonship until Pentecost. They were members of the fallen race, under the same condemnation as other men. The very highest claim that they could make was that which the Jews made – that of being servants of God. But now, as recorded in John 1:12, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power [privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; who were begotten, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

This spirit-begetting was not possible in its full, proper sense until Jesus had made reconciliation for the sins of the world, or, at least, had prepared the way for reconciliation by His own death. In one sense of the word, however, His death had already occurred; namely, in that He had presented Himself a living sacrifice, and that the Father had accepted that sacrifice. But that death must be finished, and Jesus must ascend into the presence of God and present the merit of His sacrifice, before the Divine blessing would descend upon any, permitting them to be the sons of God.

THE FATHER OF THE CHURCH

We see, therefore, that Jesus spoke in an anticipatory, or prophetic, sense as to their relationship to God. Because they believed in Him and were seeking to do His will, they were in full line with God's arrangement for their becoming sons. Just as after

a person has adopted a child and while the papers are in process of being drawn up in legal form, the child might be spoken of as a son, or he might address the one adopting him as Father or Mother; so these would have the privilege of addressing God as their Father and their privilege would depend on their faith. The majority of the Jews did not have this faith, and when Jesus said that He was the Son of God, they were about to take up stones to stone Him for blasphemy. But Jesus said that not only was He the Son of God, but that He would bring many sons to God; and He quoted from the Psalms in support of this assertion. – John 10:31-40; Psalm 82:6.

Thus our Lord spoke to His disciples as if they were already New Creatures, had already become sons of God and had already received the Holy Spirit, even though both He and they knew that this was not to be completely accomplished, until, as He told them, "not many days hence" they should actually and personally have received it – at Pentecost. Addressing the disciples from this standpoint the Master said, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of." These words are part of His Sermon on the Mount. As we read, "When He was set, His disciples came unto Him; and He opened His mouth and taught them." The multitude were not to call God Father, but they were to understand that those who had become the followers of the Lord Jesus could call Him Father.

The word Father implies a great deal when taken in conjunction with other Scriptures. God was the Father of Adam in the sense that He gave Adam his life. Jesus was not Adam's Father, although, as the Logos, He was the One particularly active in giving Adam life. By Adam's disobedience, this life was lost **[R5623 : page 39]** for himself and for all of his children. Not only life was lost, but the Spirit of the Lord was lost, and that included the relationship of sons.

THE EVERLASTING FATHER OF HUMANITY

After Adam, we find none called sons of God down to the time of Jesus. Jesus was the first Son of God after Adam; and since our Lord's time the Church have been called sons of God. (1 John 3:2.) The fact that we are called sons of God implies the begetting of a new life; for the old life which we inherited from Father Adam is gone. This new life which we have received is not from Jesus, but from the Father, Jesus being the channel through which this life comes to us. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... hath begotten us." (1 Peter 1:3.) We see that the arrangement for the world is somewhat different. God does not purpose to beget the world of the Holy Spirit, as He has the Church. On the contrary, we see that Jesus is to become the Everlasting Father of the world, in due time. (Isaiah 9:6.) That due time will be the great thousand-year Day of the Messianic Kingdom.

In that thousand-year Day Christ, as the great King, Mediator between God and men, will give life to humanity. We see that the life He will give will be human life. He will be the Father of humanity, because that human life which He will give them will be something that is His own. By His obedience to God's Plan He bought the right to give human life. Hence, in giving that life at His own cost, He is styled the Father of the human family. This will not mean that the world will not be considered sons of God, any more than a grandson would not be a son of the father and of the grandfather. Mankind will not receive their life directly from God, but indirectly through Christ – Christ is the Father and God the Grandfather. God does not speak in random terms, but with great exactness. This being true, we have great confidence in His Word.

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL

When Adam and his family became sinners, some of them went further than merely neglecting God. It was no fault of theirs

that they were cut off from Him. But they did not retain God in their minds, and so God gave them over to a reprobate mind. They became children of Satan in the sense that they became obedient to him. He adopted them into his family, they willingly accepting him and becoming obedient to him. Of course, Satan did not give life actually to the world, but they adopted him as their father by accepting his terms and becoming members of his family. To some of the human family our Lord said, "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." – John 8:44.

When Adam was rejected, he came under the sentence of death. He was left to shift for himself. The statement, You are under a curse of death, would mean, You cannot avoid dying – "Dying thou shalt die." There will be pestilences, earthquakes and famines. You **[R5624 : page 39]** will be subject to these because you are sinners. Mankind could not expect God to do anything for them when they were under death sentence; yet God has done much for them, even though they are sinners. He causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust. – Matthew 5:45.

When the Jews were called of God under the Law Covenant, it brought them under a special relationship to Him as servants. "Moses was faithful over his own House," a servant over the House of Israel. These servants were subject to some care, even as a caretaker in a great house would look after all the servants as well as the sons. While the son would have the more particular care, yet the servant would be cared for also.

Thus the Jews were invited to have a share in God's care. They were promised that everything would work together for their good. God would bless their flocks and herds, and would do them good if they would obey His statutes. They did not do so, and thus brought upon themselves chastisements. As we read the record of the people of Israel, we find that they were the most chastened

people of history, passing through the most wonderful experiences and disciplines, through which they were brought to a high religious attitude. So when our Lord came into the world, they were of the highest religious sentiment, of the most devoted sentiment, of all mankind. Many of them were prepared to have the special favor that Jesus came to give; namely, the privilege of becoming sons of God.

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH THE CHURCH

The sons of God during this Gospel Age are similarly under special favor of God and under special Covenant with Him. He has engaged to treat them as sons, not as servants; not as opposers or enemies, but as children. "God dealeth with you as with sons." (Hebrews 12:7.) With this assurance that God will deal with His people as with sons, we might be surprised that the saintly people have not been blessed, as those who are unsaintly, with money, health, temporal prosperity. We inquire how this is. Is God neglecting His part when He has promised that He will deal with these as with sons? We are not sons of God according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. Having been begotten of the Spirit, we are sons of God according to the New Creation, the interests of which are often best served by experiences which are not favorable to the flesh.

With these sons of God, the New Creature is the special thing in God's sight. The flesh matters little. And God wishes these sons to have the proper experiences that will bring them to the required development as sons of God on the spirit plane. This means that they must ultimately die according to the flesh. There is no other way of entering into the spirit nature than by dying according to the flesh. We must all follow in the footsteps of the Master.

The trials of the narrow way are special tests of the New Creature. How will the New Creature act under these trials and difficulties? Will he prove loyal to God when things seem

unfavorable to him according to the flesh? If so, the New Creature will grow strong; and the warfare between the two, the spirit and the flesh, will finally result in the victory of the New Creature, and in his birth in the First Resurrection, or Chief Resurrection, to the spirit nature, the Divine nature.

PROPER MENTAL ATTITUDE FOR PRAYER

The words of our text apply only to the New Creatures. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of." It is not necessary for us to use vain repetitions as the heathen do, asking God over and over again for blessings of a temporal kind. He knoweth what things we have need of; that is to say, whether we as New Creatures will be most profited in the abundance of wealth or in the absence of wealth; whether we as New Creatures will be most profited in the possession of health or otherwise. We are not to tell God what we wish. We are to give up our will in order that His will may be done. We are to pray, therefore, as Jesus prayed, "Not My will, but Thine be done"; for "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of." The heathen do not have God as their Father, and He is not **[R5624 : page 40]** supervising their affairs. They get certain common blessings that God is providing for all – sunshine and rain.

The prayer of God's people should not be for temporal things. We know of no Scriptural illustration where the spiritual sons of God asked definitely for temporal things and received an answer. We remember that St. Paul prayed three times very earnestly for the restoration of his eyesight. God would not give him the thing he asked for, but would give him that which would be better for him as a New Creature. And this affliction of poor eyesight, watery eyes, would help to keep him in remembrance of the fact that he was once a persecutor of the Lord's people. The Lord would not take away his affliction, but would give him the grace necessary. Presumably, when the Apostle learned that lesson, he did not pray for such things again; but doubtless it was to our benefit that he did

not find this out until he had prayed those three improper prayers. We learn from this that we should be in the attitude to say, "Lord, Thou knowest what I have need of. Give what is best."

THE MODEL PRAYER

Some might declare that this would not be the proper way to offer a petition – that we should ask God for something definite; for instance, if one needed a coat, he should ask for a coat. But our Father has said that we need not go into particulars. God knows that we have need of bread. Our petition, therefore, when we say, "Give us this day our daily bread," is not that we think that God would forget about it, but rather as an acknowledgement on our part that all we have – our food and everything else – comes from God. He knows what we have need of, and provides these things aside from our asking. Nevertheless, it is the Father's good pleasure that we should go to Him, asking forgiveness for our sins, realizing that He has made provision in advance for that forgiveness, and that only as we are merciful to others will He deal mercifully with us in respect to our trespasses. With regard to our food, we thank our Father as the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

We hallow His name – honor His name – put it first in our petitions, in our thoughts. The idea is not as to how much glory we can get; but, first of all, we mention our Father and His glorious name – we hallow His name, make it holy. It should be hallowed and revered everywhere in the whole world. Then we follow with the petition desiring that His Kingdom would come; for we realize that His Kingdom is the very thing that the whole world needs, and that He has promised that it shall come. This is merely to tell Him of our dependence upon Him, and our waiting for Him and for those things which He has promised and arranged for in His Kingdom. We are not merely *saying*, "Thy Kingdom come" – we are *waiting* for it, *expecting* it. Then comes in the mention of our necessities. He knoweth what things we have need of – whether it

be a full loaf, a half loaf or a quarter loaf, a small ration or a large one. Then we ask for protection from the Evil One.

There is no such request as, "My shoes are needing to be replaced with new shoes," or "My coat is getting glossy." The heathen, the world might pray for these things; but we are children of God, and are to conform our prayers to what He has said. We are to take for examples the prayers of Jesus and such prayers as the Apostles offered. These prayers are not so much requirements made of God, but telling Him we are depending upon Him, seeking to have no will of our own – merely sinking into His will, asking that His will be done in all our affairs. Then we are to live and act according to that will and according to those prayers.

