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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on

Sunday evening 24.10.71

71/I

Hymns 624, 1083, 274

Reading John 17

Text: Luke 11.2

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"And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."

I have already been speaking a little upon this verse, and of the fact that the Lord Jesus was in a certain place praying. What a wonderful example He was to His disciples, and to everyone of us, particularly myself, in regard to this sacred, holy exercise. I have been thinking what a wonderful mercy it is that the Majesty of heaven is approachable by a sinner. If this were not a sacred truth you and I would be lost to all eternity. It may be said that prayer is the life of a believer. It is a divine appointment whereby His poor, needy children are invited to betake themselves to their heavenly Father. It is confirming that we have encouragements to pray in the Psalms and the New Testament; "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.", "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" If our heavenly Father bestows upon us that gift we shall go to heaven, for the blessed teaching of the Holy Spirit in the heart is a divine preparation.

"Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give.
Long as they live should Christians pray;
For only while they pray they live."

As we read the Holy Scriptures we can see the value of prayer, and answers to prayer too, sometimes this has been in very remarkable interventions. The particular point I referred to this morning was what is recorded here in the prayer that the Lord taught His disciples, "Our Father which art in heaven". Our Father - there is something very sacred about this. God, the infinite God,

is God over all the earth, and its inhabitants are in His sight as grasshoppers and the nations as a drop of a bucket, but to His dear people He is a Father. What a sweet thought this is that solemnly, not lightly, if we have a hope in the blessed Gospel, we may use this title, "Our Father which art in heaven."

"Our Father" indicates a relationship. If God is our Father we are His children, and some sacred apprehension of this sometimes when engaged in this sacred exercise can affect our feelings in prayer, it can soften our spirit, humble us and produce repentance, faith and love. It opens the mouth, it is conducive to a sacred liberty when approaching to one Who has a love to us, that is if we are His children, - "Our Father which art in heaven". As our Father He had a love to us from all eternity. He pre-ordained everything necessary to our everlasting redemption as our Father. He gave His own beloved Son to complete that work which none but the Son of God could complete as our Father, and He bestows all spiritual blessings to His dear children through His Son Jesus Christ. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all His dear people that are in Christ come inside the 47th. chapter of John. What a blessed chapter that is, it seems at times in our feelings as we read it to take us away from this poor polluted world, and carry us up into heaven, seems almost to take us there. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

If God is our Father in Christ He is our Father to our everlasting glorification. I do not know what words can be more sacred than we have in the 17th. of John where the Lord says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (I have been thinking about that this afternoon, wondering whether I shall ever know that blessed experience). What glory is that? The glory of God in salvation through His beloved Son. How sweet it is to contemplate the glorious, blessed Trinity. I think sometimes of what we read in the Revelation, of what John saw; what did he see there? The Lamb as it had been slain - here is the glory of the

Father, shining in the Person of the Lamb in our eternal redemption. What an amazing wonder it will be to see Him. I know I have told you this before, but when a certain person asked an old minister in Sussex whether we should know our friends and relatives in heaven, that is as to their persons as we know them now, he said, "When I set my eyes on Him I shall never want to look at anyone else". What did Asaph say? He said "Whom have in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Can you say that? I have sometimes felt like this, that He will be my heaven; to see Him must be an honour and a glory that surpasses all our highest conceptions.

"Our Father which art in heaven". - this indicates that there is a love to Him in the heart, because He is our Father; so there is. The Majesty of that infinite, glorious Being must be more than our poor frail nature could bear down here, but when we can feel that He is our Father it draws us to Him like a child so to speak who naturally has a love to its parents. "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.", that is revered, honoured, be thy name, because He is infinitely worthy of more honour than any poor fallen sinner can give. All the honour we can really give to Him is to fall at His feet and repent in dust and ashes. "Hallowed be Thy name". This precious prayer may often be lightly used without any honour to the Majesty of heaven in what is said, but when a poor sensible sinner feels a taste of a Father's pardoning love in His beloved Son, when the precious blood of sprinkling softens the heart and purges the conscience, then in the deepest humility we say, "Hallowed be Thy name".

What are we to understand by His Name? We may understand first of all those divine attributes or perfections that constitute His glorious eternal being. You may remember that we read of what God said to Moses when He sent him to the children of Israel, and Moses said, "If they enquire as to who sent me to them, what shall I say unto them? God said, "I am that I am". "Hallowed be thy name". "I am that I am" means that everything throughout the countless ages of eternity is under His control. "I am the

Almighty God". That is His name, Jehovah, "I am that I am!" This indicates an authority, a rule, a supremacy above all created things without any exception. In another place the Lord says, "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another". He reigns supreme. He is omnipotent. He is everywhere, though heaven is His throne. He is an infinite spirit, He is everywhere, "Hallowed be thy name"; and we may humbly say this when we have some soul-humbling view of God's Majesty and our nothingness. What a miracle it is that a poor trembling worm of earth may approach and be received by the Majesty of heaven. "Hallowed be thy name". By His name we may understand all that He has done in the salvation of His people, for the glory of His name shines in every detail. As you know, even naturally speaking, it is not actually a person's name by which they are named so much as their reputation, their character, their honour or otherwise. As often you may hear of one who bears a good name, a good honourable man that is upright and is consistent in his life and conduct and dealings. Naturally he bears a good name, but there are some people who bear a bad name, their character is bad, their life is bad, their ways are corrupt, they dishonour God. But here is a name - "Hallowed be thy name". His name sounds forth with majesty, and the glory of His divine perfections-especially as those perfections meet in His justice and His grace in the salvation of His people. One of the blessed features of His name is this, as the Apostle says. It is "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus". That is His Name. "Hallowed be thy name". O what a different land this would be if the name of God was honoured in it even as it was more particularly in bygone days. O how different it is now! What a dreadful violation of the Sabbath day, what wilful, dreadful disregard of His holy blessed Word, and what dishonour is cast upon His holy name. One wonders what will come to our poor land. I have read or heard that when Queen Victoria was asked the secret of England's greatness she pointed to the open Bible. O, dear friends, shame and confusion of face unto us that now, comparatively speaking, it appears to be disregarded. What a mercy, friends, if you and I are

among the few poor people who can say, "My father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name". How becoming it is when there is a spirit of reverence in the exercise of public worship. I have been to some places where I have felt there was a sad lack of this, but I am thankful that as a little company it is at least our desire in the exercise of public worship to reverence God.

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come". This is another point in the prayer. "Thy kingdom come". What did the Lord Jesus mean, then? I would understand Him to pray here for a furtherance of the blessed Gospel among the nations of the earth until the whole elect of God are quickened into life and gathered into the heavenly garner; then the Redeemer shall say "Here am I and the children which thou hast given me"; then the kingdom of the Father will have come. This seems to carry us far ahead, incorporating the glorious resurrection of the dead, and the fulfilling of every divine purpose concerning the salvation of the Lord's dear people. "Thy kingdom come". A kingdom indicates a king to reign. God reigns supreme, but there is also a reign that refers to the Lord Jesus Christ as we read in Psalm 2.6. There is a universal reign, but this is a particular kingdom that refers to the redeemed of the Lord, and this is a kingdom in the first place that is set up in the heart of a believer. The Lord said this in a later chapter. He said that "the kingdom of heaven cometh not with outward observation" - outward show or ostentation, "it is within you". When a poor trembling one says, "Thy kingdom come" as we are taught to pray here, is it not a humble prayer that the Lord would take possession of Him, reign in his heart and govern all his words and ways? Does not the hymn writer say something about this,

"Reign o'er us as King, accomplish thy will,
And powerfully bring us forth from all ill".

"Thy kingdom come". This means then that you would have him to reign in your heart and govern there.

This kingdom has relation to the Church of God, for these are the subjects of His blessed kingdom. They are, under another figure, referred to as the body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. These are His subjects, the subjects of this kingdom. This is the kingdom of the Gospel, and this is where the dear

Redeemer reigns. The Father reigns, but He exercises that reign in and through His beloved Son Whom He has appointed to be king, and has established Him in Zion. "Thy kingdom come" - this also indicates His commands, laws and ordinances, because in the kingdom, as you know in the United Kingdom, there are laws for the subjects of this kingdom to observe; so it is in the kingdom of heaven. There are laws and commands for them to observe as subjects of this kingdom; these can refer to the exercise of faith in the precious doctrines of the glorious Gospel, a gracious adherence to its precepts, and also to the claims of the moral law, in so far as by His grace we may seek to observe what is right and upright and becoming to the subjects of this King. It is a mercy for us that "properly speaking" the moral law is fulfilled for His redeemed people in the perfect and absolute obedience of Christ for that law claims absolute obedience; but even so there are precepts and ordinances for His people to observe.

"Thy kingdom come". There is a kingdom of glory too, a time when the Lord Jesus Christ will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and when death will be swallowed up in victory. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." How can the will of our Father be done in heaven? His will is done in heaven in relation to the entire inheritance of that celestial city, and in that abundant entrance given to every vessel of mercy that He designed to be there. There is another point, - how shall they be engaged who are there, and who will yet be there? What are they doing? They are casting their crowns before the throne, crowning Him Lord of all. It is His heavenly will that He should be honoured and adored and worshipped by all the inhabitants of heaven. There is another point, and that relates to their eternal, everlasting enjoyment. Heaven is referred to as a place of rest. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them", and often here it is said of godly people that they have entered their eternal rest. This is the will of our Father Who is in heaven that heaven shall be a place of rest - rest from all conflict, trouble, grief, pain, sorrow, sin and death, blessed rest. "Thy will be done ~~as~~ in heaven". This relates also to the joy that fills them. It is our Father's will that it shall be a holy happy place. Many things come here to mar our rest, peace and joy; but nothing can ever come there to mar or spoil our rest, our peace, our joy, because there is no sin.

"Heaven is that holy, happy place,
Where sin no more defiles,
Where God unveils his blissful face,
And looks, and loves, and smiles".

O beloved friends what a mercy of mercies it will be to be right at last and to be right now. One wonders how many foolish virgins so to speak there are who are wrapped up in a profession of religion with no oil in their lamps. What a mercy to be prepared to die, as sometimes we sing,

"Prepare me, gracious God,
To stand before thy face;
Thy Spirit must the work perform,
For it is all of grace."

Amen.