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LaD389 n preached by Mr. J. Delves on Sunday morning 24.10.71 at

"Ebenezer", Clapham

No. 71/H

Hymns: 697, 508, 683
Reading Luke 11
Text Luke 11.2

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

"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."

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If the Lord shall be pleased to answer the prayer in the hymn, and the prayer that has been brought before Him this morning, we shall have a day to be remembered, a day when we shall lose sight of the entanglements of this poor world and shall worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. This verse has been on my mind in a particular sense as regarding the relationship inferred here, "Our Father, which art in heaven", the reverence and honour which are due to Him, "hallowed be Thy name", and the furtherance of the blessed and glorious Gospel until that time shall be when the whole elect of God shall be gathered before the throne and before the Lamb, "Thy kingdom come".

We read that this teaching of the disciples to pray was when He was "in a certain place". There is a reference to this in Luke 6 where we read that He "went up into a mountain and continued all night in prayer." There may be a link with this particular instance when His disciples said unto Him "Lord teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples." He set before them a pattern so to speak for this is not the "Lord's Prayer" properly speaking; the Lord's Prayer" in the highest sense is in John 17; yet there is a beautiful connection. In the 17th. of John frequent reference is made to the Father. "Father the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." Running through that very sacred prayer is repeated reference to the Father; but here the Lord taught them to say "Our Father. which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name."

He was in a certain place praying. This can be literally true with the Lord's people, when they are exercised before Him. Some of you may have known what it is to pray in a certain place, when you have had secretly to groan before the Lord or pour out your

heart before Him. It does not matter, beloved friends, where this "certain place" is, whether it be in a solicitor's office, in a bank, working upon a building, in your home, or in the street. There was a 'certain place' with dear Jacob when he was left alone and the angel wrestled with him by the Ford Jabbok. There was a 'certain place' with good Hezekiah when he turned his face to the wall and prayed. But the mercy of it is, there cannot be a place where the Lord is not able to hear us. This may refer to a particular exercise of soul, pressure of circumstances or a variety of other things. The Psalmist in Psalm 130 prayed in a 'certain place' when he said "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee." He was in the depths of trouble. The Psalms refer often to conditions of mind and soul. "When my heart is overwhelmed within me, lead me to the rock that is higher than I." All through the Scriptures we see these particular exercises, sometimes soul exercises, and sometimes connected with the dispensations of God's providence. What a mercy, beloved friends, if you and I can say, 'There was a certain place in my life once where the majesty of heaven and a poor rebellious sinner came together and communed together, when you, Jacob-like, may have said, "I will not let thee go except Thou bless me." Those of you that have been for many years on your spiritual pilgrimage may be able to go back in your minds to certain places and feel able to say "He blessed me there." Even in the case of Jacob, although he was in a waste-howling wilderness, he said, "This is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of heaven."

A point that has been rather sweet to me, friends, is this sacred relationship indicated here. He said unto them, When ye pray say, Our Father which art in heaven. I know this is a formula in the Church of England, and may often be repeated without this sacred relationship existing; but these disciples were believers in the Lord Jesus and He addressed them as such. "Our Father which art in heaven." It is very blessed, friends, to feel something of this relationship, and that we have a Father

in heaven. Good Asaph, when he was delivered from his conflict, and favoured to realise the blessing of the Lord, said, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

This may also refer to the blessed Trinity, to our exalted Saviour for He ascended up into heaven, and there is exalted at the Father's right hand, and is authorised to dispense mediatorially every spiritual blessing. Here is a very sweet point; if God is our Father then Christ is our Saviour, and if Christ is our Saviour the Holy Spirit is our Teacher. We cannot separate one from the other. To have a knowledge of the Trinity by the Holy Spirit's grace is profoundly sweet, sacred and blessed. "Our Father." Not "O God which art in heaven", although that is certainly true, and applies to all creatures whom He has under His control to determine their everlasting destiny, but here is a people to whom the Apostle refers as being the children of God. He says of them in the Epistle to the Romans, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God". "Sons of God by blessed adoption". The Lord Jesus Christ could say "Our Father", "My Father", because the Father is God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But God is the Father of Christ in a far higher, more profoundly blessed, sense than can apply to His people. He is the Eternal Father of His Eternal Son. "This day have I begotten Thee" - His Eternally-begotten Son in a relationship amazingly profound, blessed and glorious, the eternal Son, also the incarnate Son, to whom was committed the mighty work of redemption.

It is very sweet to look up to heaven as far as we can and feel that we have a Father there. This indicates a relationship and involves our position and our everlasting destiny. As our Father He made a choice of us in the Covenant of grace and inscribed our names in that book of life. As His dear children we are incorporated in a bond of union that neither death nor hell can ever break, this is the most sacred union that has ever been or can possibly be - it is a covenant bond. The Lord Jesus says of these in His prayer, in the Gospel by John, "Those whom

Thou hast given me". This is a blessed thought. The Father gave the whole elect to Christ, to His beloved Son, the Redeemer, who espoused their cause, assumed their nature, stood in their place, bore away their sins, justified their persons, and fitted them for heaven.

"Our Father which art in heaven". As our Father He cares for us, this is more particularly mentioned in the Gospel by Matthew, in regard to His divine providence. The Lord Jesus exhorted us not to be over-anxious about temporal matters, for "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Your Heavenly Father! There is something sweet about this, because it indicates a standing that nothing can affect or alter. Even in natural ties the relationship abides, whatever the conduct of a son may be. How beautifully is this set forth in the parable of the Prodigal Son; even the poor, wretched prodigal, when he came to the last extremity, realised that he had a Father, and said, "There is bread enough and to spare in my father's house and I perish with hunger" so he resolved to go back to his father and to say "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee and am no more worthy to be called thy son." If his father had rejected and abandoned him yet he would still remain his son. How much more blessedly true is this with regard to the Lord's dear people. They are personally chosen and adopted in the decrees of God, and are sons and daughters of Zion. They may sow their wild oats so to speak and go very far astray, yet they are marked in ^{the} sovereign purposes of God and eventually as good Kent says:

"The appointed time rolls on apace,
Not to propose but call by grace;
To change the heart, renew the will,
And turn the feet to Zion's hill." (Gadsby's 76)

Nothing can stand against the power of heaven. I was reading recently of a good man at Mayfield who became an avowed infidel, openly and publicly, and despised and scorned those who made any profession of religion as though they were demented; but the time came when the arrow of conviction penetrated his conscience and he was brought down a condemned, guilty sinner before God. He was, in the Father's eternal purposes, one of His children. As our Father He watches over our providences as it is recorded in this

prayer, "Give us day by day our daily bread." As our Father He will receive us one day as His children into that better land above that is awaiting all the redeemed family of God. "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".

Can you really feel that the Majesty of heaven is your Father? This sense of relationship can come into all the exercises of our souls, the circumstances of our lives, the trials through which we may have to pass, the temptations with which we may have to contend and the enemies against whom we may have to fight. There is a Father in heaven who has appointed everything unto us as Job felt he could say; "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me and many such things are with Him." "Our Father". It can touch a spot when we are in trouble, sickness, passing through hard things; there is a Father whose eye is upon us when nature fails, when we feel to be walking in darkness, or are assailed by Satan. He can subdue all our enemies, sanctify all afflictions, and appoint ~~all~~ things for our good and for His own glory. The Apostle Paul informs us that if we are not chastened we bear no evidence of sonship "for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" May not this sometimes sanctify a hard path when we can feel that the chastening is the chastening of our Father; may not this sweeten the bitter cup? Is it not blessedly true what Rutherford says that our Lord always carries the heaviest end of the cross?

"Our Father which art in heaven". Is He not everywhere? He certainly is. In Psalm 139 divine omnipresence is proved. The author of the Psalm declares, "Whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, behold Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there." But in a very particular sense He is our Father in heaven. His throne is there. "Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool." His throne is in heaven, that is His dwelling-place. This is where His glory and His majesty can become bearable in the eyes of angels, and

of all that have crossed the flood of Jordan to behold the King in His beauty. He is in heaven. We find good Nehemiah saying:

"I prayed to the God of heaven."

Three things I might say, in concluding, about heaven. First of all, it is the dwelling-place of our Father. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?", He does, but in a particular way He is the glory of heaven. Christ as the exalted Lamb is the glory of heaven. The Holy Spirit is also the glory of heaven. But when a poor sinner prays under a sense of this relationship, his prayer enters the realms of bliss, and is regarded by his Father who dwells there in that holy place. It is the dwelling-place of unfallen angels; there they are, engaged in that holy worship in a sense that we cannot understand. The Lord says the angels "do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Thirdly, thousands upon thousands of poor sinners saved by grace are now before the throne of God in heaven, happy souls indeed are they.

"Heaven is that holy happy place where sin no more defiles,
Where Christ unveils His lovely face and looks and loves and
smiles."

"Our Father which art in heaven." If this glorious, blessed Person is really our Father, that sweet, sacred relationship bears its own blessed witness that one day we shall be there too. What a blessed day it must be! "Absent from the body, present with the Lord", with our Father in heaven! Nothing can mar that blessed peace, that sacred joy, that holy worship in heaven. Many, many dear children of God, lifting up their hands, have indicated the Lord's coming to receive them. A dear old friend recently died in Lancashire, and I was asking a friend who witnessed his death whether he said anything before he passed away. He said, "No, he had no power to say anything; but just before he expired one of his eyes (he was blind in the other) began to shine like a star, looking upward as though he saw something; then he dropped back and was gone to heaven." O blessed, happy soul! "Our Father which art in heaven." May the Lord grant His blessing upon a few words spoken in His Name. Amen.