

An Attempt To Listen To God

Meditations on  
His Prayers of Intercession  
Section 3

By

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### **The Relationship “Father”**

There are times when the flesh explodes in fury and uncontrolled utterances, and never more when one is being afflicted. The thought of forgiveness is far removed from the mind of the individual and perhaps forgiveness toward the erring one is never granted.

There also must be very few, if any, believers who have never chafed under the will of God, and perhaps gotten angry for the happenings which God permits to come into their lives.

Both these attitudes were never seen in our Lord. Gazing upon Him we see the heart and mind of God gloriously manifested. Looking down upon the sea of faces, with a mind undimmed by numbing sedative or the deadening of death, He said one word which speaks volumes: “Father”. (Lk. 23:34)

- a) It was not just that He called God Father
- b) There is no emphasis on how He said it
- c) It is a manifestation of the character of the man:
  - i) He knew all that was involved in asking for forgiveness.
  - ii) He knew the depths of the judgment required for forgiveness.
  - iii) He knew what that forgiveness was going to mean to Him.

The Lord pleads before God on the ground of Sonship. This was not a relationship He entered into when on earth. He was ever the Son. “The Father sent the Son” (1 Jn. 4:14). In this prayer the Lord pleads the efficacy of His own sufferings. This is very beautiful for in Lev. 1:4 the offered is told that the sacrifice would be accepted for him, and atonement made for him before the sacrifice was ever offered. Had one of the priests standing there, or a soldier confessed “He is there to be my sacrifice, to bear the penalty for my forgiveness”, the efficacy of that sacrifice would have been effective immediately.

### **When our Lord, in these circumstances said: “Father”, what did it signify?**

His spirit and relationship with God was greater than any other human being could manifest.

- a) It manifested His contrast with those who put Him there, for they had acted in the name of God, but now He shows the heart of God.
- b) Paul appealed to a higher earthly power: “I appeal to Caesar” (Acts 25:11), but the Lord appealed to the Throne Sitter of Heaven.
- c) We learn that His God consciousness and relationship was unshaken by that which had and was befalling him.
- d) His imploration was a gracious condemnation for those who had so hated him.

### **The Imploring “Forgive”**

Since it is only God who can forgive sins, because it is God who has been sinned against, the Lord prays to the Father to forgive them. This is interesting because up to this point He forgave them. In this intercession for forgiveness, the word indicates a holding back of judgement, let them see the seriousness of that which they are doing in rejecting me, let them see the fullness of thy love and forgiving grace. Thank God He did hold back and gave them more time as the book of the Acts teaches.

That which amazes is that the Lord, who is the Angel of the Lord, single handedly in one night slew the entire Assyrian army (2 Kgs. 19:25). This is the one who overthrew the world with the flood and slew every living creature (Gen. 7:4). Again, He destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (13:10). Consequently, a few hundred would have been very easy to obliterate, yet in this we see the riches of His love and mercy.

We must appreciate that God does not simply forgive sins. He executes the judgment on them, and then offers salvation. Christ, in thus praying, was fulfilling the type shown by Moses when He interceded. Sin must be punished. The value of that which was damaged must be seen and known, and thus the Lord was going to be the sin bearer, experience the fullness of the curse, and know the baptism of judgement from God.

Forgiveness is:

- a) The removal of judgment for our trespasses: “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses”. (Col. 2:13)
- b) Giving full acceptance to the sinner: “To open their eyes, [and] to turn them from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me”. (Acts 26:18)
- c) Redemption: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”. (Eph. 1:7)

Then it goes one step further: “Their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more” (Heb. 8:12). God will never bring to mind again such a one spat on the face of my son, such a one hammered the nail in His right/left hand, such a one cried with drunken venom and enticed others to cry “away with Him”. Added to this is the reality that the Lord knew what He was praying, and the cost it was going to be to Himself.

He does not deny their deservingness of judgment. He does not pray: “Father be merciful and gracious, but forgive”. It is a tender understanding and with compassion. Never were His compassions newer and richer than on that morning. His words indicate: “hold back any judgement, let them see the seriousness of that which they are doing in rejecting me, let them see the fullness of thy love, and until I have done all that can possibly be done for them, and then still give them time.” (My paraphrase)

### **The Subjects “Them”**

When we come to consider the “them”, the greatness of the forgiveness will be seen. In this prayer the Lord is interceding for those who hated him without a cause. He knows intellectually, and soon by experience, that which lies ahead of them if they reject Him. Therefore His prayer is for:

- a) Those who need forgiveness.
- b) Those who to all outward appearances salvation is very remote.

When reviewing the narratives of the Scriptures:

- a) Esther never prayed for forgiveness for Haman. (Est. 7:7-9)
- b) Jonah never prayed for forgiveness for the people of Nineveh. (Jon. 1:2)
- c) Joseph’s brothers confessed and asked for forgiveness. (Gen. 45:25-28; 50:17)
- d) Stephen asked for forgiveness, but the order was reversed in how the Lord asked. (Acts 7:60)

There are people whose life is seemingly filled with sorrow and care. Life for them is hard, and more often than not, they walk a very lonely path. Yet, irrespective of how hard such a ones life is, nought compares with that of the Lord. He had been abused, hated, and despised, yet in His heart there was no animosity. His heart was filled with love for those who despitefully used Him, and being void of spite and hostility, He will seek God’s graciousness toward them.

His life was a hard life because of sin and the sin hardened state of humanity. They made His life to be:

- a) Filled with sorrows, and grief was His acquaintance. (Isa. 53:5)
- b) He came to His own and was not wanted, the hurt of being told you’re not welcome here. (Jn. 1:11)
- c) At birth, there was no room for Him. (Lk. 2:7)
- d) Herod sought to kill the baby, a hostility He was to live with constantly. (Matt. 2:13)
- e) Then He was crucified between the thieves. Why was He put in the midst? What truths there are here for two purposes.
  - i) God’s purpose was to show Christ is the divider of humanity for eternity.
  - ii) Man’s purpose was to show Him as the worst of them all.
- f) Then they lifted Him up on the cross, possibly by ropes, but nailed Him to the tree.
- g) Then when the screaming searing pain of mutilated flesh was raw.
- h) Then when the venom of the blasphemers was happening.
- i) He was to vicariously suffer for these people who were so callous and animalistic. Then He prayed: “Father forgive them.”

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.  
John 16:13**

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