

The Wednesday Word, October 1, 2014: The Danger of Praying, “Our Father”

Probably the most famous and often repeated prayer in the world is The Disciples Prayer (often called The Lord’s Prayer). Here in ‘Catholic Ireland’ it is simply known as the ‘Our Father’ and countless numbers of pray it daily to their detriment.

Detriment? Why so? It’s because, when we pray this prayer we are claiming that the God of the Bible is, in fact, our Father. That’s all well and good, but the God of the Bible, the living and true God, is not everyone’s Father. For example, Jesus informed the Pharisees that they belonged to their Father the devil (John 8:44). Clearly then, not everyone can assume the paternity of God.

“But,” says someone, “God is the Father of everyone because He created us.” Indeed he created all things, but that does not mean He is the Father of all things. He created the rocks and the soil, but He is not a Father to them. He created angels but to which of the angels has he said, thou art my son, this day I have begotten thee (Hebrews 1:5)?

Now, before you get too upset with me, consider this. Our heavenly Father has commanded that we should love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. But we don’t! We, at best, partially conform to this commandment. Why do we then call Him Father, when we don’t obey Him? If He is as we confess in prayer, our Father, he has a right to our utmost love and deepest respect. But do we give him that? Do we really want to see His will done here on earth as it is in Heaven? Do we want to read, listen to and be guided by His written Word?

Furthermore, when we say, ‘Our Father,’ that speaks of community. He is not merely my Father but ‘our’ Father. ‘Our’ speaks of our neighbour and especially speaks of the other members of the redeemed community. So, here’s the question, have we loved our neighbour as ourselves? Many people who pray the ‘Our Father’ are not even members of any redeemed community so, again, it is impossible for them to honestly pray those two words. They fail to realise that by praying ‘Our Father’, they are declaring themselves to be liars and rebels against God.

But, who then can pray this prayer? Let’s be honest, we have all failed to love God and our neighbour perfectly; so who, then, is qualified to pray these two words? Here’s the answer. Only redeemed believers can pray ‘Our Father’ (Isaiah 63:16). The redeemed believer has received Jesus the Lord as His mediator and therefore has access to heaven. Christ Jesus alone is the Saviour and hope of those who believe. He, as our substitute, has loved the Father perfectly. He, as though He were us, has loved his neighbour as Himself. He alone is our salvation! And the good news is that His holy obedience is ours by faith alone, apart from any works we can produce.

Oh, the folly of the unsaved who presume that they can pray, ‘Our Father!’ God, the heavenly Father, is so pure that he cannot be approached by sin. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13). Yet, countless numbers who are not looking to Jesus alone as their one great sin offering presume to pray, ‘Our Father.’

Furthermore, redeemed believers have now been adopted into the family of God. Therefore, it follows that, from our hearts, we will call God our Father. We read that; “... because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). But the non-member of the Family of God, the one who tries to approach God without the mediator, the Lord Jesus, makes himself a liar from the moment he begins this prayer. God is not His Father, his heart is far from him. He would be better to erect a golden calf and talk to it rather than mock God by praying the

words, 'Our Father.'

And that's the Gospel Truth!