

“Our Confidence in Prayer”
(Matthew 6:9)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. We’ve been looking at prayer – asking God for the things we need, especially His Spirit. We’ve seen:
 - a. We should ask for what He has promised.
 - b. In the name of His Son.
 - c. Believing that we will receive them.

2. Prayer should be accompanied by certain things:
 - a. Praise for who He is.
 - b. Thanksgiving for what He’s done, for answered prayer.
 - c. Confession for what we’ve done: sin.

3. Prayer should be done in a certain way:
 - a. Persistence/diligence: pray until He answers; keep on asking, seeking, knocking.
 - b. With a thoughtful economy of words.
 - c. With a forgiving spirit.
 - d. With a delighting in God.
 - e. Without affectation or being ostentatious/trying to show off to others.
 - f. With sincerity: meaning what we say, what we ask for.

4. Prayer should also have a particular priority: we should pray for God’s glory first, then our own needs (Cf. The Lord’s Prayer; Matt. 6:9-15).

B. Preview.

1. This evening, we’re going to begin to look at the pattern Jesus gave us in the Lord’s Prayer piece by piece.
 - a. Remember, it is a pattern, an example.
 - b. But to follow it, we need to know what it means.

2. The first thing I want us to consider is the confidence Jesus tells us we can pray with:
 - a. Basically, it is the confidence a child has in asking his or her father for something.
 - b. It is the confidence we have through our adoption into God’s family.
 - c. It also reminds us of a prerequisite to prayer: we must be His children.
 - d. But there are two additional truths we can learn from this:
 - (i) The Spirit of adoption – the confidence to pray to God in this way – strengthens our assurance.

- (ii) The Spirit of adoption also reminds us that we are members of one body/family, and as such, we have an obligation to pray for and with each other.

II. Sermon.

A. First, Jesus teaches us to pray, “Our Father, who is in heaven” (v. 9), or in other words, to pray with the confidence of a child to a father.

1. This is the blessing of adoption.

- a. When we trust in Jesus, He takes our guilt away and gives us His righteousness.
- b. He also begins to break the power of sin in our lives through sanctification.
- c. But having given us this standing, the Bible says He also adopts us into His family.

(i) John writes, “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:10-13).

(ii) Paul writes, “In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:5-6).

(iii) And he writes, “But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal. 4:4-6)!

2. Adoption means that we have the full right of legal sons and daughters.

- a. We are heirs of God’s kingdom.
- b. We are joint heirs with Jesus Christ.
- c. We are welcomed as His children: we have access to the throne of grace.
- d. And the confidence that the Father will hear us.
- e. When we pray according to His will, in the name of His Son, for things He has promised to give us, our confidence is increased by the fact that *He is our Father*.

3. However, we do need to remember to be reverent in our approach: this Father is in heaven.

- a. Yes, He is our Father, but not our equal.
- b. We must resist over-familiarity.
- c. God is in heaven, exalted over all, infinitely holy and powerful, eternally the same.
- d. We are on earth, still unperfected, still tainted with sin, but thankfully forgiven, still and forever creatures.

- e. The infinite God has been pleased to draw us near in Christ; let's not drag Him down to our level, but treat Him reverently; come in holy fear.
- B. On the other hand, secondly, we also have here a prerequisite to prayer: we must be His children; we must be saved.
1. Unbelievers can call God their Father in a general sense, since He made them.
 2. But only true believers can call Him Father in this sense.
 3. God doesn't promise to answer the prayers of an unbeliever.
 4. But He does promise to hear our prayers, if we are His children.
 4. If you don't know Christ tonight, trust in Him now.
 5. If you do, then draw near in confidence, knowing that He loves you – you are His child.
 - a. Jesus said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him" (Matt. 7:11)!
 - b. The greatest good we can ask for is His Spirit – whom He commands us to be filled with - "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Luke 11:13)?
- C. Third, if we can pray in this way, it will strengthen our assurance that we are His.
1. Paul writes, "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* in order that we may also be glorified with *Him*" (Rom. 8:15).
 2. How does the Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are His children?
 - a. Certainly, by filling our hearts with love for the Father and the Son.
 - b. Certainly, by causing that love to endure through all our trials and persecutions.
 - c. But He also does so by confirming in our hearts that we are the children of God, to the point where we can confidently call God our Father.
 - d. When you can come to God and not hesitate to sincerely, honestly and joyfully call Him your Father, then you have a good measure of assurance that you really are His child.
 - e. How could you do so without it?
- D. Fourth and last, this family into which we are adopted, is a large family – the church – and as we are to love and care for the members of our own family and pray for them, so we are to do so for our extended family, the church.
1. We are to pray *for* one another.
 - a. Paul prayed for the church at Philippi, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all" (Phil 1:3-4).
 - b. He prayed for the church at Thessalonica: "To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; in order that the name of

our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thes. 1:11-12).

- c. The church prayed for Peter after he was arrested, “So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God” (Acts 12:5).
 - d. And we are commanded to pray for one another, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (James 5:16).
 - e. This doesn’t mean we aren’t supposed to pray for anyone else.
 - (i) We are to pray for all men: “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Tim. 2:1-2).
 - (ii) Jesus tells us to pray even for those who hate us, “But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44).
 - f. But we are especially to pray for one another: we are brethren.
2. We are to pray *with* one another.
- a. We are to gather together for prayer.
 - b. This is what the apostles did from the time Jesus ascended until He sent His Spirit on the day of Pentecost: “Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the son* of James. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the* women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers” (Acts 1:12-14).
 - c. This is what the disciples did when they were arrested, threatened and released, “And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).
 - d. This is what the church did when Peter was arrested. After Peter realized he had been set free by an angel, “he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying” (Acts 12:12).
 - e. They were a family with a common Lord and a common Father: they cared and prayed for and with one another.
 - f. We are the family of God, we are also to pray for and with one another.
 - g. May the Lord grant us confidence to draw near through the Spirit of adoption; may He strengthen our assurance through His Spirit that we are His; may He give us the love of the Spirit we need to pray with and for one another. Amen.