

God, Our Father

Opening of the Lord's Prayer

2 Thessalonians 2:16,17

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16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work. --2 Thess. 2:16,17

There are many great prayers in the Bible. The Bible will not only teach us how to find salvation for our souls and how to live good and productive lives, it will also teach us how to pray.

I would like to consider this prayer in the light of the Catechism Questions 120, 121:

Q120: Why did Christ command us to address God thus: Our Father? A120: To awaken in us at the very beginning of our prayer that childlike reverence for and trust in God, which are to be the ground of our prayer, namely, that God has become our Father through Christ, and will much less deny us what we ask of Him in faith than our parents refuse us earthly things.

Q121: Why is it added: Who art in heaven?

A121: That we might have no earthly thought of the heavenly majesty of God, and from His almighty power expect all things necessary for body and soul.

The Catechism makes several important points which are illustrated in Paul's prayer for the church in 2 Thess. 2:16,17. These points are as follows:

1. Childlike reverence and trust in God are the ground of our prayer.
2. God will not deny his children anything we ask of Him in faith.
3. We are to have no earthly thought of God, but expect all things necessary for body and soul from Him.

Let me read the words of our text again:

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

I. Paul usually refers to the Father first, but this time He puts the Lord Jesus Christ first. It is interesting that the verbs in verse 17 are singular [comfort and stablish] showing that Paul recognized the unity of the Lord Je-sus and God. We have these kinds of structures so often in

the New Testament that only ignorance or stub-bornness can account for the refusal to acknowledge that The Father and the Son are both the One True God.

A. It is also true that the Fatherhood of God must be seen in the light of Jesus Christ. We are sons of God through faith in Christ, and through faith alone.

1. Although we have been created by God, that gives us not comfort, if we are not his sons and daughters by faith, so that a spiritual and moral sonship is of far greater importance than one by creation. Because the enemies of Jesus were characterized by murder and by lies, they were of their father the devil, according to Jesus Christ—hence, as the offspring of Satan, they could not escape the damnation of hell.

2. By faith we are engrafted into Christ, and are counted as the children of God. We are adopted into the family of God by grace. This is brought out clearly in the text through the descriptive phrases in verse 16.

B. The provisions of grace, through Jesus Christ:

1. God is our father: this is a covenant term.

a. We have been adopted as the children of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, so that He is our father in a way that He is not the Father of the ungodly, nor the Father of all that He has created: pigs and termites, devils, angels, and powers. We are closer to Him than all that He created, because we are in Jesus Christ. Read those wonderful words in John 14:23-24

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

b. This is the purpose of the sending of Christ into the world, that we might abide in the Fa-ther, and that the Father might abide in us. John expresses this also in chapter one of his Gospel:

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

c. So there is a birth after the manner of the Spirit, which is not of the flesh, which makes us children of God in a moral and spiritual manner, working in us the wonder of faith and seeking to conform us to the commandments of God.

2. The Father has loved us. Paul's teaching in uniform: this love is in Jesus Christ.

a. Hence, it is a special and a special love that is rooted in the excellence of Christ and not in our own excellence.

i. Ephesians 1:3-6: Any excellence we have is the result of our union with Christ in predestination and calling:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

ii. Romans 8:28-31

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

b. Everlasting consolation:

i. This is the comfort in Christ through the Holy Spirit which has its roots in the prom-ises and the comfort of God in Heaven, and not on the earth.

ii. This is not given by earthly things, and cannot be taken away by earthly things.

iii. Hence, we are not to set our affections upon earthly things as if our consolation were from them.

iv. It is from our Father in Heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that these consola-tions or comforts are given. There is an everlasting and heavenly power that sus-tains the child of God, showing that he is not a child of the earth, nor is his inheri-tance of the earth.

c. Good hope. These words need to be taken apart and explained:

i. Hope. In the scripture this means something that is certain, based upon the promise and integrity of the one who promised. It is certainly going to be received by the person to whom it is promised, but he has not received it yet. That is the meaning.

ii. Good. The thing which is good in itself. Not because it is esteemed good, nor be-cause it produces good things, but because it is good in itself. It is truly good. It is esteemed good because it IS good; it produces good because it is good.

iii. Good hope, then, are those promises which are given to us the things which are really good, not like the things of the world. They come to us from heaven. They are better than rubies and diamonds, better than gold that perishes, better than garments with holes in them. It is a very bad economic bargain to sell the prom-ises of

God for earthly things. They are worth more than life itself, for after this life is over and we rest in the grave, the promises of God are still good and legal tender and God will redeem them at the resurrection of the dead. Amen and Amen.

d. Grace: This is all by the Grace of God through Jesus Christ, and it is not of our own do-ing, or of our own will, or of our own goodness. It is the free gift of God given to us in Christ Jesus. If you have Christ, then you have everything in Christ.

II. The prayer itself: the gifts that Paul prays for the church.

A. Comfort and establish your hearts, The ideas are related, for both words have the ideas of strengthen-ing through exhortation and encouragement.

1. He had said before that we have been given comfort; now He prays for its application. The check is good; now go cash it. Everything is in Christ; we are to draw our from Him all His promises and blessings.

2. We are encouraged in the promises and the good hope that is in Christ. Discouragement and words of despair are deadly to the work of the Church. Paul knew this, as he said in I Thess. 3:2, that he sent Timothy to them for the very purpose of encouraging the church and strengthening their hands to the work of Christ.

B. In every good word and work.

1. Every doctrine: All the teaching of the Bible was to be received and obeyed by them. Often troubles and tribulations are for the purpose of taking us to a new level of obedience and trust. Blessings—tribulations—new blessings—tribulations—etc.

2. Every work: Every obedience that God has required. How important all of this is.

Conclusion: How great is our Heavenly Father, that He does not leave us to our misery and unbelief. He nurtures us as a mother does her children. He strengthens and encourages our hearts with his good hope, so that we do not falter in the trials along the way.