

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS GOD

Luke 11:1-13

Intro: Last Sunday night my message was on “The Christian and His Bible.” And I sought to emphasize with you the unique importance of the Bible in the Christian life. It is by the Bible that we have been born again. The Apostle Peter emphasized that in the first chapter of his first epistle when he wrote,

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter 1:23).

This is probably what the Lord Jesus had in mind when He spoke to Nicodemus about being born “of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5), the “water” representing the Word of God. The Apostle Paul seems to have justified this explanation of “water” when he said in the Ephesian epistle that the Lord Jesus gave Himself for the church,

That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word (Eph. 5:26).

And I expressed to you that I doubted if anyone is ever saved but what the Word of God is used by the Spirit of God as the effective means of bringing a person to Christ.

But I also sought to emphasize as the main point of my message that from the moment we are saved until the Lord takes us to heaven, our lives are inseparably bound to the Bible, the Word of God. We need to begin right away reading it. We need to read it daily, and as much each day as we possibly can. We need to read it completely, and when we have read it through, we need to read it again and again. We need to read it carefully and prayerfully. We need to seek to understand its teaching, and we need to apply the Word to the way we live. Even the kings of Israel in the OT were to write out their own copies the law, and then to read it every day so that they would learn to fear the Lord, to obey it, to be humbled by it, so that they would not turn away from it, if they wanted to enjoy the blessing of the Lord throughout their lives. They were even promised longer lives if they gave careful attention to the Word of God. We learn all of this from Deut. 17:18-20.

Paul told Timothy, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:13).

But Paul also told Timothy to “meditate” upon the things which he read. That meant that he was to think about what he was reading until he

understood it, and then he was to give himself “wholly” to do what the Lord wanted him to do, or not to do what the Lord did not want him to do. And all of this was so Timothy would *be*, or better, *become*, what the Lord wanted him to be. We are transformed by obeying the Word of God, not all at once, but by spiritual growth. If we are too busy to read the Word every day, and to pray over it and to meditate on it, then we are just too busy. Nothing must be allowed to take the place of the Word of God in our daily routine. Get to it the first thing in the morning, is a good habit to make.

Now let us suppose that you have been saved from the penalty of your sins through the sacrifice of Christ, but you have not had much in the way of any previous contact with the Bible, God’s Word. What should you be looking for?

Well, if you were to begin reading the OT, you would find that it starts with these words, “In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Then as you continued to read through chapter 1, you would find GOD mentioned no less than twenty-nine times (if I have counted them correctly)! And the Spirit of God is mentioned once! What conclusion do you think you might be inclined to think about this book? Well, it seems that it might be very close to the truth to start thinking that this is a book about GOD!

And, as you would continue reading, your impression would become stronger and stronger. It is about God! And this is why we can say that the Bible is not only a book given to us by God, given by inspiration of God, but it is a book about God! God has given us this book to tell us about Himself. And we must gather from Genesis 1 that there must be another Person called “the Spirit of God.” That, too, is confirmed as we continue with our Bible reading.

But turning to the NT, and starting with the first chapter of the NT, what do I read? I am immediately told that the Gospel of Matthew is “the book of the generation of Jesus Christ.” And I read through those names that I have gotten acquainted with in the OT, and find that the main characters were all related to this Person Who was called, “Jesus, Who is called Christ” (Matt. 1:16). And then I begin to learn about Jesus Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary, and Who came to “save His people from their sins.”

Now I don't mean to imply that the truth about God would become very clear just by reading through the Bible the first time, but, having read the Bible consistently, you and I would soon see that there are three Persons Who are God. We initially know that One is known as God, the second has the name, Jesus Christ, or the Lord Jesus Christ. And the third is the Holy Spirit. There are three who can be addressed as God, no more, and no less. That is why we speak of the Trinity. And we have named our church the Trinity Bible Church because we are a church of people who believe that the Bible is the Word of God and that it teaches us that there are three Persons in the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

To be a Christian means that you have eternal life. Our Lord expressed this in His prayer to God which is recorded for us John 17, verse 3:

And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.

To be saved we come to the knowledge of God. We learn that we can only know Him through His Son, because no one has ever seen God. But knowing God begins when we are first saved, and we keep knowing Him in an ever-increasing way throughout our lives here on earth. And this is the main reason that we read the Bible. We want to learn more and more about God, and about His Son, and about the Holy Spirit.

Now we can never really know all that we need to know about God. But we are all learning. But one thing that becomes clear from the early chapters of Genesis is that God intends to for to enjoy fellowship with Him. And that fellowship is through the reading of God's Word, where He speaks to us, and then through prayer, where we speak to Him. The Bible is really also a prayer book, the greatest prayer book that has ever been written. No one can really know how to pray unless they are learning about prayer from the Bible.

Tonight I want to combine two subjects that are taught throughout the Bible. The first is the doctrine of God. The second is the doctrine of prayer. Now by "doctrine" I mean what the Bible teaches us as Christians about our relationship to God in prayer. That is what fellowship is. God speaks to us through His Word; we respond to Him in prayer.

My text is found in Luke 11. I could also have taken Matt. 6 as my text because you basically find the same words there. But I have chosen Luke 11 because there Luke has recorded for us that the Lord Jesus Christ was asked by His disciples to teach them to pray. A few of them had been

disciples of John the Baptist, and evidently John the Baptist had taught his disciples how to pray. And so our Lord's disciples asked Him to do the same. And that is a request that we can bring to God. He wants us to pray. As Jews, the disciples would have known about prayer, and had learned to say prayers, but when they were saved, they knew that what they had thought was prayer, really wasn't prayer after all. And so they brought their request to our Lord: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1).

Now I don't plan to expound this whole passage except to draw from it to throw more light on the first words that the Lord said as He taught His disciples to pray.

We often speak of this as "the Lord's Prayer," but it was not His prayer in the sense that He needed to pray like this, but it was a model of the way we should pray. I don't even believe that He intended for us to pray this prayer although you can if you pray it from your heart and really understand what you are saying.

But the Lord began with these words: "When ye pray, say, Our Father." And when He said this, He was telling His disciples that

I. THIS IS THE WAY THAT GOD WANTS US TO ADDRESS HIM IN PRAYER.

I was probably in high school when I read a booklet on prayer that my mother had which carried this title: "When ye pray, say, Our Father."

There are volumes of meaning to be found in those words.

In the first place, it indicates that if you are saved, you are going to pray, and you are going to want to pray the way you should pray. There are many religious people who say prayers, or read prayers, who really don't know how to pray, nor do they know the One to Whom they are supposedly praying. They take comfort in the prayers, not in any assurance that there is a God Who hears their prayers and will answer them.

A true Christian is one who not only will read the Bible, but he also will pray.

But how does God want us to address Him?

I don't think that there is anything wrong at all with recognizing any of the great attributes of God when we come to Him in prayer – His wisdom, His mighty power, His eternal nature, His perfect holiness, His all-sufficiency, His omnipresence. There is blessing for all of us in those infinite perfections of God. We need to spend time meditating on them. But evidently there isn't anything that pleases God more than for us to come to Him and address Him as "Father." We say, "Our Father," when we are praying with someone else, but when we are praying by ourselves we can say, "My Father," or simply, "Father." Or we can do what the Lord Jesus did and call Him, "holy Father," or "righteous Father." But He wants us to call Him, "Father."

That is a family word. We are suffering in our generation because of what has happened to the family. Two women are not a family. Two men are not a family. A man and a woman who are married and have children are a family. At least that should be a family. Now many fathers do not accept the role of a father. I have spoken to young people who have told me that it doesn't mean much to them to call God their Father because their own human fathers never did love them or take care of them, and may have deserted their mother to marry someone else. But it is a great word. It is not a human father that should determine for us what God is like, but it is God Who is the pattern for all human fathers to follow. But now father can really do it unless he knows the heavenly Father.

It is a word which indicates that we know that we are in the family of God.

It is a word which indicates that we have the Holy Spirit in us because Paul told both the Roman church and the Galatian churches that it is the Holy Spirit Who has come to indwell us Who enables us to say, "Abba, Father."

It is a word which indicates that we have One whose responsibility it is, and whose joy it is, to meet our needs.

Look at the way the Lord Jesus explained what He was seeking to teach his disciples. First of all He spoke of one who was only a friend. This is in verses 5 through 10. But then in verses 11 and 12 he spoke of a human

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father. And then in verse 13 He applied to our heavenly Father.

When I was born, and when you were born, our parents had to take what they got. But when we were born again, born from above, born of God, God was taking what He wanted. I don't understand that, but the Bible tells us that we were chosen by God before the foundation of the world.

Related passages: John 20:11-18; 1 John 3:1-2. Also see 1 John 4:4-11. And when we remember that God is not only my Father, or your Father, but "our Father," this is what enables us to see what our relationship is to each other in the family of God.