

# Thoughts on the Lord's Prayer

## 2. "Which art in heaven"

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**T**HESE WORDS are telling us more than the location of God. We are reminded of the contrast between us and God. He is in heaven and we are on earth. Whereas our thoughts, aspirations and actions are earthly, God's are not.

The first thing that this should do is humble us. What a great privilege of entering (via prayer) God's heavenly house, approaching His throne and speaking to Him! What should we say? Not much! "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Eccl. 5:2). As Jesus himself said, "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him" (Mt. 6:7,8). The man who is so full of himself that he thinks that God has nothing He would rather do than listen to a mass of poorly considered and repeated words has made a mistake.

The privilege of approaching God in this way needs to be appreciated. The God of the universe, the Creator Who cannot even be contained by the vast expanse of space, is prepared, no, better yet, desires, to hold a conversation with us. If the Queen of England or some other suitably high-ranking dignitary was prepared to grant us an audience for a few moments, how would we feel? Honoured would probably be too mild a feeling. We would talk about it for months on end, bragging proudly of the great privilege at every opportunity. Why is it, then, that when offered a far better thing than an audience with the Queen, we take it so lightly, and frequently decline altogether?

To approach to God in this way requires faith; faith that we can, that He is pleased to receive us, and that He will respond:

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6);

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter

into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (10:19-22).

The question arises, If God is in heaven, is He on earth also? The answer comes to us from the Psalms: "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me" (139:7-10). Although heaven is the seat of God's throne, He is everywhere present by His spirit.

As the Apostle Paul said, "indeed He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27, NEB). Thus we cannot think that God in heaven is unaware of what transpires on earth. Frequently we can escape attention from our fellows, and the thoughts of our hearts remain secret, but this is not so with God: "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:14).

It would, however, be wrong for us to imagine that, because God is in heaven, He is aloof and uncaring of our circumstances. We should not think that because God's ways are far above ours He takes no thought for us. Isaiah the prophet makes this very plain: "For thus saith the high and lofty One That inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (57:15). In fact, as Jesus explained, "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him" (Mt. 6:8). The picture is, then, of an amazing benevolent being Who is all-knowing and all-seeing, and far beyond our understanding. Let us be careful as we approach Him.