

# Our Father In Heaven!

Reflections on A.W. Tozer's—*The Attributes of God*

All Bible references: "The Word"

*When was the last time that you said the Lord's Prayer? For many of us it may have been just this morning in our morning devotion or last night as we were closing our eyes in sleep. There are many versions of the Lord's Prayer—some more formal than others. But, ultimately, the prayer remains the same: it's a formal prayer directed to our Heavenly Father petitioning His involvement in our life and presenting Him with our pledge of allegiance and our understanding of just how powerful and important He is. "For yours is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen!" Pretty powerful stuff! But, what does it mean and, if true, and we certainly believe it or we wouldn't say it, just what is this "Power and Glory" anyway?*

*There are two ways of looking at the Lord's Prayer. One is obligatory. Jesus was asked by His disciples "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1-4). Jesus responds that we should pray and gives us this powerful, beautiful prayer tool: The Lord's Prayer. "If Jesus said it we should do it." That's sort of how I looked at it from youth onward. "He would know since He sits at the right hand of the Father. So, this is something I need to do. In fact, it is something God expects me to do." In some sense we often find ourselves thinking that God needs to hear those words in order to summon His help; almost as if His back is turned to us and we're tapping Him on the shoulder and alerting Him to our needs. That's human nature and, unfortunately, we often attribute human qualities to God that just don't fit. God is aware of what we need even before we know or think that we need it. He is never unaware of anything. He doesn't need to be informed of even the smallest detail (Matthew 6:8).*

*The best way of looking at the Lord's Prayer is from the perspective of Jesus Himself. Why did He give it? Was it to provide His disciples with a simple way of getting God to do their bidding? No, God isn't human. He doesn't get convinced. That's something we do. God knows everything perfectly from before time. He is changeless and knows without learning. "For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything" (1 John 3:20). There is a more suitable explanation of why Jesus gave us this prayer. He gave us this prayer to bless us, to give us a better understanding of "who" the Father is and "why" He is merciful. To put it simply, the prayer is the key to understanding the "majesty" of God. And, once that majesty is understood, we can come to know God in a "fearful" way that will help us to discover just how awesome He is. Once discovered, there is no need, no fear, no pressing concern in life that can step between His awesomeness and our problems. The prayer is a key that unlocks the mystery of God's majesty and it is anything but obligatory.*

*It's hard to get your arms around God because despite the fact that we were made in His image, we are finite and He is infinite. We learn and He knows. We strive and He allows. We are becoming and He has always been. Nevertheless, I think just the exploration of His awesomeness opens the door to a spiritual adventure, one that we will never finish in this life. Nonetheless, it is an adventure that propels, intrigues; reveals in bits and pieces and, finally, keeps us glued until the end; the end being the end of this journey here on earth. We are here to explore the majesty of God, the Shekaina glory that inhabited the Ark of the Covenant between the Cherubim, and connected the awesome majesty of the Father with the likes of you and I.*

## **Eternal!**

*(John 14: 4) “ . . . but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

*God is eternal. His love is eternal. His grace is eternal. His justice is eternal. He had no beginning and has no end. As Jesus clearly stated: “I am!” You and I have a difficult time really understanding the concept of eternity because we base our thinking on what has been, is and what is coming. We are consumed with thinking spatially and in the context of time. God is not restricted by space or time. Eternity is a perpetual realm without beginning or end in which He “is.” Because of our difficult understanding of the eternal concept, we tend to avoid thinking about it. Unfortunately, when we do we bypass an essential “quality” of God that helps us to become more aware of His presence. “Our Father in Heaven.” We’re not quite sure about where Heaven is located or what it looks like. Since it is eternal, it was not created nor will it be in any way completed. It, simply, “is.”*

*Jesus does not want us to overlook eternity. He offers it as the ultimate reward or punishment, for that matter, to all who believe or fail to believe. It is a reality that can’t be overlooked. Yet, how often do we focus on eternity as a place in which we will all dwell eventually? I recently attended the funeral of an aunt. Looking at the many pictures of her from bygone days, it really struck home that she wasn’t here any more; she was in eternity. Wow! Eternity. The thought pierces the heart for an instant sort of like one of those weird stinging pains that suddenly grabs the bottom of your foot and then it’s gone. A.W. Tozer wrote: “We have lost an awareness of the invisible and eternal. The world is too much with us so that the invisible and the eternal seem to be quite forgotten or at least we are not aware of it. We’re only briefly aware of it when somebody dies.” (Tozer, *The Attributes of God*)*

*The fact of the matter is this: God is eternal and invisible at that. That’s pretty awesome especially when you think about the fact that someday you and I will share eternity with Him. No more pain, anxiety, stress, sickness or any sort of stress whatsoever! Why is it so important to come to an understanding of the awesomeness of that? Simply this: thinking on and about eternity creates a consciousness of the divine presence in our lives because God IS eternal, and He also dwells in eternity as well as in our temporal home. He is bridging eternity and the temporal just like He bridged the space between the Cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant. Think about that! The Shakina glory of God reaching out from beyond time to the very moment you read this word. “Our Father in Heaven!” Awesome!*

*KERNAL: Eternity isn’t something that we ought to be reflecting upon simply when someone we know touches it. Rather, eternity is something that you and I ought to be reaching out to continually in our lives. God bridges eternity to each moment in our lives because He dwells in both.*

## **Perfect!**

*(2 Corinthians 13:11) “Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.”*

*Perfection is a relative term. Take, for example, my truck and my son’s car. On a nice*

day in spring you might find both of us striving for perfection, washing, waxing and buffing our vehicles. In the end it is unlikely that both will be equally shiny and brilliant. That's the nature of human imperfection. Dan might apply more wax, apply it in a different stroke and take more time to buff it out. In the end the product of my efforts was perfect in as much as the standard that I had set for that perfection. Dan's efforts, however, might appear more perfect in that he set his standards much higher. I guess in terms of understanding perfection, our understanding, since it is open to our own relevant standards, is something less than perfect. God, on the other hand, has no such standard since His standards have no starting or ending point. He IS perfection; so there is no need for a relevant standard. There's nothing to base the comparison on.

Unfortunately, from a spiritual perspective, as Christians we often find ourselves setting standards of perfection akin to our belief that in some way we are attaining a higher level of perfection, closer to God's idea of what is perfect. This is a dangerous misconception. We may build better and sturdier churches, but, in the end, God doesn't require them. We may stem the tide of backdoor losses, but "not going to church" does not necessarily equate mean a lower standard of spiritual growth. When you look back over the course of the last century you can see all kinds of gains in education, communication, publishing and a whole gamut of "advances" in the spread of the gospel. But, is this the measure of perfection that can somehow pull us closer to our God?

"May your name be holy among men!" Jesus, I believe, gave us this part of the Lord's Prayer to remind us that God is perfect and the holiness of His name is important beyond measure. That's perfection! Now, look back over the course of the last century with His holiness in mind. Have we as Christians gained or lost in our "fear" of our Holy God? Or, have we compromised that fear in favor of a God that better fits our worship, our recreation, our home life, our employment? Has God become too familiar, too ordinary in our lives? If so, we don't know Him properly and we don't know perfection either. Perhaps it's because we seem to have lost an appreciation of what makes God awesome. He's eternal, invisible, all-powerful, all-knowing and, at the same time, all-loving and just. To stand in the presence of Him who is these things must be fearful, awesome and just, plain perfecting. A communion with our God is a fearful and awesome experience. In this communion we can find the perfection in His majesty that we ought to be striving for. Why? There is no other standard to compare it with.

KERNAL: Perfection is not found in buildings, programs or statistics. These "perfections" aren't of the same caliber as God's perfection. Only when we draw closer to Him who in His majesty IS perfection can we ever know what perfection is.

### **Infinite!**

(Isaiah 40:25) "'To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?'" says the Holy One."

To whom can we compare God? Because we like comparisons and they help us picture things in perspective, people, Christians, have always longed to "picture" God. Christianity Today did a survey a number of years ago where they asked their Christian readers what particular art form they most picture God as? The overwhelming response was Michelangelo's, Sistine Chapel painting of a majestic, bearded, muscular and stern-

faced deity reaching out from a cloud to touch an adoring, reclining figure of Adam as he is given life through that touch. I've always felt that the clouds in the picture are the most significant part of the painting and not the representation of Adam or Jehovah. The clouds symbolize our utter inability to grasp God and his infinity. For generations Christians have focused on a "cloudy" vision of God; a vision of God as defined only by what we know, and not as well as by what we don't know. In a sense Christians have long had this vision of God as the epitome of what is perfect and we below as creatures striving for that perfection but never achieving it. (Adam reaching out but not quite touching.) How wrong an impression that is. God is infinite and we are finite. That means He is without beginning or end and we are with a beginning and, from an earthly perspective, will most certainly have an end. A.W. Tozer put it this way: "God is completely different and separate, so that there are no degrees in God. God is simply God, an infinite perfection of fullness, and we cannot say God is a little more or little less." (Tozer, *The Attributes of God*)

"Let your kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven." To whom can we compare God and, for that matter, His kingdom; certainly not to a Michelangelo portrait of a bearded, muscular man. As long as we do, we worship clouds and not the infinite Creator of the universe. In that sense God is not comparable. As Tozer states, there are no "degrees" in Him. We strive for perfection but He IS perfection. That's why He is so zealous of Himself. When we substitute things, people or activities in our life for Him, making idols of what we can touch, feel and smell, respect or enjoy, His image is damaged for He must be at the core of our thinking and worship.

True, God commands us in Scriptures to be perfect, like Him. But, here's the key: since God's perfection, his infinitude, is beyond our understanding, He gives us a way of traveling toward an understanding without actually grasping it. The fact is that there is no word in any language to describe adequately who or what God is because He is without degrees and not limited by words. So, in His kindness and mercy, He gives us a word, perfection, to cling to.

KERNAL: We can't know God in a way that reflects other things we know. We can only know Him as we reflect on the mystery of that which we cannot know.

### **Beautiful!**

(Psalm 29:2) "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness."

When is the last time that you thought about the "beauty" of God? The Bible tells us that we know him by the mystery of his splendor. I think that sometimes you and I forget how beautiful, how awesomely majestic and handsomely glorifying our God is. Yes, he's a spirit— so that it makes it difficult to ascribe beauty to a God without human form. Perhaps the reason that it is so difficult to ascribe beauty to God is that we're so hung up on the form and are forgetting the substance. God is the Word. God is the creation. God is love, truth, justice, mercy, grace, light and a long list of other qualities that define beauty. Read the Word. Meditate on the Word. Push back from your chair for a moment and think about the beauty of what you just read. God is beautiful. It rained yesterday and there were thousands of tiny crystals of light shining through the water dripping from the leaves of the trees here at Beech Springs. Wow! God is beautiful. For that

*matter, God is in Christ and Christ is in God. We are in Christ and, therefore, we are in God. Can it get much more beautiful than that?*

*“Give us our daily bread today.” When I come to this part of the Lord’s Prayer I can’t help but stop for a moment and reflect upon God’s beauty. God provides food, clothing, shelter, security and employment while also allowing hardship, sickness, pain and, yes, even death. Yet, can there be anything more beautiful than a God who both gives blessings and allows sorrows while always promising we will never be outside the palm of his hand. The Bible tells us that we are the “Apple of His Eye.” He is so close to us in happiness and in sorrow that we are reflected in the spiritual pupil of his eye. Think about it! You and I are daily, face-to-face with the divine creator of the universe and, unlike the Children of Israel who could not look upon Moses when his face reflected the glory of God, we are not blinded by his beauty.*

*We look out upon a decaying world on a daily basis. Yet we find beauty there despite the imperfection. The world around us in no real indicator of beauty in and of itself; yet, because it is so tangible, we often exalt it to what we call beautiful. We are impressed with our scientific discoveries and cultural advances. They improve life and, therefore, make things more beautiful. Think about all the “green” focus we see around us today. Everyone is focused on how we need to seek a more “beautiful” environment. God looks down upon our strivings to seek beauty here on earth and smiles. As Tozer put it: “He is not impressed. He is calling mankind to Himself, to His holiness, beauty, love, mercy and goodness.” (Tozer, The Attributes of God) Can there be anything more beautiful than a God who does that?*

*KERNAL: God is beautiful because God is beauty. We need to raise our heads daily and realize that we are the apple of his eye imagining our own reflection in Him.*

### **Wonderful!**

*(Isaiah 9:6) “. . . and he will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

*Wonderful is a word we don’t often use much any more. When was the last time that you called someone “wonderful” or experienced an event that you termed “wonderful?” I remember Lawrence Welk and his orchestra. Every Saturday night my parents tuned him in. Lawrence liked the word “wonderful.” (He always pronounced it “wonerful.”) When Myron Floren played a tune on his accordion you just knew that Lawrence would walk onstage, stand in front of the CBS camera and intone: “Wonerful, wonerful Myron!” Perhaps it’s a word that’s a bit too flowery for our taste these days. But, “wonderful” is an important characteristic of our God. It describes quite specifically what He has done for us in the person of Jesus Christ. As the prayer states: “Forgive our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Do not allow us to fall into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” Is there any wonder why the Psalmist used the word “wonderful” to describe the Christ who delivered us from certain death to eternal life?*

*Perhaps we’re too wrapped up in the tiny “wonders” around us that we can’t see the wonderful forest for the trees. We break an arm and it heals. God is good; He is wonderful. We land a job in a bad economy. God is good; He is wonderful. We overcome an addiction in our life. Perhaps we lose a bad habit or, as many strive to do*



*these days, lose some weight. God is good; He is wonderful. Nevertheless, although these things are good, they pale in comparison to the fact that God is gracious, forgives sins in Christ, expects nothing from us other than faith and has prepared a home for us in heaven to live eternally with Him forever sharing His wonderfulness. You and I need to see beyond these good things when we pray this prayer and break through to a higher level of worth: the worth of eternity and not just the good fortune and deliverance of our God in temporal matters. We busy ourselves with the details of believing like going to church, serving on committees, bringing our bodies into control, raising Godly children and help others less fortunate than ourselves. But, if we do these things without an ever-watchful eye on the wonderfulness of Heaven and salvation in Jesus Christ, were just busy Christians and not Christians on an eternal journey. Tozer put it this way: "We try to promote religion, forgetting that it rests upon the character of God. If I have a low concept of God, my religion can only be a cheap, watery affair. But if my concept of God is worthy of God then it can be noble and dignified; it can be reverent, profound, beautiful." (Tozer, The Attributes of God)*

*KERNAL: God IS good! We ought to be reminded daily that His goodness reveals His wonderfulness. Then and only then will our faith be noble and our hearts pointed in the right direction heavenward.*

### **Conclusion:**

*Knowing God is far more important than being religious. And, God isn't difficult to know. He reveals Himself to us daily in His Word, His creation and in our willingness to communicate with Him in prayer and meditation. Knowing God comes from seeking Him not only in a Sunday pew, a weekly Bible class or even as we read His Word. Knowing comes from clearly making God a "knowledge" priority, from moment to moment. Every decision we make in life, whether to lift our spoon of oatmeal to our lips in the morning or making a right choice when the wrong choice is more attractive, presents an opportunity to see our reflection in the spiritual pupil of God's eye. He is near, always. He is not in Heaven; He IS. IS means He is over, around, in, above, next to and underneath us—always. God IS. What it comes down to is this: many of us are content to smile at God while tolerating the world around us. This isn't knowing—it's believing without entering into the knowledge of that belief. When we come to the realization that "Our Father in Heaven, may your name be holy among men; let your Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven" is the apex of eternal perfection and an infinite presence beyond understanding, we know that God is near. When we dwell on His beauty as He "gives us each day our daily bread" or meditate on how wonderful God is each time we feel his grace and forgiveness, His awesomeness will envelope us and His peace will be indwelling. Enoch walked with God in the Old Testament and God took Him to heaven. Our walk, yours and mine, ought to be the walk of Enoch. Jesus knew this and that's why He gave us this blessed, blessed prayer. Dear Friend, there is no veil on our Lord's face. He wants us to raise our eyes to His and be drawn in. In that drawing we will do all the things that we want to do, to preach, teach, convert, serve, bless and love. But the difference is that we will do these things not as busy Christians, but as believers in an awesome, gracious, fearful, wonderful, beautiful, perfect, infinite, eternal God. For Jesus sake!*

*Mark Brunner  
This Passing Day*

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