

Fatherhood of God Part II

Last week we began our series entitled the fatherhood of God. We noted the radical teaching that was introduced by Jesus when he instructed his disciples to address God as their heavenly Father.

It certainly was a radical departure from the Old Testament period when people were afraid to even pronounce the name of God.

We then explored the New Testament scriptures revealing that we have a right to adoption and that God has adopted those who have been born again as his very own children. An adoption made possible by the Jesus dealing with our sin problem on the cross.

So, everyone who has asked forgiveness, expressed remorse, and placed their faith in what Jesus did on the cross has been born again by the Spirit of God and as a result has been adopted by God as his very own children.

Hence, our Lord's disciples, and subsequently we as followers of Jesus, are able to legitimately call our awesome and infinitely holy God our Father.

In addition, we looked at scriptures that encourage us to come boldly into his presence.

Today, want to move ahead and explore some of the implications of this father-child relationship.

I trust that if you haven't already done so that you begin to think about God in terms of that Father-child

relationship and that you begin to address him in your thoughts and in your prayers as Jesus taught us- “Our Father”.

What are the most important things in life? I think it could be successfully argued that the most important thing in life is to be born again.

After all your life, that is your eternal life, depends on it. Because all have sinned, we are all doomed unless we take advantage of the offer to have our sins forgiven.

Because of what Jesus did on the cross, paying the penalty for our sin we can simply ask for, receive forgiveness, and be born again by the Spirit of God.

I trust that if you haven't already done do you will take those steps necessary to be born again.

It is the most important step you will take in your life.

Last week we looked at this verse from John chapter one verse twelve:

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

The point that we were making then, is that the New Testament father-child relationship is made possible by the work of Jesus on the cross and subsequently by taking that important step of being born again.

But today I want you to notice another important point from this verse.

Becoming a child of God is the first, and therefore the primary blessing or benefit of being born again.

But to all who believed him and accepted him, that is to those who have been born again, he gave the right to become children of God.

There are many blessings to being born again, but we see here John listing adoption as the first blessing.

Right at the outset, in the very first few verses of his gospel John underlines the importance of this primary benefit of becoming a child of God.

And then throughout the gospel, this Father child relationship continues to be mentioned.

And as his gospel winds up, in chapter twenty verse seventeen we read these words from our Lord.

But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God..

A consistent reminder of this primary blessing of being born again, a reminder that we are now a child of God, he is our Father, Jesus is our big brother, and all fellow believers are our brothers and sisters.

We might think that the promise of eternal life, or the promise of a mansion in glory is the primary blessing of being born again.

But John here consistently reminds us that our father-child relationship as the first and primary blessing of our born-again experience.

Now, we might well ask ourselves some important questions with respect to this.

How do I personally see my right as a child of God, my right to have this father child relationship in my own life?

Where does it rank in my life in terms of how important it is to me and my life?

How does my status as a child of God, how does this blessing as a child of God change the way I think, speak and act?

How does my status as a child of God, how does this blessing as a child of God change the way I think, speak and act with respect to my brothers and sisters in the Lord?

John at the outset and throughout his gospel is underlining for us the importance of this new relationship.

Obviously, the implication is that this blessing should have a significant impact in the way we live.

So, we see here in John's gospel and in many other places that our Lord constantly referred to God as his Father.

Note also in verses we have read the reminder to his disciples that God is their Father too.

So, if we would like to explore what our Father-child relationship with God should look like, we would do well to explore and emulate our Lord's relationship with the Father.

John in his letters would continue to remind his readers of the importance of this relationship and what it should mean to us.

First, the relationship should be characterized by love.

In I John 3:1 we read:

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!

Now any healthy relationship between a father and child is one that demonstrates genuine love.

So, in this verse we have just read, John affirms the love that the Father has for us.

But if our relationship with the Father is healthy it will naturally result in our loving our heavenly Father **and** in our loving other believers who are also adopted by our Father and therefore are our brothers and sisters.

Listen to I John chapter five, verse one and two:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too. We know we love God's children if we love God and obey his commandments.

Now as a bit of a homework assignment I would recommend you read the entire first John letter. It doesn't take long, but as you read it, watch for the many times John alludes to our heavenly 'Father'.

You probably remember that Jesus told his followers that they should be known by their love for one another.

Secondly, we see that in our Lord's relationship with his Father Jesus acknowledged and honoured the Father's authority.

In John 6:38 Jesus says:

For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will.

In John 4:34 Jesus says:

"My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work.

And the in John 17:4

I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

The Father sent Jesus to be with us here on earth for a few short years. He was sent with the intention of completing the plan of salvation. And Jesus obeyed.

Jesus obeyed the Father, recognized his authority, and accomplished the Father's plan.

Jesus was obedient to the Father's will. He worked at, and accomplished, the mission that he was assigned. An accomplishment that benefits us all by providing us with the opportunity to be born again.

Thus, if we as God's children wish to emulate Jesus, we must be seeking his will and purposes for our lives and living out that calling.

Thirdly, we see that our Lord's Father-child relationship was one of companionship and fellowship.

In John 8:29 Jesus says:

And the one who sent me is with me—he has not deserted me. For I always do what pleases him.”

And in John 16:32 Jesus says:

But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me.

Notice how in both these verses Jesus points to companionship with the Father. In spite of the trials that may well come because of our commitment to obedience to God's plan for our lives, the Father was always with the son, and he will always be with us as we are obedient to doing the Father's will.

Now you might be thinking well Jesus had a much different relationship with the Father. It was much easier for him to have that intimate fellowship than it is for me. Easier for him to communicate with the Father, and so on.

Well think about this for a moment, with rare exceptions, while Jesus was on this earth, his communication with the Father was through exactly the same mediums that we are called to use that is, prayer and the Holy Spirit.

You and I have those same mediums available to us.

The Father's presence will be with you as it was with Jesus when you are obedient to your calling, living out his plans and purposes for your life and communicating with him using prayer and the Holy Spirit.

You can communicate with him exactly the way Jesus did.

Fourthly, our Lord brought honour and glory to the Father and if we want to emulate Jesus then our lives should also bring honour and glory to our Fathers' name.

In John chapter seventeen verse one Jesus says:

Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you.

And then in verse four:

I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

That word 'glory' can be somewhat mystifying at times. What does it really mean?

The Greek word 'doxazo' has several connotations of meaning. It is frequently translated as 'glory' but it can also mean 'to honour' or 'to hold in honour' or 'to cause the dignity and worth of some person to become manifest and acknowledged.

Jesus lived his life here on earth to bring glory and honour to the Father.

God has adopted us as his children. What a great privilege! What a great honour!

Surely if we have been adopted into the most prestigious home in the universe, we would want to conduct ourselves in a way that honours that family!

Our lives should be lived in a way that would make the worth and value of a born again experience acknowledged.

So, we should ask ourselves regularly: Am I living every aspect of my life, my words, my thoughts, my actions and my attitudes in a way that is pleasing to him, and brings honour to him when viewed through the lens of others?

Let's be resolved to bring honour to our heavenly Father in return to the honour he bestowed on us.

Our last thoughts for today centre around the very nature of our life in Christ. The very nature of what the gospel, the good news, offers to us.

Again, what is the most important aspect of the gospel?

Many would say our salvation. The gift of grace, the indescribable gift as Paul calls it, the option to be born again by the Spirit of God as we have discussed in these two messages.

The fact that we can have our sins forgiven. The fact that we can be born again. The fact that our sins past, present, and future can be washed completely away.

To use a theological term, we can now stand before our Father God as justified. Someone has said that the position of being justified and be accurately explained by

changing the word into a phrase, ‘just as if I had never sinned’.

In Romans 8:1 Paul writes:

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

So, the work Jesus accomplished on the cross is powerful and it is important. It is critical to our status with God because without it we cannot be born again, and unless we are born again, we cannot be adopted, and without being born again or justified we cannot claim the promise of eternal life.

But the nature of it has a legal context. Before we came to Christ our sin was an affront to our holy God because we had broken his laws.

We were declared guilty. We were due to be punished until God designed a plan which would address our sin problem.

Thankfully, Jesus carried out that plan and so we have been set free from the punishment that lay ahead.

The New Testament scriptures remind us repeatedly of the need to acknowledge our sin problem; to ask forgiveness; and believe that Jesus did in fact pay our full price.

Think for a moment about a legal criminal trial here on earth. There are many cases which when tried, when all the evidence is examined, conclude that the prisoner is to be set free.

There may be joy on the part of the prisoner but there is no beneficial relationship that develops between the judge and the person on trial.

There is no doubt that salvation and justification is important and that it is critical. It is critical that we be examined, critical that we be found not guilty because of what Jesus did for us, critical that we be declared not guilty and set free.

But there is a higher dimension to adoption.

Technically speaking it would be possible to seek and receive forgiveness for our sins without ever developing a personal relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Adoption is made possible because of the cross, but adoption goes way beyond what the cross has accomplished.

Adoption gives us the privilege of developing and nurturing a Father-child relationship with our awesome God.

The awesome God, the judge of all the earth not only declares us not guilty, but adopts us and calls us his children.

Meditate for a few moments on what Paul writes in Galatians 4:7.

Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

The cross sets us free from our sin, but adoption is on a much higher plane than being set free, it brings us into a close family relationship with the one who once had been

our judge but now has loved us, adopted us, made us his own and made us an heir as well.

We close with a verse from I John 3:1

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!

I trust you are appreciating and working on that relationship.

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