

Abba, Father

“For God so loved the world that He gave His own begotten Son” (John 3:16). The most precious thing to the Father’s heart is His Son. Aren’t the most precious jewels in our own lives our children? Yet He was willing, able in some miraculous way to offer up His Only Son that we might be freed from our sins and brought into His family through a new birth, a spiritual birth. It is the most amazing thing that has ever happened in this universe, that we would be joined to God in such a way that he could be our Father and we could be His sons and daughters, part of His family. That is what is on my heart this morning.

Let’s begin with a word of prayer:

Father, I do not really know how to share what you have laid on my heart, but I ask for grace today. I ask for that Spirit of wisdom and revelation as we share together from Your Word out of the book of Ephesians. Lord, open our eyes. That was what the blind man requested when the Lord asked, “What do you want?” And the blind man said, “That I might see.” Lord, that is what is on our hearts today, that we would see more of You. We just ask that You would bless us in that way, Lord. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

It is pretty obvious that this matter of God our Father is on my heart this morning. We have been looking into the book of Ephesians, and in Ephesians 3:9 Paul made it very evident what his purpose was in writing this letter. He said, “That all men might see, to make all men see.” He had so much to show us. The last time I spoke I mentioned that there are a number of key words in this little book, and if you do a little word study on these words, it is amazing how the Lord can open up your heart to see Him. I will mention them again. Love is mentioned thirteen times, grace twelve times, glory nine times, in the heavenlies four times, together six times, fulness six times, and Father eight times. These are all very key words in the message to the Ephesians and to us.

Ephesians 1:2 says, “Grace be to you, and peace from God *our* Father.” Today our emphasis is on God our Father.

In Galatians 4:6, a companion verse, Paul said, “God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

Now the book of Ephesians is full of the wealth of God’s nature, of His work, of His riches in Christ Jesus that Paul so desperately wants us to not only know about but to experience.

Paul Makes Known the Riches of Christ

Paul struggled with the human language. And I feel something of that also in trying to express the inexhaustible riches that we find in Jesus Christ, the inexhaustible resources of God that we discover in Christ. We find that God has an eternal purpose to reveal the fulness of Christ in the ages to come. It was a mystery hidden to the Old Testament saints but revealed by the apostles. Once Jesus was risen from the dead God revealed His mystery. So great was this burden on our brother’s heart that he had to stop and pray. In Ephesians 1:17 he prayed, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” The Father of glory would give to us this Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

He is the Father of glory; He is the Father of full satisfaction. He is the Father who brings us all to completeness in Jesus Christ, the full measure of Christ expressed in each and every heart in all of His family. This is the God of glory, and that is our end to bring us all to glory, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory would give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation. The human mind cannot see or understand or comprehend what these riches are. It is only by the Spirit that we can know this. That is why we need to constantly pray, "Lord, I need to see; I need revelation; I need something beyond what I can discover with my mind. I need the Spirit to reveal what is behind these words in Your Book."

You know, all of the world can see some of the riches of the glory of God in His creation. All you have to do is go outside and look around and see the variations of trees that we have as you walk through the forest. I have been in the northwest, and it is beautiful out there. Those evergreen trees are gorgeous. This is for all to enjoy and to see the fields with all their beautiful flowers. Remember that our Lord Jesus spoke of the lilies in the valley. He was very aware of His Father's riches on this earth in His creation. In the morning when you wake up early, you can hear the birds singing as the sun rises, and that is for all to see. Then there is the cooing of the doves in the afternoon. I like to sit outside at my table in the afternoon and hear the doves cooing, cooing, cooing. It is like the Lord's love song to us, drawing us to Himself because that is what the doves are doing, drawing their mate to themselves. Then there is the magnificent sunset; At night we have the stars like jewels in the sky, oh how beautiful!

In so much of our lives we never notice these things. There is that little saying, "We need to stop and smell the roses." This creation reveals our God. I am so sorry that many do not see Him or are drawn to Him just by looking at His creation. As a matter of fact, the Lord said that you are all guilty of not searching for God or not seeing Him in His creation because He is so evident. All of these things are tests for us to be able to see the unsearchable riches that we find in God our Father and the resources that are there to see and experience and hopefully be drawn to Him.

But for those who love Him, for those who have been born again of the Spirit, you are family now, a member of His spiritual family, and He has something special for His family. Listen to I Corinthians 2:9:

"He has prepared things that the eye has not seen, nor the ear has heard, nor the heart has ever conceived of the riches of His grace for those who love Him." They are beyond imagination.

Brothers and sisters, beyond all that we can imagine or see; we have just touched, scratched the surface of the riches that Christ wants to reveal to us, of what the Father wants to reveal to us and experience in this life and the life to come.

Ephesians 1:2-3 begins with this: "Grace and peace from God our Father."

Brothers and sisters, we need to know that it is not only from God, but it is from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ His Son.

Blessed with All Spiritual Blessings

Verse 2: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ."

If you read the first chapter in Ephesians, you find the blessings we have already received. It says that we have been chosen in Him, predestined in Him, adopted as sons in Christ, accepted in the Beloved in Christ. We have been forgiven of our sins. We have been saved unto an eternal salvation. And this is just the beginning of the riches that have already been poured out on us. There is so much more to do, more to see, more to know. We cannot even imagine what they are with our human minds.

These riches are for those who love Him, and to experience them you must know Him, and you need to know Him as your Father. They are for His family. They are for His children. To be His family you must be born again; you must be born of the Spirit. That is what the Lord told Nicodemus who was interested in coming into the kingdom. That was His interest. The Lord stopped him and said, "Look, you have a real issue. You need to be born again. You cannot know the kingdom unless you are born again in your spirit by the Spirit. It takes the Holy Spirit coming into your life, into your spirit to quicken you, to bring about that new birth in you so that you are able to commune with the Father and to receive of His riches. It is all by spiritual birth."

In Ephesians 2:18-19 Paul says, "For through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore you are no longer strangers or foreigners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

You are of His household. Remember that saying, "There is no place like home." You are of the household of God. All the riches of the Father, all the grace and blessings of the Father are made available to His family in Christ to His household, to His own.

Paul is so overwhelmed at this point in His letter with the grace and extent of the mercies of God and His riches that it says he falls to his knees. This is in Ephesians 3:14-15. He falls to his knees, and he says, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Notice he said, "I bow my knees to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

The Fatherhood of God

God is a Father, and He relishes being our Father. Fatherhood did not begin with man, nor did it begin with Adam. Fatherhood began with God Himself. He is a Father and has been a Father from eternity. It is His nature; Fatherhood is His nature, and from eternity He has desired this spiritual family.

All things were created for Him and by Him, and man especially was created for Him." Why? He wants to bring many sons to glory, and that includes daughters.

Romans 8:29 makes it really clear. He said, "Christ is the firstborn among many brethren." We are His brothers and sisters by spiritual birth. He is the elder Son in the family. Paul is very aware of God's desire to express Himself as a Father and to have a family. He is very aware of God's heart for His family.

In Ephesians 4:3 he encourages us in the family to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and he reinforces that in Ephesians 4:6. He reminds us that we need to maintain the unity of the spirit because we have one God and Father who is above all of us, through all of us

and in all of us. The Spirit of the Father in Christ Jesus is in all of us. In other words, we are encouraged to keep the family spirit, the unity of the spirit; that is keeping the family spirit, and that comes from the Father Himself.

In Ephesians 5 Paul encourages us as a family to walk in love, and he says we have a responsibility for the family and for one another to encourage one another, to fellowship with one another.

Ephesians 5:19-21 says, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Praise the Lord we were able to do that this morning. Making melody in our hearts to the Lord, giving thanksgiving always for all things unto God and unto the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Brothers and sisters, how He wants His family together! Then he adds, "submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God. You cannot submit to one another unless you love them. You just cannot do it. The flesh is too strong. Submitting yourself to one another. This is family life, being together, praising the Lord together, offering up songs, encouraging one another. Oh, the love of the Father! He says, "Walk in love." That love comes into our heart by the Spirit. The Father's love pours into our heart, and we are able to pour that love out to our brothers and sisters in the family and to whomever.

In chapter 6 of Ephesians we find a great warfare, and we know that. It speaks of principalities and powers of darkness, and they are shown in full array. What are they against? They are out to deny the Father His family, the family that He has always wanted. Christ came to redeem sinful man in order to have sons for His family. Today, the Spirit is working to bring many sons to glory. Do you know what that means? That means full maturity in Christ.

It was spoken last week of the depth and height, the length and the breadth, four dimensions, not three, but four dimensions of Christ in love. Oh, He wants to bring us all to the fulness of what we were born for and for what we desire to be. The enemy is exerting all of his efforts to divide and destroy the family, to deny the Father of His great desire for a spiritual family, many sons brought to glory like His firstborn, Jesus Christ.

Finally, Paul ends in Ephesians 6:23: "Peace to the brethren and love with faith, from God the Father." Peace, oh that means something. That means that there are difficulties, troubles, trials and tribulations. That is why we need the peace of the Father in our hearts, knowing that all will be well in Him. Even in our trials and troubles, one thing I can guarantee you in this family while we are maturing and growing, unfortunately there will be offenses. We will offend one another, knowingly or unknowingly. It happens quite often, but we are encouraged to respond to the love of the Father in our hearts for His family and for His own to put aside ourselves, to deny ourselves, and to maintain that family spirit in love. If we do this, He will pour out His faith and love. Faith and love cannot be separated because faith is trusting, and if you trust the Father you will love the Father, and if you love the Father, you will trust Him even more, and the more you trust Him the more you love Him. Faith and love are what the Father provides for us, and it is this faith and love that ultimately triumphs.

We are familiar with a little of what the Father is because we have all had fathers. Now fathers fall far short of who God our Father is. He is perfect in every way, in all of His dealings with us they are perfect, and we know with our own fathers that was not always true. I am saddened by some fathers who are abusive, and that is tragic. But for anybody who has been in that situation, I want to encourage you this morning, that is not a picture of God our Father. That is not the Father's intention. He has never been abusive with anyone, even His discipline is always in love.

The Mystery of Father in the Old Testament

Paul speaks of a mystery, and actually God as Father was a mystery in Paul's day. It was a mystery to the Jews; it was a mystery even to the religious leaders. They did not really see God as Father. So how is it that Paul had such insight into this matter of who the Father is, and the Father's great love for His family? Until Christ came, the Father was virtually unknown; it was a mystery. The Jewish leaders did not consider the term Father in any way like we do today. What does this mystery mean? It does not mean that it is a myth, it does not mean that it is mysterious, it does not mean that God is kind of playing hide and seek with us on this matter. It means that He has kept a secret, something precious in His heart, hidden and undisclosed until the perfect timing, until the fulness of time when He feels He can really reveal it, and He holds back.

In the Old Testament He hinted at it in types and symbols, but He did not uncover or reveal the fulness of the Fatherhood until Jesus came. We know that in the Old Testament the ark was a type of Christ. The curtains were a type of Christ, His body torn, the lampstand; all of these things spoke of Christ; they were types, but Christ was the reality. It is the same with the Fatherhood. God hinted at it in the Old Testament. Adam and Eve were joined together by God, and then He told them to multiply. Of course, this implies family; it implies that Adam would be a father. The name patriarch means head of the family.

Exodus 4:22, God says, talking to Moses, "Say to Pharaoh, thus saith the Lord; Israel is my son, my firstborn."

In Isaiah 64:8 Isaiah says to the Lord, "Lord, you are our Father." The idea of family is throughout the Old Testament. However, the Fatherhood of God was mostly hidden. Now I found four instances of where God referred to Himself as Father in the Old Testament, and I am not saying that is the exact number because I read another piece by another brother in the Lord who said that he had found ten. He is probably more accurate than I am because I did not do an in-depth search. But that shows you how little God as Father was mentioned in the Old Testament or known by Israel up unto the time of our Lord Jesus.

The Holy One of Israel

The Lord's people did not speak of Him as Father nor did they address Him as Father. The Jews' concept of God up until Jesus came can be summed up in one word, 'Holy'. Remember, He was always referred to as the Holy One of Israel. Isaiah refers to Him as the Holy One of Israel twenty-nine times. In chapter 6 Isaiah had a vision of the Lord on the throne and he said, "I saw the Lord high and lifted up, and the angels cried, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.'"

Brothers and sisters, this word Holy basically means separate, different, other than other, set apart from others. The priests were considered holy because they were different than all the other men in Israel. The temple was holy because there was no other structure like this temple, God was Holy because He was completely different from all other gods. He was the God of gods. (Of course, we know the other gods were really not gods.) Because He was Holy and so lifted up, He was unapproachable by sinful man, and that was their concept. In fact, even the high priest could only enter the Holy of Holies once a year. How rare it was to be able to come into the presence of God! We know that we can do that now. Through Christ we can come to the Father; we can come into that Holy place.

Remember God's people at Sinai, and this is what came to my heart in Exodus 19 and 20. God was coming down to give the law to Moses and the pattern of the tabernacle. He came down on the mountain, and it says that the mountain was engulfed in smoke. There was fire and lightening, and an earthquake, and the mountain quaked. There was the sound of a trumpet that kept getting louder and louder and longer and longer. There was the voice of God, and the people retreated from the mountain; they were scared to come near the mountain. In fact, God had instructed Moses to say, "Anybody who touches the mountain will die. Keep the animals away from this mountain." And the people said to Moses, "You can speak to us, and we will listen, but let not God speak with us lest we die." That was their concept, and they stayed at a distance. They were so terrified of God they would not come into His presence. This was their concept.

This is what Paul was steeped in, brought up in. This is what the Jewish leaders and people were brought up in. Now by contrast in the New Testament, God is referred to as Father 250 times. Jesus Himself referred to God as Father 165 times. The Gospel of John, chapters 14-17 are very precious chapters. John shares with us what the Lord said during the period of time from the end of the Lord's supper until Jesus arrives at the Garden of Gethsemane. It is about a mile and a quarter walk, and I do not know how long it took Him, but there is this discourse in chapters 14-17 in which He was pouring out His heart to the disciples and to His Father, especially that precious prayer to God His Father in John 17. During that time, He spoke of God as Father forty-eight times. During that time (it was probably an hour or two max) He spoke of His Father constantly. Now this concept of the Father was totally foreign to the Jews. In fact, they considered it heresy to refer to Him as Father.

The Mystery of Father Revealed when Christ Came

In John 15:17-18 when the Lord Jesus referred to God as Father, they sought to kill Him. In John 8:19 He told the Jewish leaders, "You do not know me nor the Father." Later, in John 16:3 He tells His disciples, "These leaders are like this and do these things because they know not the Father."

So it was a mystery. In fact, Jesus said in John 17, I have manifested thy name. So the name of God as Father was not revealed until Jesus Christ came."

John 17:6: "I have manifested Thy name. I have done what I came to do." In other words, He manifested the name of God. It is very clear when you read this chapter, that that name is Father. He said, "I have come to manifest the Father. I did not come to give you a teaching on the Father

or to talk about Fatherhood. I have demonstrated to you the Father and the Father's heart. If you want to know the Father, you need to know me."

In John 14:8-9 Jesus was talking about His Father, and Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father." And Jesus said, "He that has seen me has seen the Father."

Brothers and sisters, the mission of the Son was to reveal to mankind God the Father and to secure a family for the Father. All of His Life He was demonstrating what God the Father is like. He said, "Look, all I say is what the Father says, all that I do is what the Father does. I am representing the Father."

Jesus, in His Person, showed us our Father. What was He like? Jesus was very open and very approachable. He even drew the little children. They were trying to keep the little children from Him, but He said, "No, bring them to me." He was very approachable. He healed the sick. He restored sight to the blind. He raised the dead, He fed 5,000, He brought love and comfort wherever He went, He reached out to the sinners and was rebuked for talking to a sinner. He talked to sinners. He said, "They need a physician. If you do not think you are a sinner, you do not need Me." This is what the Father is like.

The I AMs in the Scriptures

You will remember all of the I AMs in the Gospel of John. Through these I AMs Jesus really shows us who the Father is. In John 6 Jesus declares: "I AM the bread of life." Then He says, "All that the Father gives me shall come to me." In other words, He is saying, "Come unto me, the Father will feed you with the best food. I AM the bread of life. Spiritual food is the Father's care for you. The Father will feed His family.

In John 8 He says, "I AM the light of the world." In connection with that Scripture He says, "And he that sent me is with me: The Father has not left me alone." In other words, He was sent to be a light for us, a light for His family in this dark world. You know, in Romans it speaks of darkened minds.

Brothers and sisters, I do not care how intelligent people are, and those who are governing our nation are supposed to be some of the most intelligent men, but we can see the darkened minds that are operating there. It is darkness, and He said, "I bring light to you." We could get very confused in this world but settle your heart down before the Father and say, "Father, I need the light. You promised me light through Your Son Jesus Christ." He does not want us to live in darkness. In fact, we are called in His word, "the sons of light."

In John 10 He said, "I am the good Shepherd. I know my sheep, and the Father knows me." What is He saying? "I know every one of my sheep. I am the good Shepherd. And the Father knows you too, and He wants a personal relationship with you, just like I do. He knows you; He knows everything about you, and He loves you. He has promised to shepherd you all your life. I am going to make sure you have a good shepherd."

Jesus said in John 11 when he raised Lazarus from the dead, "I am the resurrection and the life." Previously in John 5:21 he said, "As the Father raises up the up dead, and quickens them; even so the Son quickens whom he will." The raising of the dead was from the Father.

What is he saying? He said that the Father is going to preserve this family; death cannot destroy it. Death cannot separate you from the family; He has overcome death. We have His resurrection life, and we can overcome even death. We experience death every day in this world; we sense all the powers of darkness pressing in on us. The Lord is saying, "I as your Father can overcome this death. My Son is the resurrection and the life. Take Him; take that resurrection life in the face of the onslaught of the powers of darkness."

This is the Father's heart for us. I would suggest that you might want to read the gospel of John again with this point of view that John is trying to show us what the Father is like and who the Father is through His Son Jesus Christ. John saw Jesus as the Son of God. In fact, he said that He came to show us through his gospel that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God and to show us that He is the full expression of God as a Father. Of all the gospel writers, John emphasizes the Lord's words concerning the Father more than any of the others. There are 134 references in John's Gospel to the Father. I think it is for our hearts to show us how much the Father cares for us and loves us. So we can understand why John, who was with the Lord for three and a half years as the other disciples were, responded to His love so greatly. They observed the Lord, they listened to Him, they heard Him talking and speaking, they heard His words concerning the Father. We can understand why they could have some revelation of what the Father is like, and they did. They saw that He was an affectionate Father; He was not a terrifying Father. And He wanted children like His Son. He wanted those who would commune with Him as a Father, close to Him, serving His purpose.

Paul's Revelation of God the Father

What about Paul? He did not have that kind of relationship, did he? I could not help but wonder as I was looking into this, how did Paul get such a revelation of God as Father? It was unknown to Paul. The religious leaders and those who taught him said nothing about this matter of God as Father. In fact, he considered Jesus, who said that He was representative of God as Father, as his enemy. He thought Jesus was God's enemy.

But on the Damascus Road he met the Lord Jesus Christ. He fell to his knees and immediately submitted to Him as Lord and said, "Lord, who are You? You are Lord, but I just do not know who You are." And Jesus said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." That encounter blinded Paul for three days. I am sure the Lord did that in order for him to be in total silence trying to understand what had just happened to him. But I could not help but wonder, and said, "Lord, he has been blinded for three days." That would be a bit terrifying to most of us. However, I do not feel that Paul was terrified. On the other hand, I think he was in awe and wonder. But I do wonder if possibly he realized, "You know I have come in contact with the Son of God, the holy One, the righteous One. I have seen Him, and I am still alive; I am not dead. He is not a terrifying Father. I am still here; I have not been destroyed. I deserve it but I have not been destroyed." Well, I do not know for sure, but we do know that he accepted Christ as his Lord, and he had become a son of the Father. He was part of the family now, and that became a key, I believe, to His revelation.

Galatians 4:6 explains to us how Paul discovered God as Father. It says, "And because You are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

The Spirit had come into Paul, and he sensed that God was his Father, Abba, Father. It was the Holy Spirit who showed him. It was a revelation for him. It was in him; it was more than just an understanding. He had touched God as Father.

Now remember that the Lord sent Ananias, a family member, to open his eyes. And this is Paul's account in Acts 22: "The God of our fathers has chosen thee that thou should know His will, and see that Just One and hear the voice of His mouth." That must have affected Paul. He said, "The holy One has chosen me. He was my opponent, my enemy; I hated His Son, and I persecuted His followers. But these are not just followers; they are His family, and He is telling me, "If you are going to mess with my family, you are messing with Me. You give account to Me. I am their Father."

Once again, I do not know, but I could not help but wonder if that didn't really strike Paul; they were his family. He retreated to the desert for three years, and I am sure that he began to go through the whole Old Testament in the light of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. He saw all those types which really pointed to Jesus Christ. He had finally met the reality, and that is why he said, "The shadow is no longer needed, for I have come into the reality." First, God revealed His Son to him, then I believe He revealed the fact that He was God the Father, and then He revealed His family.

Israel was his earthly family, but that was just a type; it was not the reality. It is His spiritual family that He was looking to and looking for. This new family is those who are born from above out of every nation, tongue and tribe. It was not just Israel, but it was out of every nation, tongue and tribe. This is His family, His new family. Did Paul see this? I believe he did.

In Ephesians 3:14-15: "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

It was not just Israel; he saw that there was a spiritual family out of every nation, tribe and tongue. Paul himself manifested the Spirit of the Father. In the Corinthian Church, there were many whom he had actually brought to Christ. He said, "I am like a father to you." They were rejecting Paul; they were opposing him. Some were being rebellious and were very carnal Christians. They tried to undermine his apostolic authority and his leadership over them. And this is Paul's word to them. "I will most gladly be spent for your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I to be loved less?" This is a father's heart. We love our children. Oh, they make mistakes, and some of them make tragic mistakes, but we love them. That is the father heart. Thank God, we have a Father that can correct these things.

Paul's Revelation of Abba, Father

Paul seemed to have a special revelation of the Father, a unique revelation. It is called, Abba Father. Paul's revelation was really full. My heart today as we come to this is that we would all see Him as Abba, Father because Paul wanted us all to see this.

In Galatians 4:6 Paul used this term Abba, Father. "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

In Romans 8:15 he uses it again. He says, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

This term Abba, Father is used only one other time in Scripture. It is used by our Lord Jesus Christ in Mark 14:36. It says, "Abba, Father, all these things are possible to Thee. Take away this cup from me, nevertheless not what I will but what You will."

"Abba, Father, all things are possible. Will you take this cup from me? Not my will but yours be done." Abba is an Aramaic term; it is not Hebrew or Greek; it is an Aramaic term. It means Father. And the other word, Father that is joined to it, was a Greek word meaning Father. So when we read this, are we just saying, "Father, Father?" No, not at all. This Aramaic term is used because it was an intimate term in the Aramaic language. It meant intimacy, an intimate Father. It spoke of a personal, loving relationship between the child and their father. It was an adoring, name, an adoring family name, for the father. The child could affectionately come to Abba. The child honors, loves and respects their father, and they reverence him; yet they could come to Abba. They could comfortably approach Him without fear and share in the affection of the Father.

Jesus used this term when He prayed to His Father in Gethsemane before the cross. He was talking about taking up the cup. Of course, that was the cross where He would die for my sins and your sins. He was concerned about the separation that would occur between Him and His Father that had never occurred in eternity past, a separation that I am not sure if He realized whether He could bear. It says that when He began to pray, sweat and drops of blood poured out of His pores. It was so intense, and He was overwhelmed at this thought of the separation from His Father. The Father looked down and saw it was unbearable for His Son, and I am sure it was as unbearable for the Father. Yet He knew to have the family, His Son was going to have to die to bring many sons into the family. In other words, the cross was unavoidable. What did the Father do? It says that He sent angels to Him to strengthen Him, to succor Him during that time.

Isaiah 53:10-11 says, "When the Lord makes his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, and he shall be satisfied." That was what He was looking forward to, His seed, His family. That is us, brothers and sisters. That is why He went through the cross, that is why the Father allowed Him to go through the cross to see His seed and be satisfied.

In that day the people had slaves. We know there were slaves in the family. Some of them were very close, almost like family members, and yet if you were a slave, you could not use the term Abba. You could say Father, but you could not use the term Abba. It was meant only for the family.

Paul uses that in Romans. He said that once you were slaves to your flesh and you have been set free, you are no longer slaves, you have the spirit of adoption in you crying out, Abba, Father. You have a new Father; you are in a new family; you are not a slave anymore to your passions and lusts.

In Galatians, it was similar. He was saying to them, "You were a slave under the law; you were bound by the law, and you could not keep the law. But he says, "You now have the Spirit within you that cries, Abba, Father." In other words, you are in the King's family now; you are no longer a slave; you are free in Christ.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus came that He might reveal the Father to you, Abba, Father. The Spirit in you should cry out, "Abba, Father."

In I John 3:1 it says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God."

John 16:26: "The Father himself loves you because you have loved me."

The Father wants us to be close to him. We should be reverent, for He is our Father, but we can also have an intimate relationship with Him as Father. He wants to lavish his love upon us. That is why He sent His Son, Christ Jesus, to show us His love.

The Training of His Children

The Lord loves you like that, and yet He does not spoil his children; he is not a father who spoils his children, his family. Paul obviously saw him as a loving Father, and he knew the Father's love for him. Yet as you read II Corinthians 11, Paul said he had exhausted himself in laboring diligently for the Lord. Five times he was whipped with thirty-nine stripes, once he was stoned, three times he was shipwrecked. He spent a day and a night treading water in the ocean. He was always on the watch for thieves and robbers. He was always followed by the Judaizers trying to discredit His ministry and apostleship. He said that he was weary and in pain. But then he said that by far his biggest burden was his care for the church, the Lord's family.

He was even given a thorn in the flesh by the Father to keep him humble. Remember, he was taken up to the third heaven and he also went to Paradise and saw things that he could not share. God the Father did not remove that thorn for Paul's sake to keep him humble and always dependent on God's grace. He said, "My grace is sufficient. Paul, you need to learn, My grace is sufficient. You need to humble yourself; you will always need to depend on My grace, but by the riches of My grace, you can overcome. I am sufficient."

Is this love? I say it is. The Lord does not want to spoil us. It says in Hebrews that those whom the Lord loves He disciplines; He corrects us. This word for discipline is not punishment. We are in child-training. He is training us to live an overcoming life, not a life of luxury and pleasure. He is training us for life in the kingdom, to serve in His kingdom, to be His family in the kingdom. In fact, we are to be the governing family in the kingdom, and to govern we have to come to maturity; therefore, we have to be trained.

In Ephesians 3:10 he says, "Through my family I am going to make known My manifold wisdom to all the principalities and powers." I am sure He is talking about the good principalities and powers. He said, "My wisdom is going to be manifested through my family."

In Ephesians 3:23-32 he talks of his family as the helpmate to the Lord Jesus, His bride. He loved the church and gave his life for us, and through His Word he is removing all the spots and wrinkles.

The Lord is not going to spoil us, but He is going to train us. He is going to bring us to maturity and glory. All the spots will be removed; all that is not of Christ in your life will be gone. That is what He is working on. There will be times in our lives when there are unexplainable things that

happen, things that would make us wonder and maybe give us difficulty in our lives with the Lord. There will even be darkness at times, but the Lord is teaching us to trust Him as Father. In all of these difficult times, He is teaching us to trust Him as Father, as a loving Father who wants to give us faith and love.

I can only say that until I started looking into this word 'Father' in the book of Ephesians, I had no depth of understanding of what it meant to call, God our Father. But I am thinking and praising the Lord that a little bit of light has been given, and I see the Father in a new way. I pray that I will see Him more, that all of us will see Him more. I think the purpose of my sharing this morning is that we would really know God our Father, Abba, Father.

Abba, Father, we come to You this morning. We praise and thank You that we have been called the sons of God, and that You are going to bring us to glory as sons. You are going to have this marvelous family that You have wanted all through eternity to share with You and with Your Son throughout eternity future. Lord, it is actually more than we can really grasp with our human minds, but You have said that You were going to show us things that we could not fathom, but Lord, we are grateful that we are Your children, and today we can call You, Abba, Father. In Jesus' name. Amen.