

06/19/11

## Friend of God #8 – God Our Father

- We recognize this morning that Father's Day conjures up many different thoughts and images for the men and women who will be part of our services today...
- that is always one of the challenges we face with practically anything we do around here...
  - just a random example – should we make public announcements about couples having babies week after week knowing that such news could be difficult for a couple struggling with infertility?
  - should we honor mothers on mother's day knowing full well that some will be in attendance whose moms were anything but honorable?...
- we take questions like that very seriously and we try to avoid unintended consequences whenever possible...and we ask the Holy Spirit, and trust the Holy Spirit to personally apply whatever emphasis we're making from the Scripture to each individual present...
- it's in that spirit that I would encourage you to think about what a marvelous privilege it is when a person's father is also his friend...
  - of course that's a transition that is made as the son moves into adulthood...
  - but many of us – certainly not all – but many of us would be able to thank the Lord this morning that we had a father who was also a friend...
- My dad was a very hard working man...and when I was growing up, he was also putting himself through college so his schedule was busy to say the least...
- but one week a year he and some of his close friends from down south would go fishing in Canada together...
- this was back in the early 1960's when you could go to places in Canada that had barely been fished at all and some of the pictures they brought back from those early trips were unbelievable as far as the size of the fish and the number of fish they caught in a given week...
- my dad also had some very close friends and they thoroughly enjoyed that trip together...
- something I'll never forget is that when I reached the age of 10, my dad started taking me along...which meant extra expense, and having to care for a 10 year old with limited patience, and all of that...
  - but he let me in on those trips with his friends and they accepted me into the group...
  - eventually we began taking trips to lakes in Canada that were only accessible by float plane, and those trips became highlights of the summer...because my dad and his friends wanted me to be part of the group...
  - this is one of my oldest possessions...it was a gift when I graduated from high school in 1978...it's a hand tied rod from my dad's friend Jack matched to a fishing reel from my dad and mom...I still love catching fish on this set because of the memories and the meaning...
- when I graduated from high school and started building in-ground pools to work my way through college and seminary...my dad would often take weeks of work off and come out and work with us on the crew...
- he used to like to say that he was the only employee in the history of our nation's economy who not only never was paid for his labor, but still was expected to buy lunch for the crew...but we had some great times working together and he was a tremendous help...

- when it came time to select a best man for my wedding, I was thankful for the many friends the Lord gave me in college...but it probably won't surprise you to know that the person I selected...was my dad...
- what an incredible privilege it was to have a father who was also a great friend...
- my father died 7 years ago, and one of the most meaningful things that has ever been done for me was when Pastor Dutton, and Arvid, and Barry Redding, and Tom Hessler surprised me for my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday last year and planned a fishing trip to go back to the same lodge my dad used to take me to...
  - we had a great trip together for sure...
  - but the memories that came flooding back were unreal...
  - I kept thinking about all these kids in our culture and our community growing up without full time-fathers...
  - and how I was blessed to have, not just a dad---but a dad and all his friends, who had an incredibly positive influence on me...
- whenever you can use the words father and friend in the same sentence...that is a powerful combination...
- now, why did I tell you about all of that this am?...
  - it's because I would like all of us to sit back and think about the fact that when God selected words to try to help us understand the kind of relationship we could have with Him...He chose these exact same words...
  - and that's what I'd like to talk to you about this morning...**God our Father**...
  - with that in mind, would you please open your Bible to Romans 8 this morning...page 123 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- we were in this same passage last week and as I was reading the text I pointed out that we were going to skip over one particular section and save it for today...I think you'll see why..
- this morning we want to focus on Romans 8:12-17...**Read**
- we're talking about God our Father, and with the time we have remaining, let's think about **3 blessings of a Having a Father in Heaven...**

### **I. Guidance – Because of a Spirit Who Leads Us.**

- verse 14 makes it clear -- **Romans 8:14 - For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.**
- one of the benefits of God being willing to function as our Father is that we are given access to something we desperately need as human beings...and that is, guidance...whether we always recognize it or not...or act like we know this to be true – people like you and me really need to be led...
- now, this is one of those places where following the argument of the text is so critical...that's one of the reasons I decided to take an extra week on Romans 8 to be sure we had time to follow Paul's logic carefully...
- so please go back to verses 12-13 and let's walk through them carefully...because that's the key to understanding what it means to be...beneficiaries of the Father's leadership through the Spirit...
  - **read verse 12...**
    - what does that mean?...we don't have to live according to the flesh?...according to our own desires or impulses and habits of this sinfully habituated body...

- Scripture doesn't teach that everything about our bodies is entirely sinful...God created our bodies...
  - but Scripture does teach that they are inherently weak and easily habituated...
- one of the challenges is that we are often told by our world that we need to be true to ourselves...we need to follow our inclinations...we need to do what comes naturally...
- this verse suggests the polar opposite...
- then verse 13 says – **READ...**

- here's what that means – even though we often want just to do what comes naturally, or what we feel like doing...
  - God is seeking to lead us to do the polar opposite by His Spirit...
  - and that's the point...

**A. Often fathers must lead their children in an entirely different direction than the one that comes naturally to the child.**

- why?...because the path that comes naturally often leads to death and destruction, that's why...
- **Proverbs 14:12 – There is a way *which seems* right to a man, but its end is the way of death.**
  - how many times have you or I thought what just popped in our minds naturally, or said whatever we just wanted to say, or did whatever we just wanted to do...and we made an incredible mess of things...
  - we thought that road would lead to life and in fact it led to death...
  - that's the point of this crucial passage...**James 1:14-15 – But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.**
    - here's the quickest way to ruin a relationship – act on your own natural desires...you'll kill it...
    - here's the quickest way to hurt your family – just do what you want to do all the time...
    - here's the quickest way to get fired from your job – just do what you feel like doing...

- that's why we need guidance...that's why we need leadership...that's why we need fathers...

**B. A father's task is often to provide teaching that is counter-intuitive.**

- that's what's happening in this text...
- **Romans 8:13 - for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**
  - so when I wanted to spend all my money as soon as I got it – my dad led me to learn to save a portion of what I earned...
  - and when I wanted to do things right away whether I had thought it through completely or the time was right – my dad led me to learn to wait and be patient
  - and when I wanted to be selfish and only do what was best for me – my dad led me to consider the needs of others and be selfless...
  - the point is – when you think about the concept of being led by the Spirit—don't think about it in some fuzzy, ethereal fashion...
    - it is a provision by our father to take us in a direction (to lead, to guide) that frequently is the opposite of our natural inclination...

- the teaching/leading/guiding ministry of a Father is often counter-intuitive...

- now, let's apply that to both human fathers and our heavenly father...

1. Dads – let me ask you this morning – are you teaching/leading your children in this fashion?...because here's the bottom line – if what this text is saying is true and it is...

- that means there will be times when you are not the most popular guy on the block...

- sometimes in order to be a respected, honored, goof friend to your child when they're adults...means you have to put up with all sorts of shining, pouting, griping, grumping when they're kids...

2. Young people – let me ask you—are you listening to what God's Word is telling you this am?...

- that you need to be led...and many times, you need to be led in exactly to opposite direction of the one that naturally comes to your mind...

- and how you respond to that leadership is one of the essential tests of whether you are growing up like a person who is wise or like a person who's a fool...

- and for some young people hearing this message today – the truth is, you are not benefiting from the leadership your father and mother are trying to provide to you...and it would be a really good idea to acknowledge that to them and the Lord before the sun goes down...

- your dad is trying to be your friend by giving you what you need, not what you want...you're mad at him when you ought to be mad at you...

- **Proverbs 12:15 - The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.**

- by the way – here's a quick piece of advice for anyone who wants to move in the direction of wisdom...see if you can pick it up in this verse...

- **Proverbs 10:8 - The wise of heart will receive commands, but a babbling fool will be ruined.**

- the word "fool" in the Bible is sometimes preceded with the word "babbling"...

- do you know what babbling means?...talking a lot...

- we'll never receive the guidance God is seeking to give us unless we use our ears more than we use our mouths...

3. a third question is – Christian, are you willing to be led?...

- I'm not saying this with sour grapes this am, but one of the hard lessons I've had to learn in public ministry and in private counseling is – not every person wants to be led...

- not every so-called Christian is willing to be led by the Spirit...

- not every church member is willing to be led by their pastors...

- not every wife is willing to be led by her husband...

- amazingly, not every employee is willing to be led by his/her boss...

- not every child is willing to be led by their parents...

- one of the blessings of having God as our heavenly Father is His willingness to provide guidance...even though it is often the polar opposite of what we would have thought or wanted on our own...

- the question before the house is – are you benefitting from that aspect of the relationship?

- verse 15 explains a 2<sup>nd</sup> benefit...

## II. Confidence – Because of the Blessing of Adoption

- please look carefully at the wording of verse 15...

**- Romans 8:15 - For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again...**

- what does fear have to do with any of this?...

- why would you or I ever have reason to be wrongfully afraid in our relationship with God?...

- here's one of the best answers to that question...the fear of condemnation...

- it's the fear of messing up so badly that we're thrown out of the family...

- and that's why this passage makes it crystal clear...

### A. You no longer have to fear condemnation.

- what we're studying this morning is actually book-ended by that crucial theological concept...

**- Romans 8:1 - Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**

**- Romans 8:34 - who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.**

- that's confidence secured by the grace of our heavenly Father...and just to be sure we understand the intimacy of all of this...God uses the precious metaphor of adoption...

### B. When you repent of your sin and trust Jesus Christ as your savior and Lord, you are adopted into the family of God.

- that is precious and secure any way you look at it...but in Bible times, there is no question that an adopted child was given equal status with the other children in the family, and sometimes even a position of honor...

- most of you know that of our three children, two of them are adopted...

- Kris and I are certainly not claiming to have been perfect parents—after all, I was involved...but we can say this with integrity I believe – we never treated our adopted children any differently than the one we had naturally...each one was and is an important part of our family...

- I love that picture, and this one as well...

- and do you realize what these verses are saying to you...if you know Christ as Savior and Lord...God has a photo album...and you're in the picture...

- you have been adopted into the family – and sure you may make some goofy choices that may result in fatherly displeasure and even temporary discipline...but you need not fear eternal condemnation...because Jesus paid for your sin once and for all...

- and I realize that some people might get all wound up about what I'm saying...PV, if people hear this, it will give them a license for sin....they won't take holiness and sanctification seriously unless we keep them guessing...

- I think the exact opposite is the case...and it ties back with what we were saying a moment ago...

- openness and authenticity about the ways you still need to be led...ways you still need to grow...

- that kind of honesty comes from being secure in the relationship...

- that's why Paul could say in the previous chapter...**Romans 7:19 - For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.**

- how could Paul be that open and honest about the nature of his ongoing spiritual struggles?...
- the answer is – he knew he had been adopted into the family because of the finished work of Christ, and therefore he also knew that there was no condemnation to those who were in Christ Jesus...

- this is why...

**C. You can speak to God with terms of great endearment.**

**- 8:15 – by which we cry out, Abba, Father...**

- the Lord invites you to come to Him in that fashion, whether you've had a great week of growth and progress or whether you've blown it pretty badly...
- I think I would be remiss as a pastor if I didn't pause and ask you, have you been adopted?...

### III. Endurance

**Romans 8:17 - and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.**

- do you see that phrase at the end of the verse?...
- so that we may also be glorified with Him...in other words – if what we're studying is true, what we're experiencing on earth is not the end of the story...

John 14:1-3 - Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.