

The Father's Love

1 John 3:1 & Romans 8:15-17

Intro

Some people think of God as a big bully, a cosmic policeman or a happy-go-lucky Santa Claus. When I was a young boy I thought of God as a very old man with a long grey beard and white robe somewhere up in the sky. Even before I became a true Christian in my early teenage years I often thought of God as an angry father ready to punish me for some wrong I had done. In my early years my view of God was this stern old judge with his arms crossed, pointing his finger at me and ready to judge me and tell me off.

BUT when I became a born-again believer my concept and view of God changed. As I grew in my faith and in reading the Bible I saw God not with His arms crossed and angry at me but with arms open and smiling in love – like the father of the prodigal son (Luke 15:20).

Often we don't realize that our view of God is so limited and sometimes wrong.

In the book “America's Four Gods: What we say about God...” Baylor University scholars Paul Froese and Christopher Bader found that how people view God is one of the strongest predictors of a range of social and moral attitudes. In their research Froese and Bader narrowed it down to 4 basic views:

The Authoritative God: God is like a literal father, both engaged as a positive force in the world and a judge of the behaviors of humanity. Suffering can be the result of social and individual sins.

The Benevolent God: God is mainly a force for good in the world, a being who answers the prayers of individuals and comforts the suffering.

The Critical God: God is less likely to be concerned with moments in the lives of individuals, but will give out judgments in the next life. This is a popular image especially among the poor and oppressed.

The Distant God: God is a cosmic force that sets the laws of nature in motion, but does not get involved in day-to-day events or movements.

(Source: *America's Four Gods: What We Say about God & what that Says about Us*. 2010 by Baylor University)

Wrong Views of God

If the truth sets us free, then it's logical to say that a lie imprisons us. What we believe about God is of infinite importance. Our concept of God can either free us or hold us back from experiencing Him. Sad to say that many have a distorted view of God even Christians and religious people.

Example

A Christian woman confessed: “I am going through a very difficult season in my spiritual journey. A protracted season (how does a decade sound?) of loneliness in the church and in the world. Currently my concept of God is one of a purifier. And I realize that as a purifier, He seems single-minded in His relating to me. Dare I say, not tender. What I know intellectually about His love has stopped way short of my heart experientially. There was a time (how does a decade ago sound?) when I was a woman of deep and abiding prayer. I experienced feelings of being powerless and a victim. I long to experience

His love and tenderness and don't believe they are available because He has been purifying, stripping, and purging for so very long. My prayer life has therefore become a thin place.”

Sad to hear that some Christians go through life like that – lonely, struggling and seeing God only as a purifier and discipliner. There are many different wrong concepts and views we place on God.

Our earthly father distorts our view of our Heavenly Father

Knowing our true identity as a son or daughter of God changes everything. Yet the idea can be tainted by painful experiences of being fathered by our earthly father. The absence of a loving father affects our relationship with the Heavenly Father. The inability to establish this relationship has nothing to do with God but with people and the bad experiences they have endured with their natural fathers. Abuse, cruelty, maltreatment, rejection, lack of love, lack of protection, carelessness, and abandonment prevent people from establishing a healthy relationship with their Heavenly Father.

Jesus gives us a true picture of the Heavenly Father

We need to forgive our earthly fathers and strip away any negative associations with the world. We need to truly look at Scripture and ask how God fathers us.

I believe the perfect example is Christ. The Apostle Philip asked Jesus once, *“Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”* This is how Jesus replied: *“Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves”* (John 14:8-11).

In this little exchange between Philip and Jesus, we learn several interesting things about what Jesus says:

- If you know me, you will know the Father
- If you have seen me, you have seen the Father
- I am in the Father and He is in me
- The Father living in me is doing His work

This does not mean that Jesus is the Father; He is not. But Jesus is so identified with the Father that we can understand the Father through Him. The Father is incomprehensible to us. We cannot see Him because he is not visible to us, but the Father is in Jesus in a unique way and Jesus is visible to us in His words and actions. Jesus represents the Father; if we want to know what the Father is like we need only to look to Jesus. Jesus exemplified the true character of who God the Father is!

Abba, Father

As believers we are adopted sons and daughters of God and we have an immeasurable gracious relationship with God. We have the full right and privilege to call God “Abba.” Abba is an Aramaic word for Father. It is a term that describes intimacy, tenderness, dependence and complete lack of fear or anxiety. In our language today it would be like Daddy or Papa. It was a common term that young

children would use to address their fathers in Biblical times. It signifies the close, intimate relationship of a father to his child, as well as the childlike trust that a young child puts in his “daddy.” When our Lord was agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane and as He was about to take the sins of the world upon Himself, He used the name of endearment when He prayed, “*Abba! Father,*” he said, “*everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will*” (Mark 14:36).

In Galatians 4:4-6 we read, “*But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”*”

True Children of God

While most people, at least those who do not deny the existence of God, would claim that we are all “children of God,” the Bible reveals quite a different truth. We are all God’s created beings and under His authority, but being a son and daughter of God and having the right to truly call Him “Abba Father” is something that only born-again believers are able to do. This truth is taught in John 1:12-13, “*Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.*”

Truly it is life changing to understand the awesomeness of what it means to be able to call God Almighty our “Daddy” and what it means to be joint-heirs with Christ. Because of our relationship with God, He no longer deals with us as enemies; instead, we can approach a holy God as our heavenly Father with “boldness” and “full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:19, 22). We have that confidence because of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:15-17 teaches this, “*The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*”

When we come to understand the true nature and character of God as revealed in the Scripture we should be amazed that He not only allows us, but even encourages us, to call Him “Abba Father.” It is amazing that a perfect and holy God, who created and sustains all things in the universe, who is the only All-powerful, All-knowing, and Omni-present God, would allow redeemed humans to call Him “Daddy.” WOW!

Father’s Love

There is one powerful foundational truth about God by which every other aspect of His nature and character should be measured. That foundational truth is: GOD IS LOVE (1 John 4:8).

A true view of God will free and empower believers to live a full and abundant life. We have been designed and created to know God as love and to be transformed by His love. But slipping into a view of God as always being angry, vengeful, and waiting for you to slip up or whatever else can cripple your spiritual life. It is so sad that many in this world have never experienced the love of God.

We read in 1 John 3:1, “*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*” The Apostle John was amazed with wonder by the fact of how much God loves us. God loves believers with such love that it is hard to articulate it in human language and that it is foreign to human understanding and experience. But look at the extent of that love He lavished on us – that we are called children of God. What an awesome privilege! That’s why we can call Him Abba, Daddy. It is not surprising why the world does not understand the nature of the relationship between the Father and His children. Those without Christ cannot understand the true essence of the relationship that believers have with God. The reason the world does not know us is because they don’t know God.

Here’s another powerful truth. In 1 John 4:18 we read about God’s love, “*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*”

God’s love dispels fear, especially the fear of punishment. You see, believers are perfected in love do not face final punishment. Romans 5:9 says, “*Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!*”

Also 1 Thessalonians 5:9 says, “*For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Therefore there is no fear in love. If you love God and follow Him then there is no more fear.

Conclusion

What is your response to God when He simply says; “I love you?” Can you truly accept His love or are you trying to earn His approval? Perhaps you are scared of Him?

I would like to leave you with this picture of what God is like. Think for a moment of you being a baby in the arms of a caring mother as she rocks you to sleep. You no longer squirm but you lay there resting in the embrace of loving arms. She sings to you a lullaby and you drift away into a peaceful sleep. The Scripture describes a similar emotion in the heart of God. It says, “*The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing*” (Zeph. 3:17).

Corrie ten Boom who experienced so much suffering at the hands of the Nazis, yet went on to great spiritual victory and felt secure in God’s love. She once said this profound but simple truth, “***Don’t wrestle... nestle.***”