

God, Our Father, part 3 of The Baptist Faith and Message
February 26, 2017

George Foreman was a two-time heavyweight boxing champion of the world. In his book, God in My Corner, Foreman explains how his father pointed him to that destiny as a small boy.

"When I was a small boy, my father planted a seed of greatness in my mind about my future. As we played, he often raised my hands over my head as if I had just won a boxing match, and he'd shout, 'George Foreman, heavyweight champion of the world! Stronger than Jack Johnson. Hits like Jack Dempsey!'

"Even though I didn't understand what heavyweight champion of the world meant, he planted an idea in my mind that eventually became a reality. It's incredible that he declared those things about me, almost like a prophecy about my future. It's even more amazing that I would not only become heavyweight champion, but also come back from retirement and win it a second time twenty years later. My father started proclaiming my destiny when I was only four years old and continued saying it until I was a teenager."

(George Foreman, *God In My Corner*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007, p.122)

I've read many other stories like this one where parents nurtured life-shaping ideas into the hearts and minds of their children. A parent has the potential of shaping a child's life. God, as Father, has even more power to do so. God can bring tremendous good to your life... IF you will trust Him as YOUR loving, heavenly Father. Celebrating God as our father is our subject this morning.

This series of sermons is following the Baptist Faith and Message. The Baptist Faith & Message is a general statement of commonly held beliefs by Southern Baptists. This morning we take up the second part of Article 2, God as Father.

Baptist Faith & Message

Article II, God

1. God as Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in his attitude toward all men.

Throughout the Bible we find God portrayed as a Father. God as Father appears throughout the old covenant writings, the Old Testament.

Exodus 4:22 (NIV) Then say to Pharaoh, "This is what the LORD (Yahweh) says: Israel is my firstborn son..."

Deuteronomy 8:5 (NIV) Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD (Yahweh) your God disciplines you.

God was the father of Israel. So why did the Israelites not call God father? They rightly understood from God's revelation that He is holy, separate from the world, and mighty in

power. He showed them tremendous love in rescuing them from slavery in Egypt and giving them the land of Canaan to live in. But rather than love Him, they feared Him. They saw God as hard to know.

Perhaps you have such an attitude towards God. You think, "Surely He is too busy with the big problems of the world to relate to little, insignificant me." If that is the way you feel about God in relation to yourself, I have good news for you today. God is very aware of you. God loves you. God wants an intimate relationship with you.

Some of you may have trouble calling God father. It may be that your father was less than his best. Maybe he did not know how to show love, did not know how to parent. Maybe he was harsh and demanding, never showing emotion, sympathy, or compassion. Maybe he even abused you physically or emotionally.

If any of these things were or are true of your father, it is understandable that you have trouble calling God father. But God is the perfect father. He has all of the best characteristics of a loving father and none of the bad characteristics of a bad father.

Israel missed understanding God's love for them. They failed to recognize His love and failed to love him back.

God had wanted the Israelites to obey Him out of love, not fear. He wanted them to trust in His love for them. He wanted them to trust in His provision. He provided for their needs for the 40 years in the wilderness. He provided for their needs in the abundance of the Promised Land. They should have learned the lessons of their history and trusted Him, appreciated Him, loved Him, and in that context, then, obeyed Him.

He was a loving father to them. But they never learned to see Him that way.

My goal this morning is that you accept God as your loving, heavenly Father, and that you celebrate Him as such. I want to point out several things about God as Father that we can celebrate in our relationship to Him.

The first one concerns His presence in our lives. God is involved with His creation. I mentioned last week that God existed before He created the universe. He exists outside of the universe. He is not part of the universe, not to be identified with the universe. **God is not part of the creation. We call this the transcendence of God.**

He doesn't have to be involved in our world. He could ignore us as individuals. But God has involved Himself in our lives.

God is actively working in our world. We call this the immanence of God. God is here. God is here, today, and actively reaching out to us in love. The term "God as father" excludes the idea of a distant and impersonal deity. That is the picture that most other religions have of their god or gods. Our God is up close, personal, and loving.

So I urge you to... **Celebrate God, the Father's involvement in your life.** He is here, in your daily life.

The second truth to celebrate this morning is relationship. When Jesus came, He knew the truth about God. He knew that God was a loving heavenly father. He knew God

wanted to be seen as such by His people. Jesus constantly spoke of God as Father. Jesus related to God as His heavenly father. He taught His followers to speak to God as their loving, heavenly Father.

Matthew 6:9 (NIV) "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven...

Jesus refers to God as "Father" sixty plus times in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and over one hundred times in John.

Now, Jesus was a son in a different way than we are God's children. He was God's Son by nature. We are God's children through adoption. We see this doctrine in Romans 8.

Romans 8:15 (NLT) So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."

The word, abba, is Aramaic for father. Because of Jesus' constant use of this term, it is not surprising that His followers began referring to God as Father. Paul, the missionary, does do more than forty times. An example is the passage we just read. The other apostles also adopted this term for God. See in Peter's letter...

1 Peter 1:17 (NIV) Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

These letters were written years after the writers had become disciples of Jesus. They had experienced God as Father. They knew it to be true. It became as natural for them to speak and write this way as it is for us to speak of our earthly fathers. We too must recognize God as our loving, heavenly Father. I urge you to...

Celebrate God as Father.

The third truth to celebrate this morning is answers to prayer. One of the things a good parent does is to NOT give us everything we ask for. What happens to children who get everything they want? They become spoiled. They fail to mature. They expect the world to work in their favor. They fail to take responsibility for themselves.

You who are parents, have you ever given your child, of whatever age, something you later regretted giving them? Perhaps he or she was not mature enough to handle the responsibility of the gift. Maybe it was a pocket knife. Maybe it was a car. Maybe it was a special privilege, like no set bedtime. You gave this gift and it ended badly. If you had known how it was going to turn out you would have waited to give the gift.

God never has this problem. God has perfect knowledge and is all wise. See this truth in Ephesians 1.

Ephesians 1:7-8 (NIV) In him (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he (God) lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

God gives us gifts out of wisdom and understanding. He always knows what is best for us, what we are ready for, what we need, and when we need it. We do not always know

these things about ourselves. We know what we THINK we can handle. We know what we WANT. We know what would be NICE. But we do not always know what is best, or the best time. We are fortunate that our heavenly Father DOES know these things and always give what is best for us to have.

So I urge you to... **Celebrate God's "yes" and "no" answers to your prayers.** Celebrate the no's as much as the yes's. For THEY show God's love for you too. God always gives what is best in every life, every situation. We don't always see His NO as best at the time. Celebrate them anyway.

The fourth truth to celebrate concerns a particular gift God has given to us.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.

God has provided us the Savior we all need. God cares about every life, every person. God cares about you. I urge you to... **Celebrate God sending us a Savior.** He did so because like children, we were helpless to save ourselves.

God is the creator of all people. And as the Baptist Faith & Message says, "He is fatherly in attitude toward all people."

Invitation

God wants what is best for you. God wants a personal relationship with you. He sent Jesus to pay the penalty of your sins so that you could receive the Father/Child relationship with God that Jesus had.

If you will receive Jesus as your Savior and turn your life over to Him as your Lord, God will adopt you into His personal, special, privileged family. You will know God's love. I urge you to pray to receive Jesus today.