

The Father Heart of God

I. INTRODUCTION:

- A. Last time I spoke I touched on the beauty of Jesus and the Cross, explaining how it was on the cross that the true greatness of Jesus was shown. On the cross forgiveness was first upon His lips: "Father, forgive them." Care for His mother and mercy for the repentant flowed from a heart that was undefiled from the background noise of taunts and jeers. The greatness of Jesus' greatness is shown most precious and perfectly on the Cross. In the hours of His greatest weakness, He showed the greatest amount of restraint and revealed His true colors. He loves at all times. So in light of the greatness of Jesus, today I want to talk to you about the heart of the Father. Jesus declares in John 14:

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." (John 14:6-7)

- B. Here in John 14, it's the end of Jesus' three-and-a-half year ministry and He's about to go to the cross. Here in John 14 He's giving a message, clarifying what His ministry was about for three-and-a-half years, as well as giving them promises for the future. In John 14:7-9 He's clarifying, saying, "These last three-and-a-half years as I have been raising the dead, teaching the Word of God, and relating to you as a personal friend I've been revealing the Father to you." In verse 7, speaking to the disciples, He says, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also" (Jn. 14:7). This was a brand-new idea to the disciples. They thought, "No. We do know You, but what do You mean that we would know the Father if we knew You? That is new, Jesus. We thought when we knew You and that was it."

Jesus says, "No. The whole time, I was revealing to you the personality of the Father."

II. HE THAT HAS SEEN ME HAS SEEN THE FATHER

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." (Jesus 14:8)

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:9)

- A. Here Philip breaks in during Jesus' declaration of His ministry and explains, "Well, Lord, show us the Father and that is sufficient" — or, one translation says, "That is enough for us. Show us the Father." Jesus says in John 14:9, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9, paraphrased)..

- B. The reason this is so stunning and so significant is because in the Jewish context, with the Jewish traditions and Jewish teachings, the Jews understood God as the Creator God of Genesis 1, which is right. They saw the transcendent God. Transcendence is a fancy word meaning that He has power so utterly beyond anything we can imagine. He is wholly other than; He is in a realm of His own. The Jewish mindset understood the Genesis 1 God as being filled with power, and transcendent. He is very distant and very powerful, and the only appropriate response is to tremble before Him. That is the word transcendent; there is nothing we can compare it to. Keep your distance and tremble before Him. Jesus came on the scene and said, "Let Me tell you, it's different than that. Yes, He is transcendent. He has such power that, when you see it, you will tremble when you encounter it in the greater measures. However, that is not enough; it's not a complete revelation. I want you to know that He has affections like a Father. He has a desire for personal relationship. He has an individual plan. He has a plan for every individual who comes to Him. He is not just a transcendent Creator before whom you tremble. He has an individual plan; He is a tenderhearted Father before whom You have confidence."

And it was Jesus' ministry to declare this to us. In John 17:26 Jesus declares to the Father:

I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:26)

III. A FATHER FROM ETERNITY PAST

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen 1:1)

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. (Matt 6:9)

- A. This was new to the Jewish mindset, because they knew about trembling before a God of great power, but they didn't know about confidence before a God of great affections. They knew to keep their distance and worship with awe. They did not know how to draw close with confidence, to open their heart and to rest in the presence of the Genesis 1 God. Because He is more than a creator; in fact, He is from the beginning a father. He's not like a father; it's not like He functions as a father just to make a point. At the core of His being He feels, thinks and acts like a father because from eternity past He is a father at the heart level.

IV. THE INCREDIBLE ATTRACTIVENESS OF JESUS

- A. This was a new idea to the apostles. When Jesus said, "If you had known Me, you would have known Him," what He was doing, again, was clarifying what He had done in the last three years. He was helping them connect the dots, so to speak. They saw Him as so attractive; these apostles and multitudes of others wanted to be wherever Jesus was. He was full of enthusiasm and kindness. He had so much strength. He had so much confidence. He had clarity. He had a pure spirit. He was tender. He was anointed. He had the presence of God. They wanted to be with Him; they would argue with one another to get in the front of the line so that they could be closer to Jesus. Jesus was so profoundly attractive to them. They were awed by His teachings, by His

personality, by His miracles; I don't just mean the power dimension, but the tenderness of His miracles. The miracles that He did showed how much He cared for people. They loved Him. Even the night before He died, they had never, ever settled the idea that when Jesus said, "I am going to die," He meant, "I am going to die."

They really didn't get it the night before. When the women were at the tomb on Sunday morning, the guys were still freaked out. They said, "I don't get what just happened," but the ladies said, "He told us He was going to die."

The guys said, "Well, what did He mean?"

"He meant He was going to die."

- B. So He wanted them to get ready for His death. He wanted to connect them to the Holy Spirit who would reveal the Father to them. He was telling them, "Guys, as attractive as I am to you—you love My ministry, you love My presence, you love My enthusiasm, you love My kindness, you love My bright countenance, you love My teaching, you love the way I do miracles that help others and that help the oppressed—let Me tell you something: My Father is equally attractive, because what I do is a representation of His personality. You will like Him as much as you like Me, if you

V. JESUS IS EXACT REPRESENTATION OF GOD

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature... (Heb 1:3)

- A. Jesus and the Father are one, and Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing. It was the Father's idea for Jesus to make a way for us to get back into communion with the Father. That is why Jesus came to earth. He didn't come to the earth to give us fire insurance so we could escape hell. He came to the earth to remove everything in the way, everything that was hindering us from connecting to God as a father like Jesus does. Jesus came because The Father had a plan from before Genesis 1: He wanted a family that would dwell in voluntary love with Him, who would receive His love and return it because we chose to return it. That is why Jesus came. He came because The Father longed for a family." I mean, can you imagine this? Jesus' last night on earth, He has just finished eating supper with them and washing their feet, and after a moment of silence looks at His best friends and explains:

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love (John 15:9)

That is astounding. Jesus however, also explained at the beginning of His ministry:

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. (John 5:19)

Jesus desires that we would be one with Him and the Father and we would all walk in perfect unity, in perfect love for one another. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit desire that we would love, function, and operate under the exact same power of love that they do. The fact that that is true is completely astounding.

The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one (John 17:22)

It's important we realize that this was the Father's idea. As a Father from eternity past it was His idea to bring all things under His authority through Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, (Eph 1:3-5)

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. (1 Cor 15:24)

VI. THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION

- A. So now, in Romans 8:15, the three-and-a-half years of Jesus' ministry is over. He has died and risen again, and the Holy Spirit comes. Now, the Holy Spirit has the same ministry focus that Jesus had. The Holy Spirit takes up where Jesus left off. Jesus revealed the Father to the Church, and now the Holy Spirit is revealing Jesus to the Church as well. He came to glorify Jesus, but He came also to reveal the Father. Paul the apostle gives us a very important description of the Holy Spirit's ministry, one which is very similar to that of the ministry of Jesus: to reveal the Father. This is in Romans 8:15. Every believer is called a saint in the New Testament; every born-again believer is one of the saints of God. Paul tells the saints, "You have received" —that is past tense— "the spirit of adoption by whom we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Rom. 8:15).

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Rom 8:15)

- B. There are so many implications to this one sentence. The Spirit of Adoption is another name for the Holy Spirit; it's one of the Holy Spirit's names or titles. The Holy Spirit cries through us and inspires us to pray this way, and then empowers us while we are praying this way. We come before the Father and say, "Abba, Father." The word abba was a familiar term in the first century. It's the same word that we would use today for papa. And at first it seemed irreverent that you could call the God of Genesis 1 "Papa." I mean this is the God before whom the angels fall, trembling before His power and His holiness, and you would have the audacity to call Him "Papa"? The Holy Spirit says, "That is what I have come to show you. This is what He wants. Yes, He wants you to tremble before His power but He also wants you to have confidence before His heart and His affections." The word, the term Papa speaks of, is a respectful term; it's not a slang term. It's respectful, but it speaks of intimacy and affection. It's the little child, the little

boy or girl who gets into papa's lap and feels secure in the arms of a father, and knows that everything is OK because father's eyes are on her. That's the image.

- C. Many believers are content to love Jesus and say, "God, we love You." We call Him Father, but we don't really connect with it. The Holy Spirit is wooing us. He wants to walk us into it; He says, "Go the next step, open your heart, believe for more than just power from God and forgiveness. Enter into the dimension of God's tender heart. Receive it and let it tenderize your heart." That is what He is saying in this passage. The Holy Spirit's name is called "The Spirit of Adoption." That's actually a title of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has various titles or names or descriptions. He is also called the Spirit of Comfort; He is called the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Hope, etc. When the Holy Spirit reveals one of His titles, like the Spirit of Adoption, He is saying to us, "I want to reveal and minister this truth to your heart. I want to reveal the power and the benefit of this particular truth to you. When He comes to us as the Spirit of Adoption, He stirs us to come to God in this way, not to be content with just forgiveness, content with God as the Father of Jesus, and there you have Him. Rather, He wants us to take the next step, to take that risk and move closer to God, to the tenderness of God's heart, and to allow the tenderness of God to tenderize our hearts. The Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Adoption, wants to convince us to do this. Here I'm repeating myself, but the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Adoption, says, "These are the truths I'm going to minister to you: truths about your position as adopted sons and daughters."

VII. SEEKING A HEARTFELT CONNECTION TO DIVINE REVELATION

- A. Jesus was making a way for us to relate to God as He does. Beloved, this is absolutely astounding. The Spirit wants to convince us, and is crying through us, "Say 'Abba.' Go for the Abba revelation; move into the Abba relationship. Don't stay at a distance." The Spirit woos us, prompts us, wants to convince us. To those of you who move forward in this, the Spirit says, "Now I will help you. I will increase the revelation. I will let you feel the power of it if you want it." Many believers, though they like the idea of this when they hear it, saying, "Thumbs up... cool... awesome..." underlining it in their Bibles, even telling a friend afterwards about the awesome Father-heart of God, they don't do anything with it for another year or two. The Holy Spirit says, "I am willing to release that Abba cry in you. I'm willing to inspire you to move forward in your walk with God. I am willing to unpack and reveal this revelation of God to you. I'm willing to give you the power to feel the emotions of this truth, but you have got to pursue it. You have got to go after it." You pursue it simply by studying it and by bringing it into your dialogue with God in prayer, by actually saying it to God and asking the Spirit to unfold this to you. You have to determine that you're going to know God this way. "Father, I am going to know You as Abba; Holy Spirit, bring me into this relationship." We begin to speak to God this way; we study the Word of God along these lines. The Spirit says, "If you do that, I will give you more. If you are not content to live at a distance from God, I will actually help you in your journey in this."

VIII. GOD LOVES US LIKE GOD LOVES GOD

I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (John 17:23)

- A. John 17:23 is one of the most astounding statements in the whole Bible. I truly mean this: I cannot imagine anything more astounding than John 17:23. Jesus is praying to the Father and He says, “Father, that the world may know” — here it is — “that You love them” — “in the same way You love Me” (Jn. 17:23, paraphrased).

Beloved if we truly take this reality to prayer and meditation we will become so utterly transformed and renewed into lovesick worshippers of God.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Cor 5:17)

It’s this reality about the love of the Father that completely transforms our lives and causes us to completely surrender to the Man Christ Jesus. When we begin to touch the heart of the Father, and the reality that The Father loves me with the same intensity that He loves God, everything changes.

- B. See, Philip said it in the passage with which we began. He said, “Jesus, if you show us the Father, it will be enough for us. It will be sufficient.” That’s true. If the Spirit reveals the Father to us, it settles something deep in our spirit. It is sufficient. It places an anchor in our soul. I’m not saying all of our needs are met. There’s still a lack in this age, in this fallen world. As intimate as we become with God, there are still dimensions to our fallenness where we feel the pain, the gaps, the moments of loneliness, and in those moments the enemy comes and attacks us. That’s true for all believers across the ages, but the revelation of God can make a substantial difference. It won’t cause all the needs of our inner man to go away, but the fact that His eyes are on us will become an anchor. It really will! We’re uncertain about the future; there are relationships we’re uncertain about in the future. There’s our occupation; there’s our ministry. There’s the economy. There’s the future of the world. There are so many uncertain things in the future. We say, “Lord.”

He says, “My eyes are on you. I have power. Don’t worry; I like you. My hand is with you. I will be with you as the future unfolds.” Beloved, this creates an anchor in our soul. In other words, it creates stability, rather than an up one day, down the next, emotional roller coaster, which is so common in the human race. Then, when we have a revelation of the Father, even our own failures don’t have to throw us into a rollercoaster: “He loves me, He loves me not...” That’s what the devil comes and tells us: “He doesn’t love you today!” You don’t have to go on a rollercoaster, even in the midst of your own failures. We can have an anchor that He loves us, that we are His. Though we don’t know all the things that are going to happen, by any means, and though not all the ache in our heart is gone, though there is an anchor in us that makes our inner man strong, even in the early years of our lives, this anchor can be there in your life.

MINISTRY TIME

We all need this. I need this; you need this; there's not a person who doesn't need this message. I need to grow in this, but if today you're saying, "No, something has got hold of me for this 'Abba' cry, and I want the Spirit to break through for this cry; I want to feel the power of it; I want to feel the confidence of it; I want to have the confidence in my relationship with God when I blow it.

If you would like prayer, I want to invite you to come up and receive prayer. You're saying, "I want this 'Abba' cry. I have got to have it. I have got to have it!"

Jesus is saying, "My Father loves you as much as He loves Me. I promise you, He cannot love you more than He does now. Take hold of it. Take hold of it." Here we are, Lord. Beloved, there is nothing more powerful than confidence. When you have confidence in your spirit with God, it is powerful. You are not finished; that is a lie from the devil. He has not written you off. Don't write yourself off. He has not written you off. Come Holy Spirit. Every person in this room needs this truth in our heart. Come, Holy Spirit, touch our hearts. Release the 'Abba cry' in our spirit. Here we are, Holy Spirit.

We're going to wait for a moment as the instruments continue. Holy Spirit, release Your power right now in this room, I ask. You're speaking to the Lord in your own language, in your own words, and you're saying, "I will enter into this. I'm not going to let this evaporate over the next few days. I am going for this." Talk to Him: "Here I am, Lord; I am Your beloved. I am Your favorite one." For some of you, that's really hard to say. I mean, the enemy is just screaming inside, saying, "Don't you dare!"

Jesus says the opposite. He says, "I died. Don't you dare draw back!" The enemy says, "Don't you dare go forward in that kind of confidence. Jesus says, "Don't you dare draw back, I died for you!" Some of you are in a place of struggle and compromise. You're telling the Lord, "OK Lord, I know what to do. I'm admitting it." Go quietly before the Lord and say, "I'm not trying to cover it up; I'm going to war against it. Help me! Help me, Lord. I am going to set my heart against this." Let's take a moment here. "I need Your help, but I'm going to set my heart tonight, right now. I am going to walk free of this. Carry me on Your shoulders. Help me. Father, You love me like You love Jesus. Here I am; here I am, Your beloved. Here I am, Your favorite one. Here I am, Abba; Abba, I want to know You as Abba. Holy Spirit, show me God as Abba."