

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

John 8:30-47

Intro: Many years ago now liberal theology came out with a declaration of **the Fatherhood of God**. By it most of them were declaring that all men are the children of God. And it was generally believed by those liberals that all people were the children of God regardless of what they believed, or did not believe, and regardless of what religion they may have followed. As a result, those who were true Christians were very reluctant to speak of **the Fatherhood of God**.

But that was very tragic because **the Fatherhood of God** is one of the most precious truths in Scripture for those of us who are really members of God's family. The word *fatherhood* simply means according to the dictionary, "the condition of being a father." It means that every male who has children can be described by this title. We can speak of the fatherhood of any man in this congregation who is a father. So to speak of **the Fatherhood of God** means that God has a family.

It is true that the Apostle Paul when speaking on Mars' hill in Athens told a non-Christian crowd, citing one of the poets, said that "we are the offspring of God." And by that he meant that man was created in the likeness and image of God. Therefore, if that were the case, no idol could be a proper representative of God. These are the words which he spoke:

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device (Acts 17:29).

Was Paul saying that we are all the members of His spiritual family because we are human beings. Absolutely not! He was simply pointing out that we are all God's creatures. He made us. He is our Creator. And so in this sense we are God's offspring. We need more of this kind of preaching today because millions of people today refuse to believe that we are God's creatures, and that we owe our existence to the very word of God -- that God simply spoke the word, and He brought this world into being in six days.

But Paul was not speaking about salvation when he used this expression. We never are taught in Scripture that we are all the children of God and that we are all going to heaven even though we may go to heaven in different ways. The message of Scripture was stated very briefly and very clearly by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatian churches when he wrote the words we find in Gal. 3:26. Let me read them to you: **"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."** A better

translation is, “For ye are all **the sons** of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

Paul was not writing to a group like he had spoken to in Athens. He was writing to people throughout Galatia who had come to understand that they were sinners, and that Christ died to save sinners. Consequently they were trusting in Christ Jesus as their Savior from the judgment of God.

The Lord Jesus never taught that we are all the sons of God by nature, and that we just have to realize who we are, and our Scripture reading for the morning makes that very clear. The Lord Jesus Christ made the way of salvation very narrow. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

Earlier in John’s Gospel we have those very important words,

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13).

This is why our Lord spoke to Nicodemus about being born again. If Nicodemus had already been a child of God and in the family of God, the Lord would never have spoken to him as He did.

Now I want, with that explanation, to take you to my text for today in John 8. Did you notice as this passage was read that in this passage we read of three families? Let me point them out to you.

I. THREE FAMILIES.

Usually when you speak to people about their need for God and salvation, they will hide behind some claim that they make to show that they are already right with God. And so we see that the Jews to whom the Lord was speaking made a claim first of all to be in:

A. The family of Abraham.

(Read verses 31 and 32.) And then in verse 33 those Jews responded by saying, “We be Abraham’s seed.” By this they meant that they were the natural descendants of Abraham. They resented being told that they were not free. They did not believe that they needed the message that our Lord

was proclaiming to them. Even though they falsely claimed that they had never been in bondage to any man (when at that very moment they were in bondage to Rome), yet the Lord was pointing out that He was not speaking merely of physical bondage, but He was speaking of spiritual bondage, *their bondage to sin*. And He made it very clear that He was the only One Who could set them free from their sins. The Lord agreed that they were “Abraham’s seed.” See v. 37.

But then the Lord spoke in verse 38 of another family, different from the family that they were talking about,

B. The family of God.

In verse 38 he made it very clear that He and His Father made up another family, an entirely different family. And then they renewed their claim that Abraham was their father. See verse 39a.

And at this point our Lord moved into a new phase of His teaching where He was indicating that not even Abraham was in God’s family just because he was Abraham. Abraham knew that he needed more than he had by nature. Later on in this chapter the Lord told the Jews something very important about Abraham which none of those Jews knew. You will find it in John 8:56 where we read this:

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

What do we read about Abraham as far as his salvation was concerned? Let me read to you Gen. 15:6:

And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Paul referred to this verse in Galatians 3. Let me read a few verses from that chapter to show that while those Jews were the natural descendants of Abraham, they did not believe what Abraham believed. Listen to what Paul wrote in Gal. 3:6-9:

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

So what does this mean? It means that you can be a Jew by birth, a descendant from Abraham, without being in the family of God even though those Jews went on to say in their ignorance of the truth, "We have one Father, even God" (John 8:41). You see, they still were of the opinion that because they were the natural descendants of Abraham, they were in the family of God. John 1:11-13 denies that, and so does all of the Word of God. No person by nature, whether Jew or Gentile, whether by birth or by works, is a child of God. To be in the family of God you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, putting your trust in Him, not in either who you are by birth nor in what good works you have supposedly done.

Illus: This past week the Southern Baptists in their convention said that they were going to make a special effort this next year to win Jews to Christ. I don't agree with the way this purpose was made known, but you know how furious it made some of the Jewish leaders -- perhaps all of them. They believe they are the children of God, that it is their right by birth. Most of them would agree with the Jews who were on the earth in our Lord's day. This is always the reaction of people, whether Jews or Gentiles, when we give them the message of Scripture, that there is only one way for any of us to get to heaven, only one way to have our sins forgiven, only one way to gain admittance to the family of God, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ and His work for sinners on Calvary's Cross where He suffered to redeem all who would ever believe on Him.

So even those who are related by blood to Abraham have to come to God through Christ if they are ever to be saved. And the same is true of Gentiles who desire to be saved. There is no salvation for anyone except through Christ.

But I said to begin with that we have three families in this passage. What is the third family? It is:

C. The devil's family.

Let me re-read John 8:39-47.

Every person born into this world, including all of us, has had a natural aversion to the truth. We will believe lies in preference to the truth. The Lord told those Jews that it was because He was telling them the truth that they did not believe Him. Let another come along with error, and they would probably accept what he had to say. And yet it is only by continuing to give people the truth that they will finally be impressed

with the truth of the Gospel message if they are to be saved.

The Devil is the father the Lord was speaking about in verse John 8:38. He is a liar, and the father of lies. He is a murderer. He is an enemy of the truth, and of all that is holy and good in God's sight. And there is only one way to get out of his family and into God's family, and that is through Christ, faith in Christ.

So the Bible teaches that God has a family, the Devil has a family, and it has pleased God to put us in families. As long as we are without Christ as our Savior, we are in the Devil's family, whether we be Jew or Gentile. And the only way we can enter the family of God is by receiving Christ as our Savior. To stay in the Devil's family means eternal judgment in hell. To be in the family of God means that our citizenship and destiny is in heaven. Christ, and only Christ, is the One Who makes the difference.

But now, in conclusion, let me say a word about Father's Day.

II. THE CHRISTIAN HOME.

It is very significant that those of us who are fathers have the same title that belongs supremely to God, our heavenly Father. Obviously it goes without saying, and yet it needs to be said, that God in His dealings with us is the Example we have for dealing with our children. There is probably no title that God has taken for Himself that is designed to bring greater comfort and peace to our hearts than to be able to call Him, "Our Father." This is the way we are to address Him in prayer, isn't it?

Unfortunately, with many families today, the word *father* means anything but blessing. With some families it means a person to fear. Sometimes it means a person who is gone so much that his family does not know him. Too often a father is a person who has no concern for the spiritual needs of his family. He may work long hours to give his family most of what they want in things to buy and places to go, but nothing about God. And yet there never has been a greater need in our country for fathers who will really be what the Lord intended for them to be. And yet it is only those fathers who know the Lord and who are pursuing their relationship with the Lord who have any idea of what they should be to their families.

Actually every day is Father's Day, just as every day is Mother's Day. When the Lord said, "Honour thy father and thy mother," He did not say that it was just on the third Sunday in June that we need to do this, but it is every day that we live this way. And when we speak of Father's Day,

it should be a time when fathers rethink their responsibilities to their children, but also when children rethink their responsibilities to their fathers (and mothers). The Bible puts the two together, and so should we. Fathers need to follow their heavenly Father's ways just as much as they can, and children need to respond to their parents just as every child of God should respond to God, our heavenly Father. After all, if we know the Lord, we are not only members of the families in which the Lord has placed us, but we are also members of the family of God.

Much has been said about fathers and children in the Scriptures, but let me emphasize just one responsibility for children, and just one for fathers. And since the bible begins with children, that is where I will begin. And the basis of what I want to say is found in Ephesians, chapter 6, the first four verses. The first three verses apply to children in their relationship with their parents:

- 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.
- 2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)
- 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth (Eph. 6:1-3).

A. Children.

Paul was addressing himself to members of a Christian family, and the main word for the children is the word "obey." And one reason that this is so important is because there is not another word which is more important in the life of any Christian. The child who learns to obey at home, is laying a foundation for a life of blessing in his relationship with the Lord until the day he goes to be with the Lord. Sin makes us so prone to make mistakes, that God has given each one of us two parents to guide us. It is not always easy to be obedient, but it is "right" -- "right" in God's sight. And to emphasize the importance of being obedient, this was the first commandment in the ten commandments to which God attached two wonderful promises:

- 1) "That it may be well with thee."
- 2) "That thou mayest live long on the earth."

And you children need to ask the Lord to make you want to be obedient to your parents because obeying because you have to doesn't make you happy, nor does it make your parents happy, and, worst of all, such obedience does not really please the Lord. The best gift that you children and young people can give to your parents today, and every day, is to determine by the grace of God that you are going to do what your parents want you to do, and to do it because you love them, and because you love

the Lord. How much happier our homes would be if we always sought to be obedient!

Now a word to:

B. Fathers.

And I hope that you mothers will listen carefully to what I am about to say because you are involved in this, too.

If there is one mistake parents are prone to make, especially when you are concerned about the welfare of your children, it is the inclination to be too tough. We need to remember how the Lord deals with us, how patient He is, how forgiving and how loving. So we are not to be overbearing in our discipline, to make it impossible for our children to please us. We represent the Lord in the lives of our children, and we want to treat our children the way the Lord does. There are times when we all have needed punishment, but do not let it be extreme. And the way to keep things in order is to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” What did Paul mean by this?

To bring them up is not only to train them in every way, but to seek to move them along toward maturity. One characteristic of maturity is that a person does what is “right” *because he wants to, and not because he has to.*

But what do we need to be concerned about? First, the “nurture...of the Lord.” This has to do with all of the training that any parent father to his children -- the training of the mind, the training in morality (correcting mistakes and curbing one’s passions), training in how to treat other people. And while this word “nurture” includes discipline and punishment, yet that is the main idea in the word “admonition.” Children need to learn as early as possible that doing wrong things brings bad results just as doing right things produces blessing from the Lord.

And both the “nurture” and the “admonition” are to be “of the Lord,” meaning that fathers are to get their guidance in raising their children *from the Lord*, and the only place to find such guidance is *in the Word of God!* And parents are not to be just a communication center for passing on information, but they are to be living examples of what they want their children to be. This calls for a lot of love, patience, and prayer for the Lord’s blessing in all that we do. It would be hard to find more needed even in our Christian families today.

Concl: The father who wants to be the best possible father for his children should make a point of studying the ways of the Lord in the Word. Then he needs to observe God's ways in his own life, and follow them by the grace of God in dealing with his children. Raising children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" can be one of the greatest joys in a father's life, but there are always the testing times. There is nothing that will make us realize how dependent we are upon the Lord, and that will keep us praying for our family members. And when we do the Lord's will in His way we always will receive His blessing. The fatherhood of a Christian father is to follow in the ways of the Fatherhood of our God in heaven.