

The Fatherhood of God



Fatherhood (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week sharing out of truths that life has taught me, truths that can make the difference between success and failure in your life as they have done in mine. Today and throughout this week I'll be sharing with you on one of the great theme of biblical revelation, the theme of "Fatherhood." Strangely enough, it is a theme that has been somewhat neglected in many Christian circles.

Let me add as a personal comment that this is a subject which I have not merely studies in the Bible but also been faced with in my own personal experience. My first wife and I raised a family of nine and now, more recently, my second wife has added three more children to our total family. So all together I stand in the relationship of father to exactly one dozen persons, most of whom are by now grown up and have families of their own. However, it is not human fatherhood that I want to begin with today.

I want to talk, first of all today, about the fatherhood of God. I want to say to you that this is the great fact behind the universe. This is the fact behind all other facts that there is a Father who is our God, a Father who created the universe as a father, a Father who has left the imprint of His fatherhood on every aspect of the entire universe. In Ephesians 3:14-15, Paul prays one of his great and wonderful prayers. He says:

> "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth [or every family in heaven and earth] derives its name..." (KJV)

Now that's the King James version familiar to many of us. However, the word that is there translated "fatherhood" is the Greek word patria, and that word is derived directly from the Greek word for father; so that the most literal, straightforward translation would be "fatherhood." So, in this connection, I'd like to give you also Phillips translation of those verses which brings out this fact of the connection between father and family, or fatherhood. Phillips translates it this way:

> "When I think of the greatness of this great plan I fall on my knees before the Father (from whom all

> fatherhood, earthly or heavenly, derives its name)…" (JBP)

That's a remarkable fact that all fatherhood in the universe ultimately goes back to the fatherhood of God, and that fatherhood did not begin on earth, it began in heaven.

Fatherhood is eternal with God. It did not begin with time. It did not begin with human history. It began, if I may say, in eternity. Eternally, God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and He is so described in many parts of the Bible. In John's gospel, John says, "In the beginning… the Word was with God." That was before creation ever took place. The divine Word, the eternal Son of God, was with the Father. The Scripture says He was in the bosom of the Father. That intimate, personal relationship between God and the Son existed there before creation ever began. This is an absolutely distinctive feature of Christian revelation. It makes Christianity unlike any other religious faith that I've ever encountered in the world. It reveals something unique and particular about the nature of God, that in God eternally there is Fatherhood. There's a relationship.

When Jesus came to earth, His ultimate purpose was to bring those who turn to Him to the Father. This He states in many places. For instance, in 1 Peter 3:18, Peter says:

> "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God…" (NAS)

Why did Jesus die? That He might bring us to God. Jesus was not the end. He was the way. He said that Himself emphatically in John 14:6.

> "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.'" (NAS)

Jesus is the way, but the Father is the destination. I think many times in our Christian faith and the way we speak we've really missed the purpose of God. We talk a great deal about the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, our Intercessor, our Mediator, and so on. All of that is wonderful, but it stops short of God's purpose. God's purpose is not merely that we should come to the Son, but through the Son we should come to the Father.

There's something beautiful about the language of Jesus in the prayer that He prayed in John 17. That prayer opens with the word "Father" and the word "father" appears occurs six times in that prayer. Jesus speaks there about having made known the name of God to His disciples. In verse 6 He says:

> "'I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world…' [Then he says in verse 11:] 'Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me…' [And right at the end of His prayer He says again:] 'I have made Thy name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them.'" (NAS)

What name was it that Jesus came especially to make known to His disciples? It was not the sacred name Jehovah. The Jewish people have known that name for fifteen centuries. What was the new and special revelation, the great purpose, the name that He wanted them to know? The name is Father. That's the ultimate name of God. That describes the nature of God in His eternal character more perfectly than any other word that exists in human language. The ultimate revelation of God, therefore, in the New Testament is the revelation of God as Father and the ultimate purpose of the New Testament.

The reason why Jesus Himself came is to bring us to God. If we stop short of this revelation of God, we've stopped short of the full and final outworking of redemption's purpose. But when we come into the fullness of this revelation of God and into that direct relationship to God as Father it supplies certain things which are conspicuously lacking in the emotional experience of perhaps, I could say, the majority of people in our culture today. The three things which come out of this revelation and this relationship are identity, self-worth, and security.

Identity is a real problem for modern man. An interesting commentary on it recently was the success of the TV serial Roots. The essence of that story was a man looking for where he came from and that is what humanity is busy with. Men and women want to know where they came from, who's behind them, How did it start? Who am I? and I believe the Scripture and psychology agrees that a person does not really answer that question—Who am I?—until he knows who his father is. Today human relationships between parents and children have been so greatly broken down that it has produced an identity crisis. Christianity's answer to that identity crisis is to bring men and women into a direct personal relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son. A person who truly knows God as Father no longer has an identity problem. He knows who he is. He's a child of God. His Father created the universe. His Father loves him. His Father cares for him.

That brings us to the second need that is supplied by this revelation of God as Father, the need of self-worth. I can't count how many people I've dealt with in my ministry whose great problem was they didn't appreciate themselves sufficiently. They had too low a picture of themselves and it caused them many spiritual and emotional agonies. Listen to what John says in his first epistle, chapter 3:1:

> "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are." (NAS)

Once we really comprehend that we are the children of God and God loves us intimately, personally, that He's interested in us, He's never too busy for us, He desires a direct and personal relationship with us, that gives us self-worth. I've seen this happen again and again in the lives of people.

I remember once I was in a meeting and I ran into a lady—literally ran into her. We were going in opposite directions at considerable speed. She picked herself up and said, "Mr. Prince, I've been praying that if God wanted you to speak to me, we'd meet."

"Well," I said, "we've met, but I can only give you about two minutes. I'm very busy."

She began to tell me what her problem was and after awhile I interrupted her and I said, "I'm sorry, but I've only got one minute left, but I think I know your problem. Will you follow me in this prayer?" And I led her in a prayer in which she just thanked God that God was her Father and she was His child, that God loved her, that God cared for her, that she was special, that she belonged to the best family in the universe. Then I said, "Good-bye, I have to go," and left.

About a month later, I got a letter from that lady in which she said, "I just want to tell you that being together with you and praying that prayer has completely changed my whole attitude to life. For the first time, I really have a sense of my own worth!"

The third great provision of God through the revelation of Father is security. Behind the universe is not just some scientific force or some great bang, but a Father who loves us.

A friend of mine was once feeling lonely and blue in the streets of the city, late at night, deserted and windy, and he just didn't quite know if he was going to make it through. And as he stood there on the street corner he just began to say over and over again, "Father... Father... Father... Father." As he did that, security came to him. He knew that even though things were cold and bleak round about him, he was a child of God in the universe that God had created for His children.

All right. Our time is up for today, but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about human fatherhood.

Radio Program

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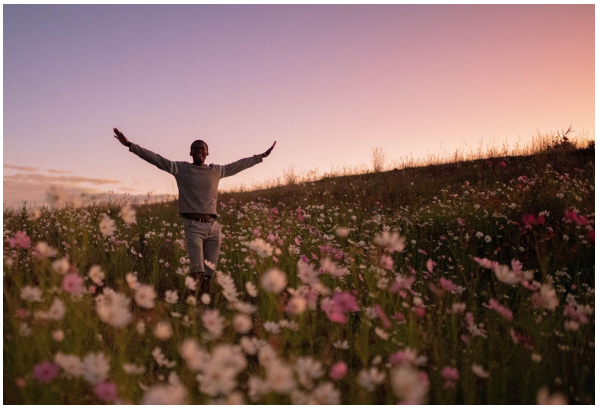

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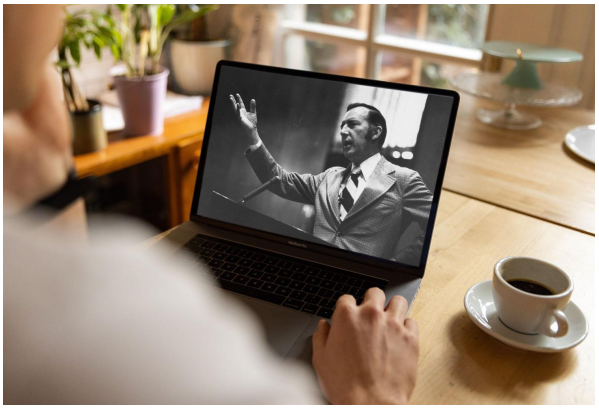

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