

The Father Heart of God

Psalm 103:8-17

Message by Dr R Bruce Montgomery ~Grace Church~6/18/2017

I recognize that celebrating Father's Day triggers a wide range emotions in people. For some it brings to surface painful memories. Some of you had abusive fathers, or absent fathers.

My prayers are that you will be able to keep from transferring the failings of your human father on to the Heavenly Father, and if anything appreciate even more, by contrast the amazing love your Father in heaven has for you.

Others fathers died when they were children. As one of our friends, who has lost both her husband and more recently her own father posted yesterday on Facebook: *"Toughest day of the year for my kids tomorrow."*

Psalm 68:5 *A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling*

Connie and I were both blessed to have fathers we could look up to, fathers who reflected for us God the Father.

Show photos of Jim Workman and then **Bob Montgomery** - talk about their hearts of love, the privilege Connie and I had of calling them "dad."

Photo of Sam Pittman family. My Dad's best friend in Pakistan. Moved to Minneapolis, MN., where he was professor of Bible at Northwestern Bible College. When we moved to Minneapolis in 1995 we had an instant "aunt and uncle" who took us in, had our first Thanksgiving in Minnesota with them and their daughters.

He went suddenly to be with the Lord in late January 2001, just after Connie and I returned from candidating at Grace Church. I was privileged to be asked to participate in officiating at his memorial service along with college officials and John Piper.

His daughter Joann was a missionary in China, on her flight back to attend the funeral wrote a tribute at 30,000 feet - which she shared at the service. I asked for a copy.

She shared about his sense of humor, his humble servant heart, his generosity, his compassion. Closed with these words: *"He loved Jesus. Quietly and simply, he ordered his life grounded in*

that love. He was a wonderful father and I miss him so very much. Perhaps the greatest tribute I can give will be when I come to the end of my days and people say simply, "she was just like her father."

Gabby Orozco will sing "**Through the Eyes of My Father**" (a Father's Day song by Brianna Haynes).

Ooh, ooh

From the start you were first

He loves you at your worst

He'll do anything, a father

He shows you what love is

Saw your dreams before you did

He'll give everything,

Like your Heavenly Father

I see God in my father's eyes, I see God

A father's like the Father in the way he loves you

A father's like the Father when he carries you through

I am my father's daughter

as I'm loving another

See love from the Father in heaven

Through the eyes of my father on Earth

A strong hand as your guide

Feel his strength by your side

He'll give anything, a father

Feels your pain when you do

Has the words to give you

He is everything, like your heavenly Father

I see love in my father's eyes, I see love

A father's like the Father in the way he loves you

A father's like the Father when he carries you through

I am my father's daughter as I'm loving another

See love from my Father in Heaven

Through the eyes of my father on Earth

Ooh Ooh

I see God in my father's eyes, I see God

A father's like the Father in the way he loves you

A father's like the Father

when he carries you through

I am my father's daughter as I'm loving another

**See love from my Father in heaven
Through the eyes of my father on Earth
Through the eyes of my father on Earth
Through the eyes of my father on Earth**

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PRAY (SLIDE OF PAUL CEDAR PRAYING)

Matthew 7:11 . . . how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

One of the things that fathers enjoy doing most is giving gifts to their children and grandchildren. My grandson Eddie turns 12 on July 12, Connie has been talking to him about what he would like to receive for his birthday.

Even greater than the pleasure I receive when I give a gift to a grateful child or grandchild, is God's delight in giving gifts to his children.

We read in **James 1:17** *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father . . .* Today I intended to talk about two gifts the Father in heaven wants to give each of us: salvation and the Spirit. We only have time for one, so since it is communion Sunday it seems appropriate to talk about the greatest gift of all, our salvation in Jesus Christ. Next week will talk about the gift of the Spirit.

We tend to think of God as a God of intellect – who looks at the state of the world and responds by analyzing the causes and hypothesizing about what possible courses of action could be taken.

But he is much more than that. We serve a God of deep emotion, of incredible passion, of intense feeling. God is not a calm God, rationally considering all points of view and then mediating and building consensus among the major stakeholders.

God reacts, He gets intense, He shows us His feelings and His heart.

Today, on Father's Day, I would like to reflect with you on the incredible heart of our heavenly Father.

Have seen snapshots of fathers and children, let's look at a snapshot in Scripture of the incredible heart of our heavenly Father.

READ RESPONSIVELY

Psalm 103:8-14

*The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.*

⁹ *He will not always accuse,*

nor will he harbor his anger forever;

¹⁰ *he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.*

¹¹ *For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;*

¹² *as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

¹³ *As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;*

¹⁴ *for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust.*

Look back at **verse 13:**

Vs. 13 *As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.*

As loving Father, God doesn't expect more out of child than he should. A good Dad knows his child's limitations. Takes into account their age, temperament, health, struggles in other areas of life such as school and the popularity issue.

If child is hurt, the good father comforts

If child makes a mistake, the interested father shows right way to do it

If a child lacks knowledge, the wise father instructs

If child is being bullied, father stands up for him.

If child falls down, father helps up.

Do you think the heavenly Father is any less sensitive to the needs and condition of his children than an earthly Father?

NB – not indiscriminate.

Three times (verses 10, 13, 17) see words **“to those who fear him.”**

Not fear associated with terror,

Or even fear associated with respect,

But fear associated with WORSHIP.

Favorite translation = **“those who revere him.”**

Such “fear” demonstrated in loving, serving and obeying God.

I John 3:1 *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*

Deep down inside each of us, we all desperately WANT to be loved by our Fathers – even when we mess up.

Ernest Hemingway wrote a story once about a father and his teenage son. In the story, the relationship had become somewhat strained, and the teenage son ran away from home. His father then began a journey in search of that rebellious son. Finally, in Madrid, Spain, in a last desperate attempt to find the boy, the father put an ad in the local newspaper. The ad read:

Dear Paco, Meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father.

The next day, in front of the newspaper office, **800** "Pacos" showed up. They were all seeking forgiveness. They all wanted to know that their father loved them. Love is a very powerful thing.

I don't know how Paco had messed up, what it was that he needed to be forgiven for. But I do know that we all mess up, and we all need the forgiveness of our Father in Heaven.

In **verses 10-12** David talked about our **Sin, iniquities, transgressions.** Each has its own shade of meaning:

1. Sins = *Specific acts, thoughts, words.* Things like stealing an orange at the store, or lying to your mother or your spouse, or cheating a customer or client.

2. Iniquities = *a broader, more general term for evil and wickedness.*

A condition of moral perversity that affects us, a power at work in us. The "sin nature" that we are all born with expresses itself in many ways:

social atrocities like oppression of the poor, racial prejudice, idolatry (putting other people and things above God) malicious verbal abuse being engrossed in empty pursuits of this world.

3. Transgressions refer to legal offenses, breaking the law.

And specifically are used for rebellion against a superior.

Brazen defiance against authority – telling teacher you can't tell me what to do!

Revolt, treachery (Benedict Arnold).

We have struck out on three accounts – any way you come at it – we continually think and do wrong things, we are depraved to the core of our beings, and we are rebels!

We wait for the umpire to cry, "*Three strikes, you're out!*"

Our sins deserve:

- Judgment
- Punishment
- Banishment.

We expect a holy God to react to our depravity with revulsion.

We realize a sovereign God has the right execute us for our rebellion against his authority. In some countries they shoot traitors. In ours we have hung them, electrocuted them, and gassed them.

Off with their heads! Cried the queen of hearts in *Alice in Wonderland.*

God's justice demands that sin be punished. God cannot just casually look the other way or sweep sin under the rug and pretend like sin doesn't exist. Sin must be dealt with, and the punishment for sin is death. In **Romans 6:23** the Apostle Paul writes: ". . . *the wages of sin is death.*"

Yet we read those amazing words in **verse 10** – *he doesn't treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.*

He doesn't throw up in disgust at our iniquity, our moral depravity. He doesn't call us out at home plate. Instead of separating our heads from our bodies, he has separated our transgressions from us!

Psalm 103:12 – *as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us!*

We are declared "not guilty" on all counts – no greater words!

God cannot ignore our sin. Instead he overcame it.

The great God of the Universe became the "trash collector." God loves you more than you can possibly imagine. He loves you so much that he gave his life for you.

On the cross He took our filth, our sin upon himself. Jesus had to die that we might experience his life.

This morning Jesus wants you to come to his cross, experience his love. All you have to do is ask, and receive the gift of salvation! The price has already been paid, and it was NOT cheap.

Allow the work that God did on the cross – the pain, the payment of the penalty for sin – to be applied to your account so that you can be forgiven, clean, and know that you're loved.

It is not difficult to get to the place where you can "embrace the grace" God has for you. Really it's as easy as ABC.

A – Admit that you’ve sinned. **Romans 3:23** says, “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” That means we are all in need of God’s forgiveness and grace. The first step in receiving salvation is to confess your sin.

B – Believe in your heart that Jesus Christ gave his life so that you can be saved. **John 1:12** states, “*To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*”

Explain that “believe” means to “place your trust in.”

C – Confess him as Lord of your life **with your mouth** **Romans 10:9** reads, “*If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*”