

The Father's Heart

Today I want to share a bit about the Father's heart. I want to assure you that regardless of where you have been, you can come back to the Heavenly Father. I also want to look at an area of responsibility we, believers, often overlook. No matter what you do in your Christian life, you must build on the basis of the Father's love for you. He has heard your heart's cry.

I want to start by telling a simple but important truth— God will never love you any more than He does right now. Many Christians have bought into the lie that if you do more, if you work harder, if pray louder, if read your Bible longer, that if somehow you can do enough, God may love you a little bit more. Truly, God loves you because of Who He is— not because of what you do.

Unfortunately for many believers in North America, we have never gotten beyond a 'works' mentality. We are always trying to do all sorts of things so they can 'earn' more of God's love. But friend, hear me today, if you have jumped onto this works treadmill, you must get off! If you do not get off, it will only lead you to frustration. Sooner or later you will make a mistake, then you will become frustrated because you fall short of the glory of God. When you blow it, you will think that God doesn't care or love you anymore. That is not true.

It is vital for us to really grasp that God's love is based on Who He is, not on what we do. You see, many have bought into the lie that God only loves the lovable or those who are perfect or those who can attain greatness or those who have certain gifts. Others will say 'Okay, maybe He loves me, but He loves so and so more. Look at what He is doing through them.' They think God must love a Billy Graham more than He loves them. They never take the time to even understand why God uses someone in a different way or a in way we think is more appealing.

We easily forget that we each have a unique role to fill and a purpose specifically designed for our lives. It does not matter whether we are the hand or the foot or the arm or the finger of the Body (of Christ). Our true contentment comes as we fulfill the job God has designed us to do. This does not take into account the fact that many believers hinder or abort God's call on their lives because they will not pay the price that is involved. Instead, many people act like immature adults, choosing to believe the lie that God does not really love them.

Friend, God loves because He is love! He loves you because of Who He is— not because of the works you do. God wants to motivate you by His love. He has never planned that He will love you because of an action, or the things you do. Our heavenly Father is a God that loves us and desires, not only to meet our needs, but to go beyond what we have ever dreamed.

This is a topic that is very close to me for I have looked at God through colored glasses. I have not arrived— but I have come a long way from what I was. God wants to bring you the message that it is okay to just be you. As we allow Him to love on us, He will bring about all the changes necessary for us to walk in all that He has planned. We must understand His love is absolutely unconditional. As we begin to grasp this, we will start to walk in the freedom that God has for us. Do you really understand how much God loves you? Do you know how much He wants you to walk in His authority and power?

Eph 1:17-19

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him;

18 having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 and what the exceeding greatness of his power TO us-ward who believe, according TO that working of the strength of his might.

What was the prayer of Paul? It was that the eyes of your heart may be opened or enlightened. My prayer for you is that God will open your eyes, to not only to see how much He loves and cherishes you, but to grasp the mission that He has for your life. You see, because of Who God is, we can always have hope for tomorrow. We can always hope that things will get better, that things will change. We can be comforted by God in all situations.

Many people's hearts have been seared by the hurts of yesterday. We have been let down, some have been abused or mistreated, relationships have been ripped apart by uncaring people. Many good people have been severely wounded by those in the church. Some churches are all caught up in legalism and the law; many people that do not fit 'their' mould are beat up by heartless words, gossip and slander. All this does, in the people who have been mistreated, is cause them to build walls to hide behind. The mistreatment reinforces their belief that nobody, not even God, would or could love them for who they are.

Christian, I am here to tell you that God loves you! God has a plan for your life. God longs to impart new vision, new dreams; He wants you to experience His love and power in new ways. Not for your benefit only, but also for those you are to take the message of salvation to. We need to reach out as Jesus reached out. We can—as we come to that place where we experience His love for ourselves.

Another area where Christians in North America get all bound up is the idea that they can only be used of God when they 'arrive' or become perfect. Over the years I have heard leaders tell their people that someday, after they are mature and are doing all things right, then God will use them. There is nowhere in Scripture that says "Get your act together! When you are perfect, then you can come to me." Jesus says, "Come—as you are!" I have learned that as I am busy doing God's business, He takes care of mine.

Jesus came to set us free! He came so we may again experience the Father's love. God wants us to walk in the knowledge and power of His love so that our past can no longer hinder to us.

Eph 3:14-19

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

This is the desire that God has for us; that somehow we can start to grasp that God's love is big enough to cover all our past, to cover everywhere we have been. Knowing Christ's love means that regardless of what you have done—HE LOVES YOU! God's love is big! It is big enough to embrace you wherever you are. Will you let Him? Today, will you allow Him to wipe away those inner tears? Will you allow Him to breathe fresh hope into your life? Will you allow Him to give you fresh revelation? Will you let Him to take away wrong habits or thought patterns and even set you free from all the problems of your past?

God desires that you would be filled with the fullness of God. Can you grasp the idea that He desires that you should be filled with the fullness of the love of God? That is why we tell others about God. His desire is that we come together to experience the fullness of God both in our relationships and in ministry. God wants us to experience all that He is. He desires that we would partake in all that He has.

Some of us have come out of bad situations; we have lost a job, or failed in marriage, or carry other deep personal wounds. When we have blown it, when we are struggling, we need to be encouraged — and at times it seems that no one is there. Friends, God is always there and He does care. He is in fact crying out to you, “I am here!”. And He is! It is also true that we to have a part we need to play but we will touch on that a little later. The fact is some of you have been standing alone for a long time. You have been crying out and wondering, ‘Where is God?’. My friend, He has been with you all the while. God wants you to know that He is there! He wants to embrace you; He wants to wipe away those tears. He wants to hold you and tell you it will be okay. God wants to give you the love that for many years, many of us have looked for - in all the wrong places.

Why do people get caught up in sex or drugs or alcohol? They are looking for some one to care; they are looking for life. They are looking to feel good about themselves, so they turn to poor imitations to either bury their pain or to gain satisfaction for a season. Friend, God the Father wants to come and embrace us. He wants to give us the real thing.

Here’s a thought for you today. I do not believe that we have fully understood why Jesus came. Yes, He came to destroy the works of the enemy; and He came to bring the kingdom of God. He came to be the sacrifice for our sins. These are all true.

Now, do you know why else He came? He came that we might come to the Father. He came to bring us into the Father’s very throne room that we might fellowship Him with and partake of all that God is. Jesus came so that God could embrace us; to give us a big, warm, comforting hug. A hug that makes all of our doubts, fears and pain go away. He came so our heavenly Father could kiss away all our tears and tell us about all He has in store for us. So we would even go from this into far more than we realize. Before we talk about that we must realize that God loves us, that He wants to best for each of us.

Some Christians have a hard time with this concept. Some, in their walk with the Lord, have a easier time dealing with Jesus than with God because of their poor concept of what a father is. Check yourself out. When you are trouble, who do you pray to? Is it Jesus or is it the Father? Many believers almost have the perception that Jesus came to tell us that Father God was uptight and we had ‘better get with the program or else’. So many have an image of a God Who is an unmerciful Judge, and that Jesus is holding judgement at bay so we do not get a lightning bolt between the eyes! We need to get rid of these images of God. They are not true!

Many think of God as a cop in a Santa costume; if we are good we get presents if we are bad we get something else. We must come to a place of, not only understanding but accepting the fact, that if we are receiving judgment in our lives, we are the ones who brought it about. It is not God sending it because He does not care. God has already done His part! Will we do our part?

Jesus came to bring us to the Father. If you get nothing else out of this sermon, please get this. Jesus came to bring us to a loving Father— He did not come to keep the Father from destroying us. We see this truth in the following verses.

Eph 2:18

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

John 14:6

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Jesus came to bring us to the Father. No one comes to the Father except through Christ. Have you ever wondered about the conversation between the Father and Jesus before God sent Jesus to pay the price for our

sins? I think it must have gone something like this. “Jesus, those are my kids down there. Yes, they have strayed and rebelled against Me, but I love them so much! I have so much in store for them. Go get my kids so I can fellowship with them again.”

During the times when I sit and dream I can hear the conversation going on as they look through the eras of time. I imagine the Father saying, “See that person? I have a plan for him but he will have to go through a lot to walk in the call I have for him. The price will be high, the way steep, but he will make it!”

Where the Father is, there is life, comfort, love and hope. God wants to let you know that He has heard your cries. Today, through Jesus, the Father is sending His Holy Spirit to embrace you and to fill you with fresh dreams and new hope.

Luke 13:34

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

The Father’s heart has always been to gather the broken, those who are in despair or hurting, so He can love on them and give them hope. Jesus taught a parable about a banquet that nobody came to. In this parable, the master said that if those who were invited do not want to come, then the servant should go, find the lame and the blind and tell them to come in.

Church, the Father’s heart cry has always been that He wants us to come to Him so we can be loved by Him, embraced by Him. God’s heart breaks over each child who will not come to Him. What about you reading these words today? When was the last time you came into God’s arms and just rested there? Or have you bought into the lie that for you it is too late for you, that you have blown it too often? What about the lie that says you must work harder to earn His love? Where are you today? Never forget that God the Father sent Jesus to bring you back to Him.

Isa 43:5-7

5 Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;

6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;

7 Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

What was the cry of God’s heart for Israel? It is the same cry God has for us today. The Father is crying out for all his sons and daughters to come home. Quit all your ‘buts’ and come home to God. Stop trying to do things out of guilt. Instead, rush back and jump into the Father’s arms. They are outstretched to you right now.

Remember the story of the prodigal? Let’s read the last part.

Luke 15:20-24

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

We need to realize that no matter where we have been or what we have done, God is waiting with arms stretched open. He wants to restore you and set you free. You have a choice to make. Are you going to let your old hurts and even the lies of the enemy keep you away? Or are you going to run to God and allow Him to restore you and set you free?

The walls that so many have built, you know the ones, you think will keep people at a distance so you will not be hurt again. The truth is— they keep the pain in and they keep God out! Why not let God come in and set you free? Why not today?

I must share with you that God's plan is for you to help in the process of seeing other people set free. Not only those who are lost need to be free of their old lifestyles, but many believers need to be set free as well. They came to Jesus, and they have continued to try to walk even though they are still all bound up. They have never experienced the fullness of what is available to them through Jesus.

Church, we are on a mission to reach the lost, the lonely and the hurting. There are a couple of things that we must come to grips with: we are in a spiritual battle whether we realize it or not; and each one of us has a specific job to do and a role to play. Together we can make a difference in each other's lives and in the lives of those we reach out to. As we learn to see through God's eyes, we can learn to love as Jesus loves. It is important for us to realize that God has commissioned each one of us to reach out with His love to the lost, lonely, hurting, even to the seemingly unreachable.

Jesus was willing to go to the cross for you and me. Are we willing to do all we can for others? Many times we limit those we will try to reach out to because of our own personal taste. Many believers have no trouble reaching out to those they can 'relate to', but far too often we will not reach past their own comfort zones. To what lengths are you willing to go, to reach out with the love and power of God? Will you go to those that are tough to love or even tough to figure out? Or are you only going to reach out to the easy ones? Are you really prepared to go the second, and third, mile with some? What about the ones that some one would have to go 103 miles with just to start to see the walls of hurt and rejection begin to come down. Church, I am not saying it will be easy— but I am saying that with God's grace, we must go forward. We must help all that God brings our way.

I have seen far too often that many refuse to reach out to those who are beyond their comfort zones. I have even seen churches refuse to reach out to certain groups. In Mark we see an example of some friends who went to great lengths to see someone receive a touch from God .

Mark 2:1-5

1 and again he entered into Capernaum, after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 and straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3 and they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 and when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5 when Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

Let us start by concentrating on verse 3. The paralytic's needs moved his friends to action. When we recognize a need, we should be motivated to do whatever we can do to see that they get help. Are you aware that there are many people out there whose physical or spiritual needs that you can help with? I pray that the compassion of Jesus will cause each of us to be motivated to do whatever we can do help those in need.

Let's go on to verse 4

Because of the crowds, these four friends could not easily get to Jesus so they made an opening in the roof and lowered the paralysed man through the roof. I wonder, how many of you would go to that much work to bring someone to a place where they could get their needs met. Jesus went to great lengths to meet our needs; to save our souls. Let us follow His example.

Now, let us turn to another passage.

John 11:

38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Let's look specifically at two verses from this part of Scripture and allow God to open the eyes of our understanding. In verse 39 we see that Martha, the sister of Lazarus, reacted when Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Have you ever been in a situation where you thought there was no hope? Have you ever found yourself refusing to try or giving up because you thought the whole situation was beyond hope? Are there areas, even in your life today, where you have bought into the lie that it is totally impossible?

Let's jump down to verse 43. We see Jesus cry with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth". What about the situation in your life! What about those in your family who are lost in the world of sin? What about all the people you know that are not saved? Will you, like Jesus, call them out of their state of death? Or have you grown complacent and say nothing?

Then as we read on, in verse 44, we see that after Jesus did His part, those around had a part to play. The same is true for us today. Jesus raised Lazarus from death then told the people around to take his grave clothes off of him. This may be stretching it a bit for you, but try to grasp this thought. Today, as people are saved, they are still wearing their grave clothes. We have a duty to help them take off their grave clothes.

Unfortunately, many people won't obey in helping remove the grave clothes. I can only imagine, but after being dead for four days, I don't think Lazarus smelled very pretty. Is this any different today? Are there situations where, because of the conflict or not wanting to get in the middle of things, we do not do anything; we just hope the problem goes away? We all have play a part, a responsibility in helping each other walk in the fullness of God.

Just because we are saved, does not mean that all of our old ways or hurts have been removed; nor does it mean we do not need to be encouraged once in a while.

As with the story of the prodigal, the older brother was some upset that the younger brother was gladly accepted back. I think the same is very evident today; it shows in how many North American churches deal with the newly saved. Many long-time Christian are offended by the grave clothes and the smell. They want those saved to be all cleaned up and fully matured before they are accepted in the body.

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We have an obligation to do to others as Jesus instructed. Take off the grave clothes and let them go. Church, the grave clothes symbolize death. People without Jesus are dead even though they do not know it. I believe that God desires that we would get to a place in Him where there would be no obstructions in our lives; where God's Spirit would flow through us to bring life to those around us who are dead, life to all who are in bondage.

God wants us to live in such a way that we can be encouraging to each other; where we would learn to laugh together, cry together and bring in the harvest together. Will you let God's love flow through you?

This is not a passive thought. If you agree, you must act. You must reach out to embrace, to encourage, to help, to walk with. All that is available is at your disposal, but you must decide and you must let love move you into action.

The Father's heart of love for us sent Jesus to earth, to live, to suffer and to die for us. If we love God, the Father's heart of love will motive us to act. True love is more than an emotion or feeling. True love is an action! Let the Father's heart of love move you to action. When we live and move and have our being in His Love, the Father's heart rejoices.

This is our desire. Let it flow through all you are and do. Together we will one day see the smile on Father's face, and that will be reward enough.

Roger Gamble