

Father Heart of God

(From “Hope for All” draft 10132015)

Can God be our Creator without also being our Father? Not according to the Bible as I understand it. To think otherwise leads to a debased view of God—one oblivious to His great love for all people. Rev. Thomas Allin says:

“We are told God is *not* the Father of all men; He is only their Creator! What a total misapprehension these words imply... For what do we mean by paternity and the obligations it brings? The idea rests essentially on the communication of life to the child by the parent. Now paternity is for us largely blind and instinctive; but Creation is Love acting freely, divinely; knowing all the consequences, assuming all the responsibility involved in the very act of creating...

It seems, then, very strange to seek to escape the consequences of the lesser obligation [fatherhood], by admitting one still greater [Creator].”¹

We cannot Biblically separate God as Creator from God as Father—they are one and the same.

Ten Affirming Points

◆ 1 Adam

- “Adam, the *son* of God.” Lu 3:38

This is Adam's identity; and as descendants of Adam, all human beings are God's offspring.

◆ 2 Being Creator assumes fatherhood

- “Have we not all one *Father*? Has not one God *created* us?” Mal 2:10
- “Is He not your *Father*...? Has He not *made* you [Israel]?” De 32:6
- “You are our *Father*... our *potter*; and all we are *the work of Your hand*.” Is 64:8
- “I will be his *God* and he shall be My *son*.” Re 21:7

Fatherhood is intrinsically connected to being God—to the act of creating.

- “Let us make [create] man in our image, according to our likeness.” Ge 1:26; 9:6; Col 1:15-20

Whatever else it might mean to be created in the “image” of God, it at least affirms His Fatherhood. The early church fathers confirmed this in their creeds—linking God's nature as both Father and Creator:

Apostle's Creed: “I believe in God, the *Father* almighty, *creator* of heaven and earth ...”²

Nicene Creed: We believe in one God, the *Father*, the Almighty, *maker* of heaven and earth, of *all* that is...”³

◆ 3 Firstborn children

Moses clarified that the children of Israel are not God's exclusive children, but His ‘firstborn’ children!

- “Israel is My son, My *firstborn*.” Ex 4:22 (Moses)

Jesus came first to the people of Israel⁴ in fulfillment of God's initial purpose to reveal Himself through Abraham

1 Allin, Thomas. “Christ Triumphant.” 1878. Rpt. 9th ed. Canyon Country, CA: Concordant, n.d. 173.

2 <http://www.creeds.net/ancient/apostles.htm> (Modern English Version)

3 <http://www.creeds.net/ancient/nicene.htm> (International Consultation on English Texts translation)

4 Matthew 10:5-7; 15:23-25

and his descendants. They (Israel) were chosen to be God's blessing to the whole world.⁵ It is the same with Christ and his Church.

So when the Bible says...

- “All of you are *children* of the Most High.” Ps 82:6 (Asaph)
- “I bow my knees to the Father... from whom the *whole family* in heaven and earth is named.” Ep 3:14-15 (Paul)

We can all rest assured... God is our Father too.⁶

◆ 4 Our “Father”

The New Testament refers to God as “Father” over 230 times!⁷ It was Jesus' preferred title for God. In His most famous discourse⁸ He addressed God as father 17 times!⁹ And note the introduction of the most solemn and famous prayer ever prayed:

- “*Our Father* in heaven...” Mt 6:9; Lu 11:2

Matthew concludes Jesus' famous sermon in these words:

- “The *people* were astonished... *great multitudes* followed Him.” Mt 7:28-9; 8:1¹⁰

“The people” and “great multitudes” refer to the general public to whom Jesus addressed God as “Our Father.” This is significant! People came from the whole region—Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan river.¹¹

In another discourse, Jesus again referred to God as “your Father” when speaking to the public:

- “Then Jesus spoke to the *multitudes* and to his disciples saying... ‘Do not call anyone on earth your father for *One is your Father...* who is in heaven.’” Mt 23:1; 9

Why was addressing God as “your” Father so important to Jesus?

I believe He wanted us to know who we were and how loved and special we are to God.

◆ 5 Athenians

Paul affirmed we are all God's children! When speaking to the Athenians, people of another religion, he said:

- “We *also* are His *children*. Being then the *children* of God...” Ac 17: 22-23, 28-29 NAS

Paul affirms that even those who do not yet know Jesus are “children” of God in some definite sense.¹² Notice how Paul identified himself with them in saying “we also” instead of “you also.” He recognized these Gentiles as brothers and sisters in God.

5 Genesis 12:2-3; See T9, #3

6 There is no favoritism with God. See T8, “No Favoritism”

7 Statistics taken from “Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology” and “Strong's Concordance.”

8 The Sermon on the Mount—Matthew chapters 5-7.

9 Matthew 5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6a, 6b, 8, 9, 14, 15, 18a, 18b, 26, 32; 7:11, 12

10 This confirms that Jesus addressed the multitudes who were present on this occasion starting from verses 4:23--5:1-2.

11 Matthew 4:23--5:1-2. Note the word “and” (*de*—S1161; a Greek conjunction) which directly links verse 4:25 with 5:1. Note too that there are no chapter or paragraph breaks in the Greek text. (1) Also, it does not matter that the cities, localities and regions mentioned are found in the “territory” of Israel, as certainly not all Israelites were true believers walking with and serving the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—i.e. of Israel. “For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, *nor are they all children* because they are the seed of Abraham (Ro 9:6-7).”

(1) <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G1161&t=NKJV>

12 Most translations say “offspring” which is defined as “children; descendant(s).” (1) Many translations specifically say “children:” For example: TEV, NIV (1973), PME, JB, CJB, CEV, EXB, GW, ISV, NOG, VOICE, LB (Sons), TLB (Sons of God), JMT (Family).

(1) Oxford American Desk Dictionary and Thesaurus. Second Ed. New York: Berkley, 2001. 573

◆ 6 One God and Father

Paul links the oneness of God with being Father of all:

- “There is... *one* God and Father of *all!*” Ep 4:4-10; Mal 2:10

Our Father is not the Creator of all and Father of some, but the one God and Father of all!

◆ 7 Father of Spirits

- “Be in subjection to the Father of spirits...” He 12:9

“Father of spirits” excludes no one; for every person has a spirit.

◆ 8 Adoption

But must we not be “adopted” to become God's children? No! That is a misunderstanding of what NT adoption means. Adoption is mentioned by Paul five times¹³ and does not carry the same meaning today as it did back then. Adoption was an endearing term which mirrored a Roman custom authorizing one to officially represent another for legal purposes.

W. E. Vine says it “involves the dignity of the relationship of believers as sons... not a putting into the family by spiritual birth, but a putting into the position of sons.”¹⁴

Professor Marvin Vincent explains it similarly.¹⁵

Though we all are “children” of God, only faithful believers are “adopted” sons in the Biblical and Roman sense. Such “sons” are led by the Spirit of God. They put to death the misdeeds of the body and willingly suffer with Christ. It never meant that God was *only* the “Father” of obedient believers in an absolute and exclusive sense. This resolves the dilemma of Matthew 5:44-45 where Jesus says:

- “Love your enemies... *that* you may be 'sons' of your Father.”

How could He tell them to do something in order to become sons when he already referred to God as their Father? A correct view of “adoption” resolves this.

Bible translator, Jonathan Mitchell, explains:

“Jesus, in Matthew 5:45, is using a Hebrew idiom, 'sons of...,' as a teaching device to indicate how His followers should live. It means 'that which has the quality and character of something, or that with which a person is associated.'” See note 263 for examples.¹⁶

13 Romans 8:15; 23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5

14 Vine, W. E. “An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words.” Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1985. 13-14 Section II.

15 “Adoption’ is a setting or placing: the placing of one in the position of a son. Mr. Merivale, illustrating Paul’s acquaintance with Roman law, says: ‘The process of legal adoption by which the chosen heir became entitled not only to the reversion of the property but to the civil status, to the burdens as well as the rights of the adopter – became, as it were, his other self, one with him... We have but a faint conception of the force with which such an illustration would speak to one familiar with the Roman practice; how it would serve to impress upon him the assurance that the adopted son of God becomes, in a peculiar and intimate sense, one with the heavenly Father (“Conversion of the Roman Empire”).’” (1) (1) Vincent, Marvin. “Word Studies of the N. T.” Vol. 4. 1887. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973. 91

16 Further examples include: Mt 8:11-12, 'sons of the reign / kingdom,' as in our present verse. Mt 9:15, 'sons of the bridechamber,' means the friends of the bride or groom; members of the wedding party. Mt 23:15, 'sons of Gehenna,' means those that will end up in the waste pile, or the dump (note: *Gehenna* was the dump outside Jerusalem). Mk 3:17, Boanerges, 'sons of thunder,' means loud and explosive, impetuous, bold, daring. Lu 10:6, 'son of peace,' means a person whose nature is peace. Lu 16:8, 'sons of this age... sons of light,' means those having the character of the one, or the other. Jn 12:36, 'sons of light,' which came from believing into the Light. Ac 4:36, Barnabas, 'son of consolation,' refers to his character. Ac 13:10, Elymas the sorcerer – Paul called him a 'son of the devil,' which he went on to explain as 'an enemy of righteousness.' Ps 89:22, 'son of wickedness,' means a person who does wicked things. De 13:13, 'sons of Belial,' means people who live in a

This explains why Jesus told the Pharisees the devil was their father. It was a figure of speech like numerous others He used. He said: “You do the *deeds* of your father... the devil.”¹⁷ Were these Jews actual paternal sons of the devil? Of course not, they merely acted as such.

Jesus said: “Love your enemies, do good, and lend... and you *will be children* of the Most High... Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate.” The “children” of God are those who act like it, not those with a “membership” card.¹⁸

Jesus constantly used metaphors and hyperboles. Matthew said: “without a parable He did not speak to them.”¹⁹ For example: “You are *Peter* and on this *rock* I will build my church... But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me *Satan!*’”²⁰ Was Peter a rock or Satan? The truth is, He was neither. He was “as” a rock in one context and acted “as” Satan in another. The same with the Pharisees. They were no more the children of the devil than Peter was Satan or a rock.

Although “father” is not always used in reference to God, especially in the OT, it is often inferred.²¹

For more on Adoption: <http://www.hopebeyondhell.net/adoption-2/>

◆ 9 Owner of All

- “All souls are mine.” Ez 18:4

We all belong to God! If He lost any of us forever, it would be His eternal loss—that of a father losing his child. But God is *not* a loser, especially of His own children!

◆ 10 Forgiving Father

- “If you... *being evil*, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your Father!*” Mt 7:11

Imagine! Even though in some sense, we are all “evil,” Jesus still considers God our Father! Our sins, failures and even rebellion do not change who we are as His children.

- “O my *rebellious children come back* to me again and *I will heal you* from your sins.” Jer 3:22 TLB; Is 55:7-9

Our Father does not disown us because of our failures. The parable of the wayward son is a great example of this: In that story, a father had two sons and one decided to take his inheritance to pursue a life of pleasure. But the day soon came when he found himself broke and distraught. Remorseful, he decides to go home wondering what he will say to his father. But while he was still a great way off, his father saw him. Filled with compassion, he runs to his son, embraces him, and kisses him fervently²²—even before he could explain himself.²³ What a picture of our heavenly Father! He never gives up on us—no matter how miserably we fail.

Bible scholar, William Barclay wrote: “There is no discipline of God which does not take its source in love and is not aimed at good.”²⁴

worthless manner.” From Jonathan Mitchell's “Parables of Jesus”—Part 2.” (1)

(1) <http://www.greater-emmanuel.org/jm/parables.htm#Two>

17 John 8:41, 44. In Lu 6:35-36

18 Read 1 John chapter 3; also 4:7-11; 20-21

19 Matthew 13:34

20 Matthew 16:18, 23

21 For example: Ex 4:22-23 ; De 1:31; 8:5 ; 14:1; Ps 103:13 ; Jer 3:22 ; 31:20 ; Hos 11:1-4 ; Mal 3:17. According too Robert H. Stein, contributor for “Bakers Evangelical Dictionary, wrote: “This metaphor for God [Father] may have been avoided in the Old Testament due to its frequent use in the ancient Near East where it was used in various fertility religions and carried heavy sexual overtones.” <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/> “Fatherhood of God.”

22 “Fervently:” See Amplified Bible footnote: a. G. Abbott-Smith, “Manual Greek Lexicon”

23 Luke 15:11-32

24 Barclay, William. Heb.12:5-11. “The Letter to the Hebrews.” The Daily Study Bible Revised Edition. Westminster Press. Philadelphia 1976. 179

How can it be otherwise since God, our Father, *is* love?²⁵ Since we, as human parents, discipline our kids for their good, wouldn't it make sense God would too?²⁶ As a dad and granddad, I can't imagine how God, as a loving Father, could sentence anyone to endless pain.

Let us cherish the truth that God is our Father and loves us all.

²⁵ 1John 4:8, 16

²⁶ Jesus had no problem comparing God as our Father, with us as parents. He said "if you know how to give good gifts to your kids how much more will your Father." Mt 7:11 (My paraphrase)