

WE CALL OUT “ABBA FATHER”

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We have spent a good few weeks talking about faith. Last week — the need to focus more on the receiving end rather than the giving end.

It is common for us to pester God — almost seek to wear Him down — to overcome what we may see as His reluctance ... which we have to overcome.

But the fact is: He’s not reluctant. And you and I of all people ought to understand that — to know better.

The Bible reveals God’s nature. That is one of the key reasons to read and study our Bibles. Not just to obtain academic doctrines ... but to better know the Author.

Knowing technical doctrinal details like how to count to Pentecost ... is important if we want to keep the Holy Day properly —but it’s just one day in the year.

What about your life today ... tomorrow ... next week? What about your relationships ... health ... your fears?

Knowing the truth about eternal hell-fire is good information to possess ... but what about your relationships today ... your anxieties today ... your health today?

So we should be careful not to view the Bible just as a collection of technical doctrines ... or histories ... or poetry. It’s a revelation of its Author — our God. To reveal what He’s like.

And ... as we touched on last week ... the Bible doesn’t reveal a reluctant ... remote ... uncaring ... difficult-to-reach God. The very opposite.

Psalms 145:8-9 (NKJV)

**8 The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, (gracious ... favourable)
Slow to anger and great in mercy.**

9 **The Lord is good to all,
And His tender mercies are over all His works.**

Psalms 145:8 (NIV)

8 **The Lord is ...**

slow to anger and rich in love. *(Even in the Old Testament. The God of the Old Testament is rich in love)*

1 John 4:8 (NKJV)

8 He who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.**

1 John 4:16 (NKJV)

16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. **God is love**, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

This truth is for believers. Though commonly trumpeted to the world ... “God loves you even in your sin etc”. The truth is for us — sons and daughters.

But you and I shouldn't shy away from pondering God's love for us. It is super-important to know it and experience it. His desire for our time ... fellowship ... for our hearts.

God's interested in our relationship with Him ... not just our accuracy on the top 20 Biblical doctrines.

It is important for us that we understand and are familiar with God's heart toward us (and it's not a hard heart!) ... it is the very opposite.

Psalms 103:8-14 (NKJV)

8 **The Lord is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.**

9 He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.

10 **He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.**

11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward 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 pities his children,
So **the Lord pities those who fear Him.**
14 **For He knows our frame;**
He remembers that we are dust.

For His part ...God is good-natured ... a kind being.

He's had problems over the years dealing with mankind. Think of Noah's day ... where every imagination of man's heart was only evil continually — Israel and Judah. He's had to put up with endless ... persistent ... rebellion.

There were limits to how God could relate to people in Old Testament times. Even His own chosen nation were stiff-necked ... obstinate — though God did His best to protect them from their own stupidity and the nations around them.

God is still the same in New Testament times — but now He has the hope of dealing with teachable individuals ... who voluntarily choose His way!

In Old Testament times God was having to deal with immature ... carnal people — like 2 year-olds with tantrums. Now ... at last ... He can reach out to faithful sons and daughters — in His family. The same God — but He's able to relate to us at a different level.

So we shouldn't misunderstand the strong action God occasionally took in the Old Testament times. His goodness has never wavered — but He has often been rejected.

Let's continue to see what the Word says to us.

1 John 4:19 (NKJV)

19 **We love (Him) because He first loved us.**

We don't love God first — struggling and striving. We need to understand His love for us ... then we can love in response.

Like the sun's rays on a beautiful flower. The flower grows and blossoms in response to the sun — not vice versa.

So — a big question. Do we “see” God’s love for us? Is it real? Do we live in the knowledge of it?

Or ... do we perceive God to be a harsh judge ... always fault-finding ... always impatient ... always dissatisfied with us?

It would be difficult for us to really love God if we don’t experience His love first.

Luke 7:36-50 (NKJV)

36 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to eat.

37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil,

38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.

39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, **“This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.”**

40 And Jesus answered and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.”

So he said, “Teacher, say it.”

41 **“There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.**

42 **And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?”**

43 **Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.”**

And **He said to him, “You have rightly judged.”**

44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.

45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in.

46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.

47 Therefore I say to you, **her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”**

48 Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

49 And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

50 Then He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

One who is forgiven much — loves much. What about you? Me?

Or do we think we weren't too bad? More or less “okay”? God just had to do “tweak” a little in our lives?

If we understood — truly — the cost to God ...? It cost Him His Son.

More of God's nature.

Matthew 6:25-34 (NKJV)

25 “Therefore I say to you, **do not worry about your life**, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. **Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?**

26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; **yet your heavenly Father** feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 **Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?**

28 “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, **will He not much more clothe you**, O you of little faith?

31 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For **your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.**

33 But **seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Don't worry! “How much more”.

Jesus isn't condemning worry because it's sinful in some way. He's not chastising them. He wants them to be free — from anxiety and concern! Have a more joy-filled life!

And note the references to a HEAVENLY FATHER. Our human experiences of a father might be so-so — but God is a GREAT FATHER. He loves us . And hopefully — vice versa!

Matthew 7:7-11 (NKJV)

7 **“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

8 **For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!**

How much more! Heavenly Father!

This is describing a close personal ... family relationship. A Father and His favourite son. A Father and His favourite daughter.

And — He's accessible — and much more willing.

Luke 15:11-19 (NKJV)

11 Then He said: **“A certain man had two sons.**

12 And **the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So he divided to them his livelihood.**

13 And not many days after, **the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.**

14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”’

This son was not altogether with it ... a bit like you and me.

Luke 15:20-24 (NKJV)

20 “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still 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 to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

23 And bring the fatted calf here 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.

This father was like God. Not quick to punish — condemn ... “once you’ve crawled for a while and finally earned a place back at the family table ... but you’ve got a way to go”.

The Father is easy to entreat. Very willing.

What about the attitude of the other son?

Luke 15:25-32 (NKJV)

25 “Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.’

28 “But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.

29 So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.

30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.

32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "

Watch out for this attitude. He kept his father's commandments ... but his attitude towards his father was bad ... his heart was all wrong. He had a WRONG VIEW OF HIS FATHER. Do we towards our Heavenly Father?

Matthew 11:25-30 (NKJV)

25 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.

26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Jesus is good company. An oasis in a confused world. He has a better way.

Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG)

28 "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest.

29 Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.

30 Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

God is in heaven. Jesus too. So we can't see them face to face (now). Though by faith we see the invisible!

But ... if we understand God's nature s revealed by Jesus here and in other places ... goodness ... love — toward us — as revealed in scripture — it goes a long way.

And knowing God's personal concern for us individually .. gives us confidence — even boldness — to approach Him.

Hebrews 10:19-22 (NKJV)

19 **Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,**

20 **by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,**

21 **and having a High Priest over the house of God,**

22 **let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**

Boldness = Greek: Parrhesia. Thayer: Free and fearless confidence, freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech.

Several times elsewhere translated “openly” as in “spoke openly”. We can go into the Holiest of Holies.

We can be completely open. We have access to our Father who loves us ... and desires an intimate relationship. No reluctance!

Hebrews 10:22 (The Message)

22 So, friends, **we can now—without hesitation—walk right up to God, into "the Holy Place." Jesus has cleared the way by the blood of his sacrifice, acting as our priest before God.**

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NKJV)

14 **Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.**

15 **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**

16 **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

“Come boldly” ... same Greek word: Parrhesia

We can come to the Place of Grace — where it says we’ll find help — in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16 (TPT)

16 So now we come freely and boldly to **where love is enthroned, to receive mercy’s kiss** and discover the grace we urgently need **to strengthen us** in our time of **weakness**.

There’s no scripture saying God is holding things back from us. Just the contrary.

Romans 8:29-32 (NKJV)

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32 **He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?**

We don’t need to wonder: Does God love me? Jesus died for you! Were you unworthy for Jesus to die for you? Join the club!!

So we all do matter to God. Each of us. And we’re all unique — “one-offs”.

It is really important that we take time to ponder our relationship with God. And it’s not based on our performance (thankfully).

Do we see God as Father? The MUCH MORE FATHER? And that we have instant access to Him!

1 John 3:1 (NKJV)

1 **Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!** Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

1 John 3:1 (MSG)

1 **What marvellous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we're called children of God!**

1 John 3:1 (TPT)

1 **Look with wonder at the depths of the Father's marvellous love that He has lavished on us! He has called us and made us His very own beloved children.**

Romans 8:14-15 (NKJV)

14 **For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.**

15 **For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."**

It is still common to hear little Jewish children calling out "Abba" to their dads. It's a family term ... like "Papa" or "Dad".

Sometimes. God is "God". But for you and me ... most of the time He should be "Dad".

Maybe in our physical lives our father was Mr Grumpy ... Mr Bad Tempered ... Mr Criticism ... Mr Never-There for me ... Mr Not-Interested. It can affect our view of God as a Father — Dad. So we may need to think this through ... dwell on the scriptural truth?

Romans 8:15 (Voice)

15 **The Spirit you have received adopts you and welcomes you into God's own family. That's why we call out to Him, "Abba! Father!" as we would address a loving daddy.**

So ... we can link this into living by faith.

It's a reminder that there's no problem at the giving end. God is willing and eager — especially to be approached by His beloved sons and daughters!

No need to beg or badger!

Our focus needs to be on you and me on the receiving end!