

THE  
FATHERHOOD OF GOD

By Vern Bennom Grimsley

One morning a little boy came running into the house and asked, "Mother, where did I come from?"

Just as she drew a deep breath to begin her first sex-and-biology lecture, he continued earnestly, "The new boy who just moved on the block said he came from Baltimore; where did I come from?"

That's a different question, of course.

"Where did I come from" is more than a mere matter of biology and geography--it is essentially a religious question. And it has a religious answer: God. For in the final sense, all men are children of the heavenly Father; we are members in the Family of God.

This is true regardless of social, cultural or economic status. It doesn't matter whether a man is painfully, pitifully poor or so rich he has an unlisted zip code number: he is nevertheless a child of God!

God is not a merciless mathematical Mind, an uncaring computerized Creator ruling the universe by the wave of a celestial slide-rule; He is our Father, and He rules by love. God knows each of us personally. Isaiah 45:3, "I am the Lord, which call thee by thy name."

Once you believe by faith that God is your Father and you are His child, this love of God will begin to change your entire life.

-2-

God loves you!

I was born in western Kansas, and I well recall my mother describing those bitter, blighting dust storms that swept stinging across the barren plains states during the 1930s. She told how Kansas housewives would slam the windows tightly and stuff wet newspapers under the cracks of the doors, but the dust came in nevertheless. She remembered even taping around all the windows, but still that gray, dry, windblown dust would sift in and cover everything in the house. No room was exempt; it was everywhere.

In the same way, no chamber, closet or cranny of human life is exempt from the love of God: it gets in everywhere! You yourself are perfectly free either to love God or not, but that will not keep Him from loving you. You can bolt your soul and stuff the chinks and tape the cracks, but His infinite love gets in anyway.

Why does God love you so? Simply because you are his son or daughter. And it is the way of a father to love his child.

Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man; that word "brother" is used 82 times in the New Testament. And in the gospel of John alone, which is only 26 pages long in my Bible, I counted through and discovered that Jesus calls God by the name "Father" 63 times. That's over twice a page. Can there be any doubt that Jesus taught the Fatherhood of God?

-3-

All human beings need love. Not long ago the United Press wire service reported that a scantily-clad exotic dancer was found in her New York apartment, lying unconscious from an overdose of barbiturates. The young woman had attempted to take her own life. Courted by a Hollywood actor and engaged to a wealthy Texas oilman, she still was not happy. When she broke her last engagement, she said, and I quote the press release, "Love, not money, is the only thing I want."

Human beings deeply crave to be loved. God created that need in us, and God alone can fully fill it. For we mortals, who long for love, are infinitely loved...by God. God forms no emptiness He cannot fill, no thirsting of spirit He cannot quench, no hungering of soul He cannot nourish. The incessant inner wanting of the human heart is spiritual. Man longs for God. Your Father He is; God loves you.

Recently at the University of California I read the transcript of a psychoanalytic session in which the doctor was counselling with an emotionally troubled teen-aged girl. Her grades were poor, her disposition sour and surly, and she had a stomach ulcer at age 17. At one point in the transcript she broke down crying and blurted out to the psychiatrist, "So you really want to know what's wrong with me? I'll tell you. Just nobody loves me."

Countless lives are tortured by painful despair precisely for the same reason: they feel unloved. And a person who feels unloved is certain to feel unhappy. It should therefore be evident why the gospel, the good news, the religion of Jesus, is so inherently important. It declares that whomever else may or may not love you, God loves you. And that makes a difference!

You are a child of God.

We humans are almost obsessively concerned to know where things came from. We have a penchant for discovering backgrounds. An antique collector wants to know if a certain cut-glass bowl came from Italy. Or a woman proclaims with pride that her set of china was passed down from her great-great grandmother. We are curious to know little histories--the artist who did a painting, the year a wine was pressed, the pedigree of a dog. But the bizarre thing about it is that hardly any people know their own backgrounds. Very few men and women are dynamically aware that they are children of the living God.

A painting without a background would be a rather odd-looking spectacle. Imagine strolling through a gallery and coming upon an artist's oil portrayal of a tree all by itself--no grass, hills, shrubs, sky or lake with it--just a tree, and the rest blank, unpainted canvas. It would seem strangely unreal without a background; it wouldn't look right at all.

Comparatively, many people on this planet don't feel right about their own lives for the very same reason; they have no sense of background. They feel fearfully alone, as if the canvas around them were utterly barren, and as if they had no place in the larger picture of things. But the truth is that human life stands not in stark and solitary isolation; it stands in personal relation to God. We are God's children and brothers of one another. That is the big picture. And it includes you.

The following are scriptures which clearly portray the Fatherhood of God:

Psalm 89:26, "Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation."

Matthew 23:9, "And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven."

Luke 6:36, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

Luke 12:32, "Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Sixteen times in the "sermon on the mount" (Matthew 5, 6, and 7) Jesus refers to God as "your Father."

Ephesians 4:6, "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

I Corinthians, 8:6, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him."

II Corinthians, 6:17-18, "And I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Deuteronomy 14:1, "Ye are the children of the Lord your God."

Psalm 68:5, "A father of the fatherless, is God in his holy habitation."

Psalm 103:13, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

Isaiah 63:16, "Doubtless thou art our father...Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting."

Isaiah 64:8, "But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."

John 16:27, "For the Father himself loveth you."

John 20:17, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

Hebrews 12:7, "God dealeth with you as with sons."

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