

Becoming Father: God's Heart for Relationship

Father's Heart Series III

Galatians 4:1-7 – But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons

Background

In the beginning of this series, we talked briefly about the parable of the prodigal sons, and how the older son viewed himself as no more than one of his father's servants. Because of this, he lost out on the real life that he could have had as a son, and lived under the [bondage] of servitude. True, in the grand scheme of things, it was better than what the world had to offer, but the bottom line is that it was no better than servanthood. There was no relationship between the father and the son, no identification from the son of what it meant to be a part of the family, and no demonstration of the real life that the son should have had.

In the book of Galatians, Paul deals with a group of people who are venturing into the same path: Pursuing activity and servanthood as a means to grace, rather than accepting what God, as their Father, wanted to establish in them.

Acknowledgement and Acceptance

Paul is addressing people who had been fooled into thinking that they were not accepted by God because they had not done or demonstrated certain things. For those people, the life of God, the life of the kingdom, and the ability to be free was not found in the finished work of the cross or in God's will, but rather in their activity that they could measure and control.

Having come out of that very life, Paul was intimately aware of the direction they were going, and needed to show them, not only the futility of their own actions, but the power of the love and acceptance of God.

He came to that which was his own but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God: children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. – John 1:11-13

The foundation of the message of Christ is the fact that salvation is not accomplished or maintained by our works, but rather on God alone. Yet, those that had infiltrated the Galatian churches convinced many of the Galatians to throw away that foundation in favor of laws and works.

I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the Law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? ...Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the Law, or because you believe what you heard? – Galatians 3:2-3,5

Rites of Passage

Paul uses a common rite of passage that the people of his day and culture would have been familiar with – the time that the father would openly declare his place in his son's life. This was important because it was not just a declaration of familial relationship, but it was an invitation for the son to begin to take his place as a full member of the community.

What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different than a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father – Galatians 4:1-2

Before the rite of passage, the son was technically in the family, but had little interaction with the father. Teachers, guardians, babysitters cared for him, ordering him around, making sure he stayed within the bounds they set, all in preparation for the day when the father would say "Now, this is my son". The child-heir had all of the potential authority, but no ability to operate in it. However, when the father felt he was ready, he would "redeem" his son.

✚ Redeem (ἐξαγοράζω) means *to pay a price to recover from another (to buy); to ransom; to make the most of every opportunity*

So, the father did not just pay the going rate to redeem his son, but in effect declared that this was making the most of the opportunity.

Paul relates this to God's action towards us. God, then not only made the effort to acknowledge us, but in doing so declared that this was not a wasted opportunity, but the best thing He could have done.

When God reached to us (collectively, and individually), He revealed his heart toward us by acknowledging where we were in the family, and that our place is important.

*... that we might receive the **full rights of sons**. And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out "**Abba, Father**" – Galatians 4:5b-6*

In this there is a dual acknowledging: First God to us, then our response to God, as the very personal, no longer distant father. "God with us" is no longer just a global concept, but it is an everyday reality that we have the ability and right to walk in.

Dual Acknowledgement

God's heart is demonstrated in this exchange of relationship truths

All I have is Yours, and all You have is mine – John 17:10

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message. That all of them may be one, Father just as you are in me and I am in You. – John 17:20-21

We see the life of Jesus being very closely tied to intimate relationship with God, but we often tie the strength of that relationship to Jesus “being God”, and don't consider the heart of God in this relationship. **Do we ever consider that the strength of Jesus' relationship with the Father, and therefore our relationship with Him, could be because He so values the father-child relationship that He pursued it with Him?**

See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse – Malachi 4:5-6

The last prophet and prophetic word for 400 years, Malachi's word should carry a lot of weight. In the midst of talking about what would happen on the day of the Lord: the wicked would be taken out; the Sun of righteousness would arise with healing – He gives one command to remember the law, then a seemingly obscure promise. Elijah, who was known for being a pretty tough prophet would come to not just restore family relationships, but to **turn the hearts** of the fathers to the children and children to the fathers. God wanted the demonstration of dual acknowledgement and acceptance to be fully active within the community, because it represented His heart toward His people. Over and over in scripture, God reinforced the relationship He wanted to have with his people: *I will be your God, and you will be my people* (Exodus 6:7; Jeremiah 7:23, 11:4, 30:6, 32:38 Ezekiel 11:20, 14:11, 36:28, 37:23,27, II Corinthians 6:16, Hebrews 8:10)

Becoming Father

*When Seth had lived 105 years he **became** the father of Enosh...*

It is interesting that this was translated as **became**. It could have very simply said he “had a son”, or he “bore” Enosh. The rest of the verse actually does say that he had other sons and daughters. But there is something to actually **becoming** a father. Any human father will tell you that his life changed with the birth of a child. Yet, it is even more than that.

The Becoming One

Moses was hanging out on the backside of the mountain when God called him. Moses was reluctant to go through with God's plan, due to his focus on his own inadequacies (“I don't know enough; I can't speak well; someone else is probably more qualified”). Moses in his questioning asks God who He is, to which God replies **I will be who I will be**. Not only does this mean that God is who He is, but it also

means that God will become whatever He will become. God will not limit Himself to any expression if it means the ability to fulfill His purpose.

God's heart as Father is expressed in a desire that is so strong for each of us, that He will become what we need in order to have that acknowledged relationship He desires

Becoming "My" Father

The declaration of Father in Galatians was something that was done for each son when the father determined the right time was to be. The father would redeem each one independently, uniquely, acknowledging the importance of that specific child to him. In the same way, while we know God as God of all, He wants to be known as the God and Father that redeems each of us independently, uniquely.

After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham and Japeth – Genesis 5:32

God's heart is to be a close, intimate, active Father in our lives, where our hearts are turned toward Him, because His heart is turned toward us. He wants us to walk, not simply as servants, but as full children, with all the rights of the family, being one with Him just as He is one with Jesus.

Questions to Consider:

- ✚ Do you have a close, intimate relationship with God, or do you see Him more as a harsh taskmaster, ready to strike at any sign of wrongdoing?
- ✚ Do you see your relationship with God dependent upon your strength to maintain it, or can you recall times where you recognized God pursuing you?
- ✚ Have you gotten caught up in the "righteousness-by-works", pursuing your goal of spiritual maturity by the things you do?
- ✚ If you asked God to reveal His love, do you think He would?