

God, As Our Father

Acts 17:24-29

Introduction:

1. It is so common to speak of God as our Father that we may miss the profound nature of the relationship.
2. It is recognized that fatherhood may be looked at from two perspectives. First, fatherhood denotes biological or genetic origin. And so, earthly fatherhood suggests a natural tie of blood.
3. When once this crude idea of physical generation has been put aside, fatherhood denotes a link of mutual responsibilities and obligations and the tie is one of respect and affection.
4. Ideally, the two sides of fatherhood co-exist, but it is not necessary that they should do so in every case. Some biological fathers do not accept the link of responsibility, obligation and affection. Some, while not biologically linked, do accept the responsibility, obligation and affectionate role. We call these adoptive fathers. They fulfill the moral obligation of fatherhood to children with whom they have no direct blood tie at all.
5. What does the Bible say about God as our Father? And what does this say about our being His children?

Discussion:

- I. The Greeks seemed to focus on fatherhood as representing origin.
 - A. The Poets Paul refers to in Acts 17:29.
 1. Aratus of Soli (c. 270 B.C.).
 2. Cleanthes, Hymn to Zeus (300-220 B.C.).
 - B. God is indeed the origin of all things, including human life. "In Him we live and move and exist."
- II. The biblical concept of divine fatherhood focuses on God's fatherhood as a moral tie, a fatherly love and care; on the child's side it represents the appropriate response of filial devotion, respect, and obedience befitting a son or daughter (cf. Matt. 15:4-6; Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16).
 - A. In the O.T., God is the Father of Israel in the sense that He is the founder and creator of the nation (Deut. 32:3-6; Isa. 63:16; Mal. 2:10).
 - B. But it is more (Deut. 32:8-14). It involves God's selection and His

care.

1. He called Israel out of Egypt as a Son (Hos. 11:1; cf. Ezek. 16:2-3).
2. He considered them His firstborn (Ex. 4:22; Jer. 31:9).
3. In this way He demonstrated He was their Father in the second sense.
 - a. He cared for them and nurtured them and brought them up (Deut. 1:31; 8:5; Isa. 1:2; cf. Ezek. 16:6ff).
 - b. It was expected that this divine favor would produce in them a response of filial love and obedience (Deut. 14:1; Jer. 3:19; Mal. 1:6). For many it did not. They were both rebellious sons and faithful sons (cf. Isa. 1:2-4).
 - c. It is those who respond appropriately that act as the true sons and daughters of God (Mal. 3:18).

III. Jesus' teaching about the Fatherhood of God continued what was begun in the O.T.

A. In the Sermon on the Mount.

1. Peacemakers are "sons of God" (Matt. 5:9).
2. Your light is to shine to "glorify your Father in heaven" (5:16).
3. Giving is to be done before "your Father" (6:1).
4. Praying is done "to your Father" (6:6, 8, 9).
5. "Your heavenly Father forgives" (6:14).
6. "Your Father who sees in secret rewards" (6:18).

B. Jesus was identified particularly as the Son of God and identified God as His Father.

1. "You are My beloved Son" (Mk. 1:11).
2. John records a discourse of Jesus with the Jews about fatherhood in which He describes God as His Father, but the devil as their father (Jn. 8:38ff).

C. The Father's care in Jesus' teaching is clear.

- a. Daily bread (Matt. 8:11).
- b. Forgiveness (Mk. 11:25).
- c. Protection and deliverance (Matt. 18:10-14).

IV. Paul uses the idea of God's Fatherhood and considers the faithful in Christ as adopted children lavishly blessed in the family of God.

A. He summarizes this perspective in Eph. 1:3-14.

1. As adopted children we cry "Abba! Father!" (Rom. 8:14) and are

heirs with Christ.

2. The Spirit of His Son is in our hearts (Gal. 4:4-7).
 3. We are sons of God through faith in Christ (Gal. 3:26). Christ is the means of our adoption into the family.
 4. Faith is the appropriate response of children of God.
- B. He refers to us as “of God’s household” (Eph. 2:19).
 - C. God is “one Father over all” (Eph. 4:6).
 - D. As children we are to imitate Him (Eph. 5:1).

Conclusion:

1. God is our source or origin, but He is also our caretaker.
2. The only appropriate response is faith, respect, honor, thanksgiving, obedience and affection for Him. If we are to honor our father and mother on the earth, how much more should we honor our Father in heaven?
3. We have not even considered the many moral implications associated with our having God as our Father.
 - a. We are to be imitators of God, as beloved children (Eph. 5:1).
 - b. In our families we are to follow our heavenly Father in bring our children up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).
 - c. As beloved children we do well when we invite and accept other adoptees into the family of God, but children are not always accepting of other children and may fear that their place is somehow diminished, but the Father leaves the 99 and finds the one who is lost.