

Epistles of John Chapter 3 the Father

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and experiencing the divine fatherhood of God, which brings numerous privileges and blessings to those who are His children.

Scripture: Matthew 7:11, John 1:12-13, Romans 8:16-18, Galatians 4:6-7, Ephesians 1:5, Hebrews 12:6, 1 Peter 1:3, 1 John 2:13, 1 John 3:1

Topics: "Identity in Christ", "Fatherhood Of God"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the profound nature of God's Fatherhood, explaining that true sonship comes through Jesus Christ and the new birth by the Holy Spirit. He highlights that believers are not merely adopted but are born into God's family, sharing in the divine nature and privileges of being His children. Simpson elaborates on the intimate relationship believers have with God, including access to His love, protection, and the promise of inheritance. He encourages the congregation to embrace their identity as children of God, trusting in His everlasting love and guidance through life's challenges.

Transcript

"I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father. (1 John 2: 13.)

"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. (1 John 3: 1.)

The Fatherhood of God is one of the most misused and abused religious phrases of current literature. The Bible recognizes no divine paternity apart from our relation to Jesus Christ. Indeed, the doctrine of God's Fatherhood of individual saints was even unknown to the Old Testament writers and saints. God was recognized as the Father of Israel as a nation, but no individual Hebrew ever dared to appropriate the name to himself. It is the special revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Neither knows any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." It is He who has taught us to say "Our Father which art in heaven." No wonder, therefore, that it was received by His first disciples as a truth of the highest importance and regarded by them with wondering veneration. "Behold," exclaims even the beloved disciple who had grown familiar with the love of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." The exclamation in the original is in an unusual form and expressive of the strongest emphasis and the most profound admiration. No wonder that the Greenland chief when first he heard it exclaimed, "It is too great, rather let me kiss His feet." Let us look at this wonderful love.

I. WHAT THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD MEANS

1. God is not our Father by creation. He is our Creator, and the Creator of all things. But this is not Fatherhood. Speaking of the sparrows the Lord Jesus says, "Your heavenly Father feeds them." But He is not their heavenly Father. Human beings by nature are not the children of God, but our Lord very plainly tells them that they are the children of the devil. "You are of your father, the devil." Men do not like this and so they try to change their pedigree in the church registers. But their names will not be found in the family record of the skies. The only children that God will ever recognize are those that have been born of the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ.

2. We are not the children of God by a special act of adoption. Earthly families are sometimes increased by the addition of the foundling child, or the drawing up of legal papers by which a fatherless orphan is added by adoption to the family circle. This may be all very well as a theological discussion and diversion, but it never can satisfy a heaven-born soul. No, it is said with beautiful force in our second text not only that we are "called the sons of God," but in the revised version it is added "and we are."

3. We are the sons of God by the new birth. We have been begotten of the Father and quickened by the Holy Ghost into a divine life which makes us partakers of the very nature of God Himself. We have all heard of the little fellow who lost heart in his home and became reckless in his life because he had listened to the street boys who had told him he was only a little foundling. When at last his mother learned the secret of his waywardness, and took him in her arms and reassured him, he looked up through his streaming tears and asked her again and again, "Am I really your very own boy? Did you born me?" It was a child's expression, but back of it was an instinct as deep and high as our eternal hope. Thank God that hope is not disappointed, for "as many as receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. . . which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

4. We are the sons of God through union with Jesus Christ. We are not only born into the family, but we are married into the family. We are not only children of second birth and a lower grade, but we are the first-born sons of God even as He, our elder Brother. In Oriental countries, and indeed in all the older social conditions of the world, the eldest son usually inherits a larger fortune and a higher dignity than his brothers, but by our union with Christ we all rise to the place of the elder Brother and the first-born ones. It was this that He meant when He taught us to say, "Our Father which art in heaven," for the "our" consists of Christ Himself and His brethren. It was this that He meant when He hastened to say just after His resurrection, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." This is the meaning of that precious assurance, "Because you are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Not only have we the legal status of sons, but we have the very heart and spirit of the Son of God Himself, feeling toward the Father the very same sentiments of confidence and love that He felt, and entering in actual experience into the very spirit of His own Sonship. This is the scriptural doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. The divine family circle is not a mongrel crowd of promiscuous souls singing the heathen song:

Father of all in every age,

In every clime adored,

By saint, by savage, or by sage

Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.

No, it is a select and beautiful company of redeemed and called-out ones all bearing the likeness of the one blessed Head, and deriving their heavenly life from the very heart of Jesus Christ Himself. These are the children of God, and these He is not ashamed to call His brethren.

5. We are the children of God by the witness and seal of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." He does this by imparting to us the divine consciousness of our union with Christ and the filial spirit which instinctively cries "Abba, Father." He does not bear witness to our spirit as one person would to another, but conjointly with our spirit by coming into it and breathing into us the feelings and sentiments of a loving, trusting, happy child. He gives us a filial heart. He makes us to feel at home in our Father's presence. He enables us to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and He gives to us the simplicity, freedom, and holy affection of little children, so that we know we are the sons of God, and it is natural for us to love and trust our heavenly Father even as it was for the Lord Jesus Himself. Such then is the meaning of sonship.

II. ITS PRIVILEGES AND BLESSINGS

1. It brings us the divine nature. It puts into us a new and higher life. This makes all our experience delightfully spontaneous and easy. We do not have to act against our nature, but according to our nature. There is something within us which causes us to walk in our Father's will and love to please and obey Him.

2. The peculiar love of the Father is one of the privileges of sonship. God has a love for the world which is very strong, but it is the love of compassion. It was strong enough to induce Him to send His only begotten Son to die for sinful men, but it is a very different love that He has for His children. This is the love of complacency. It is of this that it is written: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." This is a love that is based on something in His own heart. The instinct of fatherhood and motherhood in us loves our children not because they are beautiful, dutiful or good, but because they are ours. We are bound to them. We cannot cease to be part of their life, and they cannot cease to belong to us. Our heart follows them in their sufferings and even in their sins. Their degradation is our dishonor. Their honor is our delight. Their pleasure is to us a double pleasure. So the Father loves His children. The measure of His love to us is His love to Christ. As He delights in the eternal Son so He delights in all His sons and daughters. Our Savior's parting prayer was infinitely tender and sacred in that last utterance in which He gives away to His beloved disciples the very love the Father had to Him, "That the love wherewith You have loved me may be in them, and I in them." Dear child of God, do you believe this? Do you realize it? Will you let it comfort you, consecrate you, and make it impossible for you henceforth either to doubt or grieve your Father's love?

3. Intimacy, access, and fellowship. The child has the freedom of the house. In the old wartime when no one else could get the President's ear there was one that could always get inside, and many a message did he carry unofficially to the Chief Magistrate of the country, and many a troubled heart obtained a hearing through that irregular boy. No official sentries and no door fastenings stood between him and his father's arms. And so we have access to the Father. We may draw near. We may abide in the secret place of the Most High and dwell under the shadow of the Almighty. We may have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. There is no moment when His ear is not open to our cry. There is no situation where we may not claim His presence. And even when our lips cease to pray, and our communion no longer expresses itself in articulate language, there is a silent fellowship of the filial heart upon the Father's breast, which is deeper and sweeter than even the words of prayer, where we may

abide continually in the communion of the Holy Ghost.

4. The protection and provision of the Father's house. We are entitled as children to sit at the King's table and to enjoy His almighty care. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" And in the higher realm of spiritual blessings, "How much more shall he give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" To His own beloved children He says: "Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours." Have you ever come to some hard place in life and sat down and thought, If my father were only here, my earthly father, who was always so kind and helpful, and if he had the power to help me in this hour of need, there is nothing that he would not do for my relief? But God is my Father more truly than he. He loves me better and His power is unlimited, His resources are unbounded. Will He not, therefore, do for me all that my earthly father would if he were here? And your heart has become encouraged. Your faith has grown bolder and you have been able to take from God the supply of all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Why should it not be ever thus? Has He not said to us in the very earliest teachings of the Son of man, "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things? Seek you first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

5. The training of a child and the discipline and education of the family -- this is one of the privileges of the sons of God. There comes a time in the life of the child when soft indulgence must give place to sterner discipline, and when the little one must learn the difference between right and wrong, self-will and obedience, indolence and duty. Sometimes the father's heart has to be sorely pained by the penalty that hurts him much more than it does his child, but he loves too wisely to neglect the training of his child, and some day that child will bless his memory for a father's firm and faithful love. So God, our Father, sends us to the school of discipline, of suffering, of life's severe experience, of the Holy Spirit's faithful training. Therefore in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews we have seen that the word chastening literally means child training, and it is introduced as the highest proof of the Father's love, and although not now joyous, but often grievous, nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. Let us trust our Father's faithful love even here, and when we cannot understand His hand let us always lie close to His heart and be like the child whom his father was about to strike with the rod of chastening, when with one bound the little fellow sprang into his father's arms where the rod could no longer reach him.

6. The inheritance of glory is the right and privilege of every child. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." And therefore the children of God, like their elder Brother, are often hidden in the present world, and it is true as the apostle says, "Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

There is a day spoken of in the eighth chapter of Romans as the day of the manifestation of the sons of God. It is the day when they shall emerge from their obscurity, and when the King's children who have been in disguise, going to school in the lowly places of trial and suffering, shall come forth into the light and appear in all the glory of their royal robes and everlasting crowns. Then it shall little matter what the world thought of us once, and how the heart ached and waited through the dark and trying hour. It shall be forgotten in a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

And so as we enter into the full realization of all that our sonship means, duty and trial will become easy and light, and the song of hope will be heard above the sorrowful echoes of the vail of tears. Then it will be

so easy to let the world go by and even to surrender our rights and often suffer our wrongs because of the joy set before us.

Just after the close of the Civil War, the army that had marched in triumph through Georgia under General Sherman was to be reviewed in one of our great cities and march in triumphal parade. The night before the parade General Sherman called General Howard to him and said: "You know, General, you were the head of one of the divisions that marched with me through Georgia, and you ought rightfully to ride at the head of your division in the parade tomorrow. But I find that through political influence a plan is being pressed to have the general who preceded you in the command represent the division, and as political pulls are sometimes stronger than personal rights, I hardly know how to meet the case." Very naturally General Howard replied, "I think I am entitled to represent my division, as it was I who led them to victory." "Yes," said General Sherman, "you are, but I believe you are a Christian, are you not? And I was wondering if Christian considerations might not lead you to make an exception and even to yield your rights for the sake of peace." "Oh," said good General Howard, "If it is a matter of Christian consideration, of course I yield, and he can have the place." "All right," said General Sherman, "I will so arrange, and will you please report to me tomorrow morning at nine o'clock and you shall ride with me at the head of the army."

Beloved, that is the way that the Father someday will make up for our disappointments and wrongs. Let us trust His everlasting love. Let us love Him as our Father. Let us be followers of God as dear children. Let us obey implicitly His commandments which are "for our good always," and let us go forth into good report or evil report, unmoved because He is ever whispering to us through the darkness or through the light, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love." "Son, you are ever with me and all that I have is yours."

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