

GALATIANS 3:23-4:7
Abba Father - Cry of Sonship
EBC - June 17, 2012 (am)

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Heritage of Godly Fathers

- a. Every good father on earth is an analogy of God **SEE PSALMS 103:8-14**
- b. Many of us have the heritage of a godly father
 - 1) A father who has positively impressed & molded us.
 - 2) A father who has exemplified God
- c. John G. Paton (19th cent missionary) was such a man
 - 1) As rule there was a "*closet*" where his father would go for prayer after each meal.
 - 2) His 11 children knew & revered the spot where their father prayed
 - 3) John writes about the impact of those prayers

Though everything else in religion were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory, were blotted from my understanding, my soul would wander back to those early scenes, and shut itself up once again in that Sanctuary Closet, and, hearing still the echoes of those cries to God, would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal, "He walked with God, why may not I?"

How much my father's prayers at this time impressed me I can never explain, nor could any stranger understand. When, on his knees and all of us kneeling around him in Family Worship, he poured out his whole soul with tears for the conversion of the Heathen world to the service of Jesus, and for every personal and domestic need, we all felt as if in the presence of the living Savior, and learned to know and love him as our Divine friend." (Autobiography, p. 21)

- d. How every man should long to so represent God in their home

2. True Disciples of Jesus Christ Have Many Blessings - Chief Among Them Is Knowing, Loving, Serving & Relating to the One True God as "*Father*."

- a. Not simply saying "*Father*" BUT having such a close and loving relationship with God - - where in times of joy & sorrow - success & failure - fellowship & loneliness - one's heart cries out *Father*
- b. Packer - *Knowing God* - begins chapter 19 by asking

What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God for his Father . . . You sum up the whole of New Testament teaching in a single phrase, if you speak of it as a revelation of the Fatherhood of the holy Creator. In the same way, you sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one's holy Father. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, just find how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers

and his whole outlook on life, it means he does not understand Christianity very well at all. (182)

- c. In other words obedience - worship - service . . . ARE RELATIONAL!
 - 1) Legalism - is obligatory based under obligation to do this or that
 - 2) Faith - is relational baseddo because of love

John 14:15 - “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

- 3. Book of Galatians
 - a. Written to professing Christians who were falling away..... **SEE 1:6-7**
 - 1) The Gospel was being mangled & lost by legalism
 - 2) Using strong language holding a peach limb in his hand - Paul shows the Galatians the foolishness or their actions
 - 3) Holds forth the glorious gospel AND emphasizes the DOCTRINE OF ADOPTION
 - b. **4:1-5** - WAY of Sonship - Redemption by the Son of God
 - 1) **vs 1-3** - All believers prior to Christ - slaves
 - 2) **vs 4-5** - God sent His Son to redeem (rescue) sinners
 - 3) **vs 5b** - All redeemed sinners become adopted sons
 - c. **4:6-7** - BLESSINGS of Sonship - Consciousness & Assurance of Sonship by the residence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts
 - 1) **vs 6a** - God sends Spirit of His Son into our hearts
 - 2) **vs 6b** - Spirit cries out **Abba, Father**
 - 3) **vs 7** - positional change before God - heir of God
- 4. Those Two Beautiful Words “**Abba! Father!**” - Understood & Experienced Are Game Changers
 - a. **Abba! Father!** - Cry of a child of God
 - b. Sonship is NOT natural IT IS gift of grace..... **SEE EPH 1:3-10**
 - c. God loved those redeemed on the cross so much - He has adopted them - made them JOINT-HEIRS with Christ
 - d. **Abba! Father!** - Cry of expectation & longing & fellowship

B. ABBA FATHER

- 1. Russell D. Moore - Dean of the School of Theology and Senior Vice President for Academic Administration at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary AND a Father Writes About Adopting Two Sons From a Russian Orphanage (Adopted For Life).

My mind flashed back to the first time I ever saw these two boys. They were lying in excrement and vomit, covered in heat blisters and flies, in an orphanage somewhere in a little mining community in Russia . . .

The creepiest sound I have ever heard was nothing at all . . . Orphanage staff led us down a hallway to greet the two 1-year-olds we hoped would become our sons. The horror wasn't the squalor and the stench, although we at times stifled the urge to vomit and weep. The horror was the quiet of it all. The place was more silent than

a funeral home by night . . . It was quiet . . . despite the fact that there were cribs full of babies in every room . . . I stopped and pulled on Maria's elbow. "Why is it so quiet? The place is filled with babies." Both of us compared the stillness with the buzz and punctuated squeals that came from our church nursery back home. Here, if we listened carefully enough, we could hear babies rocking themselves back and forth, the crib slats gently bumping against the walls. These children did not cry, because infants eventually learn to stop crying if no one ever responds to their calls for food, for comfort, for love. No one ever responded to these children. So they stopped.

The silence continued as we entered the boys' room. Little Sergei (now Timothy) smiled at us, dancing up and down while holding the side of his crib. Little Maxim (now Benjamin) stood straight at attention, regal and czar-like. But neither boy made a sound. We read them books filled with words they couldn't understand, about saying goodnight to the moon and cows jumping over the same. But there were no cries, no squeals, no groans. Every day we left at the appointed time in the same way we had entered: in silence.

On the last day of the trip, Maria and I arrived at the moment we had dreaded since the minute we received our adoption referral. We had to tell the boys goodbye, as by law we had to return to the United States and wait for the legal paperwork to be completed before returning to pick them up for good. After hugging and kissing them, we walked out into the quiet hallway as Maria shook with tears.

And that's when we heard the scream.

Little Maxim fell back in his crib and let out a guttural yell. It seemed he knew, maybe for the first time, that he would be heard. On some primal level, he knew he had a father and mother now. I will never forget how the hairs on my arms stood up as I heard the yell. I was struck, maybe for the first time, by the force of the Abba cry passages in the New Testament, ones I had memorized in Vacation Bible School. And I was surprised by how little I had gotten it until now.

Walking out of the room to prepare for the plane ride home, Maria and I could hear Maxim calling out for us and falling down in his crib, convulsing in tears. Maria shook with tears of her own. I turned around to walk back into their room, just for a minute. I placed my hand on both of their heads and said, knowing they couldn't understand a word of English, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." I don't think I consciously intended to cite Jesus' words to his disciples in John 14:18; it just seemed like the only thing worth saying at the time.

Little Maxim's scream changed everything—more, I think, than did the judge's verdict and the notarized paperwork. It was the moment, in his recognizing that he would be heard, that he went from being an orphan to being a son. It was also the

moment I became a father, in fact if not in law. We both recognized that something was wrong, because suddenly, life as it had been seemed terribly disordered. When Maria and I at long last received the call that the legal process was over, and we returned to Russia to pick up our new sons, we found that their transition from orphanage to family was more difficult than we had supposed. We dressed the boys in outfits our parents had bought for them. We nodded our thanks to the orphanage personnel and walked out into the sunlight, to the terror of the two boys. They'd never seen the sun, and they'd never felt the wind. They had never heard the sound of a car door slamming or felt like they were being carried along a road at 100 miles an hour. I noticed that they were shaking and reaching back to the orphanage in the distance . . . I whispered to Sergei, now Timothy, "That place is a pit! If only you knew what's waiting for you—a home with a mommy and a daddy who love you, grandparents and great-grandparents and cousins and playmates and McDonald's Happy Meals!" But all they knew was the orphanage. It was squalid, but they had no other reference point. It was home. We knew the boys had acclimated to our home, that they trusted us, when they stopped hiding food in their high chairs. They knew there would be another meal coming, and they wouldn't have to fight for the scraps. This was the new normal. They are now thoroughly Americanized, perhaps too much so, able to recognize the sound of a microwave ding from forty yards away. I still remember, though, those little hands reaching for the orphanage. And I see myself there.

2. What a Picture of Redemption - Life Before Abba Father AND Life After Abba Father
 - a. Before God - we are WITHOUT **Eph 2:11-12**
 - 1) Without Christ
 - 2) Without hope
 - 3) Without God as our Father
 - b. God sent His Son **SEE GAL 4:4-5**
 - c. God sends Holy Spirit..... **SEE GAL 4:6**

3. Abba! Father!
 - a. NOTE - He sends the Spirit of His Son - ***crying Abba! Father!***
 - b. When did Christ cry Abba Father? **Mark 14:32-36**
 - c. Crying *Abba Father* - not merely a cooing sound BUT a heart-cry of expectation & longing & fellowship
 - d. Quote Dr. Moore

The Abba cry just might be the most easily misunderstood and misinterpreted aspect of the biblical revelation of our adoption. How many of us have heard Abba described as an infant cooing out the words "Dada" or "Papa"? This cry though, in the context of the Scriptures, is not an infantile cooing. The Abba cry is a scream. It's less the sound of a baby giggling up into his father's face, and more the sound of a child screaming "Daddy!" as his face is being ripped apart by a rabid bulldog . . . The Bible tells us, "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from

death, and he was heard because of his reverence" (**Heb. 5:7**). Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane isn't placidly staring, straight-backed with hands against a rock, into the sky as a shaft of light beams down on his face, as in so many of our paintings and church stained-glass window artistry. He is screaming to his Father for deliverance, to the point that the veins in his temples burst into drops of blood (Luke 22:39-44). That's the Abba cry. It's the scream of the crucified.

- c. Like little Maxim - we cry out
 - 1) By the Holy Spirit we desire God - NO we desire our FATHER!
 - 2) By the Holy Spirit we know things are not right
 - We see the crime & greed around us AND we groan
 - We see families leaving worship of God AND we groan
 - We hear of wars & rumors of wars AND we groan
 - We read of child-abuse & abortion AND we groan
 - We experience disease & death AND we groan
 - 3) We cry - ABBA! FATHER! - deliver us from this
- d. In that CRY - Christianity is realized
 - 1) One moves from slave to sonship - - from legalism to faith
 - 2) One moves from knowing something about God to desiring God
 - 3) One moves from God being Creator to Father
 - 4) One moves from being content with sin to desiring victory over sin

C. CONCLUSION

- 1. Perhaps You Are Aware of Your Sin
 - a. Know the weight of it & long for hope
 - b. Know about God - even believe in Him BUT have no relation with Him
 - c. Perhaps you want to believe - you want to be a Christian BUT you don't know how or what to say
 - d. Start with two words - **Abba!** - **Father!** - - Lift you heart & arms to Him
 - 1) Cry out to Him - to not leave you as an orphan - to make you a child
 - 2) Cry out to Him - to forgive you - to receive you
 - 3) Cry out to Him - to count Jesus' crucifixion as your judgment, Jesus' resurrection as your life.
- 2. Perhaps You Are A Believer BUT Your Relationship With God Is Not As It Should Be
 - a. You are religious - you serve BUT your prayers - your giving - you worship is ALL duty based and not joy based
 - b. Recommend two words to you **Abba!** **Father!**