

# A Father's Love!" Psalm 121

Preached at Parkway church of Christ in 2008

## Happy fathers' day!

According to the "Almanac for Farmers & City Folk," the largest number of collect calls are made on Father's Day.

## 800 Pacos

There's a Spanish story of a father and son who had become estranged. The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read: "Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father." On Saturday 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers.

---

Nationally, we celebrate five holidays that honor either family members or the family as a unit. Valentine's day is a day for all people who are in love. But it is a day of special significance for wives and husbands. Mother's day exists to honor mothers. Father's day exists to honor fathers.

The sad thing is that these days that are intended to honor family or family members have become painful, sad days for a large number of Americans. Between alienating friction, divorce, and death, it is possible that more people suffer pain on these days than experience joy.

The father of a family has incredible influence upon the development of his children. Fathers are to be the spiritual thermostats for the family. They are not to be barometers that only gauge the spirituality of the home, but they set the spiritual tone.

Fathers are to teach and train their children:

*(Ephesians 6:4 NIV) Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

Ideally, they are to rule their own households well, having children who are in reverent submission:

*(1 Timothy 3:4 NIV) He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.*

They are to discipline their children and not leave that responsibility to another:

*(Hebrews 12:9-10 NIV) Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! {10} Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.*

They are bound by the Lord to provide for the physical needs of their children:

*(1 Timothy 5:8 NIV) If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

Being a father is an important job with immense responsibilities attached. The principle is valid across the board: "A man reaps what he sows" (Galatians 6:4).

Sociologists are telling us that our nation's affliction of violence, crime, drugs, laziness, immorality and the breakdown of the family is largely due to the number of missing fathers in the American home.

A successful father (by that I specifically mean a man who is successful as a father) is one of the most remarkable persons in our society. What is a successful father? Are we talking about the perfect parent? No:

- Successful fathers are imperfect parents who acknowledge and accept responsibility for their mistakes.
- Successful fathers are comfortable in accepting the fact that they are not super human, are not always right, and do make mistakes.
- A successful father loves his children. He communicates his love with words, kindness, fairness, and touch.
- He builds and nurtures relationships with his children rather than assuming the role of an authoritarian.
- He dares to accept the challenge to communicate with his children in the knowledge that communication is a hard and often painful art to learn.
- He is kind even when his children exploit him. He is fair in all his discipline.

- He seeks influence, not control. He literally loves his children enough to want them to make their mistakes while they are at home.

Then he can in love and forgiveness help them recover and learn from their mistakes. He knows that it is impossible to program a child to live his or her life in the ways that he as the parent chooses. But he also knows that he can live as a positive force in his children's hearts even after he dies.

### **OUR FATHER NOTICES WHEN WE ARE WEAK AND STRUGGLING Psalm 121**

*"I lift up my eyes to the hills-- where does my help come from? {2} My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. {3} He will not let your foot slip-- he who watches over you will not slumber; {4} indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. {5} The LORD watches over you-- the LORD is your shade at your right hand; {6} the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. {7} The LORD will keep you from all harm-- he will watch over your life; {8} the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.*

Sometimes we want to put on a front; we want others to think everything is okay and we are in control; we don't want their pity, or curiosity, or disrespect. A mask of courage, a facade of strength, a pretense of power may well fool others around us and protect our image.

But our sighing is not hidden from God! Our way is not hidden from Him! He has not failed to take notice! He has not drifted off into disinterested sleep.

#### **Psalms 121:4:**

*(Psa 121:4) indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.*

God sees, God knows, and God cares. Let's make it personal here. Let's bring this into life:

- You may be weighted down with debt and financial pressures. God knows all about that and has promised to meet all your needs.
- You may be struggling with a deep-seated sense of failure and frustration. God is aware of it and cares.
- You may be weak in some moral area of life and may be struggling with temptation to sin. God sees it.
- You may be grappling with some personal relationship. Maybe you are at odds with a parent, or a sibling, or one of your children, or a friend. You want to reconcile, but you are having a difficult time. God recognizes your weakness.
- You may be weak spiritually right now. You just can't seem to pray with power; you read the bible and forget it as soon as you close it; you have to force yourself to come to worship; your witness has dried up. God perceives the problem, and cares.

In all our weakness, in all our struggles, in all our futility, he speaks to us as He did to the disciples in Gethsemane: *(Mat 26:41) "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."*

The wonderful invitation still sounds out, still waits our RSVP:

*(Mat 11:28) "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*

If you're struggling, He invites you to come to Him for rest. So, let me tell you a secret about a father's love, you see, father's don't just love their children every now and then, it's a love without end, even when we are weak!

### **OUR FATHER LIFTS US WHEN WE HAVE FALLEN**

*(Psa 37:23-24) If the LORD delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; {24} though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.*

*Our strength fails us; our foot slips.* Sometimes we suffer the weakness of the flesh, and we sin. We disobey. We fall.

Those of us who have watched our own children struggle to walk also watched them fall. They'd take a teetering step or two and then topple over, but we'd be there to take them by the hand. Or later, when they were learning to ride a bicycle or to roller skate, they'd take a spill or two. That's part of the learning procedure. But when they fell, we were there to pick them up. We didn't kick them; we didn't berate them; we didn't disown them. Nor does our Father! He lifts us! He stabilizes us.

*(Jude 1:24) To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy--*

But when that inevitable fall comes, God is there to lift us and to encourage us and to help us. So, let me tell you a secret about a father's love, you see, father's don't just love their children every now and then, it's a love without end, even when we fall, amen!

**OUR FATHER IS WITH US SO WE DON'T HAVE TO STRUGGLE ALONE:** God has given us unfailing promises.

*(Deu 31:6) Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."*

*(1 Chr 28:20) David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the LORD is finished.*

*(Psa 46:1) For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. According to alamothe. A song. God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

### **Build Me a Son, O Lord**

Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid; one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory.

Build me a son whose wishbone will not be where his backbone should be; a son who will know Thee and that to know himself is the foundation stone of knowledge. Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm; here let him learn compassion for those who fail.

Build me a son whose heart will be clean, whose goal will be high; a son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men; one who will learn to laugh, yet never forget how to weep; one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.

And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough of a sense of humor, so that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously. Give him humility, so that he may always remember the simplicity of greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.

Then I, his father, will dare to whisper, "I have not lived in vain." -General Douglas MacArthur