

Coming to Know “Abba”, our loving Father

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All scriptures are NKJV unless noted otherwise.

Summary:

Most people would probably admit they think of Yeshua (Jesus) as the loving, kind, gentle part of the Godhead but that God the Father seems distant, harsh or unknowable. Learn the truth about Almighty God in the Highest who is also our dear heavenly Daddy – or Abba in Hebrew. Many of us had very imperfect human fathers and that may be affecting how we think of “God the Father”. Our prayer is that this sermon will help you begin to have great joy in Abba’s presence and begin to feel his love for you. God is love. He can’t stop being what He is. Praise be to our Abba.

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Hello brothers and sisters in the family of our dear Abba, scattered around the world. Welcome to Light on the Rock, where we share the word of God without cost or price to you – and you’ll never see us nag you to send us donations. Enjoy the website, enjoy the blogs, enjoy the sermons and may they lead you to a closer walk with Abba and Yeshua.

I recommend you hear this message on the audio while you have the printed “notes” beside you. The notes are not a full transcript, and yet you’ll find it helpful to have the scriptures right there as you follow along with the written notes. In fact I recommend after hearing it once with the notes that you go back and look up the many verses I refer to in the notes without turning to them. You’ll have a wonderful Bible study.

Last week, we here in America remembered Father’s Day. I think it’s a fine and noble gesture to set aside a day to honor fathers, just as Mothers were honored in May. In America, these days do not have pagan roots. The 4th commandment tells us to HONOR our father and mother. I’ve been thinking of doing this sermon for a few months now!

Today I want to speak about our wonderful heavenly Father’s special love.

WHY do I think we – including me – need this topic?

- **Because when you know how much He loves you and how much He has forgiven you – you will also love Him more.** HE started the plan of Salvation. The LOVE in that plan was HIS idea. He loved us FIRST, even while we were bad He sent His Son to live and die for us – so that now we can love him back. We can’t love him back properly until we realize how much He’s forgiven us. Do you see Him wanting to hug you and bring you into His family? *And loving him will be evidenced by obeying him more and doing the good works he’s called us to do.* But the sequence is important: HE starts everything, we respond -- and He ends everything. From start to finish, salvation is his work. And our job is to abide closely in Him and to follow His lead through His Spirit.
- **We have to stop thinking of Abba as distant and aloof but as a REAL Daddy who brings JOY into our lives.** He’s someone we can spend time with

joyfully, laugh with Him, and cry with Him. Adore your wonderful, wonderful dear Abba. The Great Almighty God in the Highest is your Daddy! Amazing!

- **Because Satan, the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4) has corrupted our thinking to question our Father;** to see him as frequently angry at us, as seldom happy with us because we regularly flub up. Satan has gotten us to believe Jesus – the son of God, whom I call by his Hebrew name Yeshua – that Yeshua is the loving, kind and wonderful part of the Godhead, but God the Father is tough, scowly – and really not that kind, loving or nice! We wouldn't say that out loud, but I suspect if we check our hearts, we'll realize we do all-too-often think of God the Father that way. Satan has us convinced that God our Father is always finding fault with us....and therefore we're terrified of him and have little true JOY in his presence.

We're told in **Psalm 16:11**, which was **quoted by Peter in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:28)**, David says that "in the presence of God is the fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore". Now seriously: do you think coming before God Almighty will give you "fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore"? Probably not. *And that's because we have not been hearing about our Father correctly.* And you know what, He's inside you and me by His spirit (**John 14:23**)! And WE are somehow in Yeshua AND our heavenly father too – **1 John 2:24** and other places tell us that.

King David went on to say in **Psalm 21:6** that he felt "exceedingly GLAD in your presence".

Is that how you and I feel in the presence of our father? Fullness of JOY, and exceedingly glad? That's the way it should be.

I hope this sermon today makes you really begin to know our heavenly Daddy as a wonderful, awesome, loving Abba—our dear Father. I hope this message will make you think, make you even question some of things you've always thought about "God" or especially "God the Father".

Where does our concept of "Father" come from?

Much of the problem we have in the way we understand our heavenly Father was caused by the fact that MOST of us had very imperfect fathers, and most of us fathers – including me – have at times even been horrible fathers. Let's face it. Many of us grew up with dads who were absent much of the time. A high percentage of kids today don't even have a dad at all! Or their mom is now married or living with some other man who is not their biological dad.

And our dads ALSO had imperfect dads, and their dads had imperfect dads.... As an aging man myself now, I understand much better that dads are under a tremendous amount of pressure and this sometimes spills over to the home.

So, many of us grew up with dads who seemed to always be angry. Or finding fault. Or never satisfied or pleased with you. And you – the child – seemed to always be screwing up! So many of you (though I'm sure not all of you) GREW UP thinking, year after year—that "I can never please my dad. My dad is not highly pleased with me; or certainly if my dad knew everything about me – where I was last night, or what I was really doing – he'd be furious!" And so, maybe not always, but all too often, we grew up on pins and needles when dad was around.

I remember when I was pastoring up north that I was working with a man who had all kinds of emotional hang-ups and was struggling to be a great dad himself. But he says he had no doubt he was doing a better job as a father than his own father was. I asked him, "Tell me, what was one of the sweetest things you can remember your father doing to or with you?" He paused for a couple seconds and then said, "I remember one time sitting near him while he was peeling an orange. He flicked an orange peel at me. It made me feel he was aware I was there."

I cried inside. That tore me up. That was one of his best memories. Wow.

Now we tell someone like that -- "I've got great news. God Almighty is your father" -- but all they had was a father who was gruff, unloving, uncaring or mostly absent. And on the other hand, we have to get over it. Many of us had very imperfect fathers. I did.

But I was an imperfect dad myself. How I wish I could go back and be the kind of father to my kids like I am as a grandfather to my grandsons. I'm still not perfect -- but I feel a lot kinder, more mellow, and more excited about them and everything they do. I wish I had been more that kind of father.

So now we're told God Almighty is our Father -- and HE'S a Being who does know our every thought, every action. Nothing can be hidden from him. So based on the way we grew up, many of us -- if we are honest -- grew up thinking "God must surely think I'm a piece of dirt, since I sure sin a lot. I sure miss the mark the lot. I sure fail a lot."

Am I wrong?

And didn't many of us grow up with our MOM saying, "You just wait til your dad gets home and I tell him what you did! He's going to wail on your butt and you'll be sorry." --So we grew up fearing our dad coming home, because we were going to be in trouble.

And if you weren't in trouble, your dad (and some of us as dads did this) first words might have been something like, "what's your bike doing out on the lawn like that? And didn't I tell you to pick up the dog mess on the lawn? Why haven't you done it yet?" -- and so again, we messed up, dad's not happy, and we didn't feel the JOY of our father or FEEL loved.

And so a lot of this has to do with the kind of dad we had. Did your dad affirm his love to you often? If he did, and if you have a dad like that, hold on to him tight and never let him go, because that kind of dad is a rarity. I promise you.

I've talked to countless people who have said they have YET to hear their father ever say to them, verbally, out loud: "I sure love you, son", or "I sure love you, sweetie".

And YOU fathers hearing this: have YOU said those words countless times to your sons and daughters as you held them tightly in your arms?

Now I realize that love can be expressed in so many ways besides speaking it.

Moms do that better than fathers do.

- **Story** of when I was out too late as an 18 yr old. Mom worried...(hear the audio) then big hug and affirmation. Then I had to make some phone calls to the Police Dept. and to my big brother who was also out there looking for me at 2 a.m. or so.

Do we step OUT of our Abba's love when we sin?

*I will address "do we step out of Abba's love when we sin" in the next sermon – fully and completely. I will begin to address that in this sermon. I also want to address the topic fully next time about coming before Him "**with fear and trembling**". But we can say something about it briefly now... but remember the full explanation of fearing God and having "fear and trembling" will be fully explained next time, along with a full discussion of – when we sin, do we leave the father's love?*

You will be surprised – and I hope excited – about the truth about that phrase "fear and trembling". Does our Father really want his children coming before him in "fear and trembling", as many translations say – while at the same time teaching us that God has "NOT given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7)? Really? Does that even make sense? And in 1 John, God inspires John to OFTEN say things like "Love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18).

Would any human, loving father want his children coming before him literally shaking in fear of him? Of course not! And does that picture even match up with this passage?

1 John 4:17-19

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have ***boldness*** in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 18 ***There is NO fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.***

19 We love Him because He first loved us.

Once we have repented, God does not want us coming before him shaking in terror. He does not. He wants you to now receive his acceptance of you. Look at David's prayer of repentance in **Psalm 51**. In the same prayer he goes from the depths of revulsion over his sins to expressing how was looking forward to having "**JOY of your salvation**" restored. All in the same prayer. HE even went on to speak how he would help sinners be turned back to God. My point is: you don't find David ending his prayer the way he started his prayer. Now he was receiving the forgiveness and enjoying the reconciliation. And of course there were penalties; I know that. But he was no longer shaking in terror in God's presence.

Remember what David said in Psalm 16, -- and Peter quoted on Pentecost: "fullness of JOY in his presence". Which is it for you? You don't feel full of joy in the presence of someone who terrifies you! You just don't. Let's be honest about that. Stop and think and be honest to yourself about this. So something else must be going on here. Maybe Satan and his ministers have just made us think the wrong way about God. I'll explain it in detail in the next sermon, so don't miss it.

WHAT IS GOD? HOW would you best describe Him? Powerful? Mighty? Almighty? Fearsome?

1 John 4:7-8

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, **for God is love.**"

That is my Abba and yours. He is love personified – regardless of how Satan and even ministers who preach about "God" have depicted him in his anger and wrath most of the time.

Love is what our Father is. He can't stop being what He is; even if WE stop being what we should be. He can't stop being what He is. Everything he does is because of love. He is the great I AM. "I am LOVE", he would say.

God Most High WANTS US TO GET TO KNOW HIM

So our goal – like Paul in **Philippians 3:9-11** is to come to KNOW HIM. He prophesies that the time is coming when the knowledge of him will be like waters covering the seas, for EVERYONE from the least to the greatest will KNOW THE LORD. (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**).

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Thus says YHVH:

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,
Let not the mighty man glory in his might,
Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;

24 But let him who glories glory in this,

That he understands and knows Me,

That I am YHVH, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says YHVH.

Do you know your Father? Do you really know Him? Are you sure you do? Do you feel JOY in his presence? If you don't feel joy in his presence, you don't know him yet! Are you at the point where you can hardly wait to meet Him, knowing HE can hardly wait to see YOU – face to face?

Our heavenly Father gave us families so we can have a FORETASTE of what it's like. When my grandsons come to see us, I can hardly wait. I'm saying, "Where are they?" and when they finally do arrive, I usually run out and see them and hug them because I'm EXCITED they're coming and I want to see them and love on them!

And I want THEM to experience that a father or grandfather can love and accept them that much.

I promise you: our feelings as grandpas are just a fraction of the anticipation that our heavenly father is feeling about YOU; waiting to finally meet YOU face to face. Scripture says all creation groans as it awaits the revelation of the sons of God! **Romans 8:22.**

WE UNDERSTAND OUR FATHER THROUGH YESHUA

Yeshua – Jesus Christ - -was the WORD who came from God, was God. Yeshua was the One who literally spoke everything into existence. He breathed out galaxies! Our Yeshua is not the namby-pamby Jesus we see in paintings. Oh no, he was the one who spoke the universe into existence. We have come to learn more about HIM. I'm bringing this up because we will also understand the FATHER by Yeshua.

Who was “the God of the Old Testament”? Most of you know that it was the One who became Yeshua. If you're not clear on that, email me and I'll explain more.

We know the God of the Old Testament was called YHVH – or Yehoweh/Yahweh. It's usually translated as “the LORD”. **Was YHVH the One we know as Yeshua, or God the Father? Which one? Are you sure?**

The answer actually is that YHVH actually applies to BOTH.

We know this, because Scripture is clear that no one has ever seen or heard the Father (John 1:18; 5:37) – but MILLIONS heard Yah BOOM out the ten commandments on Mt. Sinai. MILLIONS. He began the 10 commandments with “I am YHVH YOUR ELOHIM... YOU SHALL NOT HAVE ANY OTHER elohim besides me.” Who was that YHVH speaking? It had to be the One who came to be born as a baby to Joseph and Mary.

And many saw him in various forms: Abraham had dinner with Him. Moses and the 70 elders and a couple others had dinner with Him on the mount and saw him (**Exodus 24:9-11**). Jacob wrestled all night with him (Gen 32:22-30, where he says in verse 30 – “I have seen GOD [Elohim] face to face and I live!”). I could cite many, many, many more.

And yet we also know that it's recorded in **Psalm 110:1** that YHVH said to ADONAI – “Sit here until I make your enemies your footstool.” In that verse, YHVH is God the Father speaking to our LORD – to Adonai. YHVH in this verse is Father. Adonai (my lord) is Yeshua.

They are both God (John 1:1-3). But God the Father is greater and higher, according to Yeshua's own words (John 14:28). They are not equal in rank. Yeshua makes that patently clear – the one sent is not as great as the one sending.

So MOST of what we read about “God” – or Elohim – in the OT – is really about Yeshua. He's the one interacting and talking and responding.

Now when Yeshua came to earth, one of his assignments was to reveal the Father.

Matthew 11:27-28

“All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. **Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.**”

In the old covenant, very few interacted with YHVH in a way that was like a friend. Abraham did. Moses did. But few did. *Even Daniel referred to YHVH as “the great and*

dreadful God" (**Daniel 9:4**) – or awesome, to be feared, etc. They came with fear and trembling. Even Nehemiah prayed to, in KJV at least, 'to the great and *terrible* God." (**Neh 1:5. Psalm 47:2 – in KJV** – "For the Lord Most High is terrible..." Those who failed to obey in the old covenant were punished to the 4th-10th generations afterwards! (Ex 20:6; Deut 7:9-10.) That was the old covenant. In the new covenant, our sins he will remember no more.

NKJV translates those as "awesome", which is far better translation.

So anyway, God the Father sent Yeshua not just to die for us, but to help us understand HIM – the FATHER -- better.

- The Father calls us – and leads us to Christ.
John 6:44
"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day". (again in verse 65)
- Once Yeshua has you in his hands, he will introduce you to, and teach you about, our mutual Father. But no one can come to the Father except through Christ – who reveals the Father (**Matthew 10:27**).
- God the Father, God Most High, was not well known in the OT except by a select few. He was known as a very awesome Being. So in the New Covenant, Yeshua came talking about him as "our FATHER". Pray to "our father" – and so on. SO MANY of his parables focused on what a loving Father we have. And when He spoke of "God" – he was speaking of the Father.
- Yeshua spoke of a Father who wants to GIVE us so much, and if we just ask...
- Yeshua spoke of him being so loving that he even knows every hair on your head!

When Yeshua was speaking to Nicodemus in **John 3** about being born again, THAT is when Yeshua also voiced and taught the well-known John 3:16-17 about how GOD so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son... and so on. THAT was said to **Nicodemus**.

But my point is this: the plan of salvation was Father's idea. It was HIS plan.

Father in heaven does not want ANYONE to perish if at all possible (2 Peter 3:9). So Father put his Son through the death of the cross and poured out on him all the anger and condemnation of all sin ever committed, so that whosoever would believe in the Son would NOT BE CONDEMNED but be offered EVERLASTING LIFE. . . so that YOU don't have to feel condemned anymore! Much more on that in the next sermon. All of that is in John 3:15-18. I recommend you re-read it.

I'm just making the point, that the LOVE that went into the plan of salvation was Father's idea!

So Yeshua came to take on himself ALL THE ANGER AND CONDEMNATION of our sins on to himself. It says "HE became sin for us" -- not that He ever ever sinned. No, but that he became the recipient of every sin ever committed. How disgusting! (**2 Cor. 5:21**)

So OUR sins were imputed to, given to him, counted to Him – he paid them., then He was resurrected and WE were put INTO His righteous body; we are now IN Christ, the beloved. **(Colossians 3:3-4). He took our sins upon himself, that we might be the righteousness of God IN HIM (2 Cor. 5:21).**

Eph 1:6 says WE “are accepted in the Beloved (Yeshua)”

YOU, a beloved child of God because you accepted and received Yeshua as your Savior, are now a child of God, a BELOVED child of God, IN Christ.

What was the Father’s GREATEST GIFT?

I don’t think it was the Holy Spirit. That was great. But it wasn’t the greatest gift of our Father. No, God so loved all of us that He GAVE the gift of His SON. Yeshua is the greatest gift of God. It’s the measure of His love for you and me.

And NOW, we can come boldly before the throne of Grace, because of Yeshua (**Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 4:17**).

1 John 4:17-19

“Love has been perfected among us in this: that **we may have boldness in the day of judgment**; because as He is, so are we in this world. 18 **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment.** But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 **We love Him because He first loved us.**”

How much does GOD MOST HIGH LOVE YOU?

AS MUCH AS HE LOVED his beloved Son Yeshua. Hard to believe, isn’t it? In Yeshua’s prayer in John 17, he says this:

John 17:23

“that the world may know that You have sent Me, **and have loved them as You have loved Me.**”

This should stagger you if you really understand it. No matter how bad you’ve been, if you have repented and are now “in Christ”, you are loved as much as He loved Yeshua. As much as Abba loves Yeshua, He loves YOU. And 1 John 3:1 the love of the Father makes him want to call you his CHILD!

Again, what was the Father’s greatest gift? The greatest is LOVE (1 Cor. 13:13). And GOD is love personified. And he demonstrated His love to us by giving us His SON – sending his son to die for us while we were still sinners.

Romans 5:6-11

For when we were still without strength, in due time **Christ died for the ungodly.** 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be **saved from wrath through Him.**

10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

In the New covenant, we're taught that God died for you and me while we were yet sinners. God died for the sinners. Because God the Father LOVED sinners. For you and for me – because he LOVED US while we were sinners. **GOD the Father is love.**

He can't stop being what HE is – no matter what WE are. (repeat) We continue to sin – but thanks be to God who is saving us through Jesus Christ as Paul exclaims at the end of Romans 7 and beginning of Romans 8.

Then in Romans 8:1 – there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ, who now walk according to the spirit.

We have to receive this wonderful gift and understand it – or we will never feel the joy he wants to give us. We don't strive for joy. It comes when we realize how much we've been forgiven, been accepted and brought into the family of God. That is what brings great joy! Now add to that the gift of Joy of the Holy Spirit – and we become very, very happy people.

If we're not happy or joyous in our spirit, perhaps it's because we haven't accepted the gifts of God, starting with Father's love in giving us Yeshua -- and everything Yeshua (Jesus) is doing in us, for us and to us. You may say you accepted Yeshua as your personal savior at baptism, but have you really? Do you have faith in HIM – or in your own performance? Have you accepted his grace? His life? His righteousness – all by faith in him?

If you haven't, can we say we have accepted Him as our Savior? Too many of us give lip service to that, but then work as if everything depends on us.

And Yeshua also taught us that when we REALIZE how much we've been forgiven, we will love Him and our Father – MUCH! Read the story of the woman who KNEW she was a terrible sinner, and was repentantly weeping and wiping the feet of Yeshua while he was having dinner at the Pharisee's home – **Luke 7:43-50**. Here's a concluding statement made—that explains so much – in verse 47.

Luke 7:47

Therefore I say to you, **her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.** But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

When we realize how much God has loved us – we love much in return. Let's get the sequence right: **Our heavenly Abba loved us even before we repented** and sent his son to die for us, so we could have our slate of sins wiped clean.

When you realize that, you'll really, really love him back and do everything to strive to please him. Now you're obeying out of love, not out of fear and terror.

The apostle Paul was such a man. He knew how vile he was. While he was on the WAY to arrest and torture more believers in Damascus, Yeshua appeared to him in glory and talked to him and called him to be the apostle to the Gentiles. WHILE he was on the way to HURT people, the love of God in the person of Yeshua was revealed to him. Have you thought of it that way before? All that is in Acts 9.

While we were sinners, he died for us – **Romans 5:8** – he was demonstrating his love for us even BEFORE we voiced any words of repentance.

Then what did that experience of having been forgiven so much do for Paul? It led him to easy cheap grace? NO. It led him to love God *more*, to work *harder* than ever.

TRUE Grace leads to obedience and good works. True grace does NOT lead to more sin.

But it is true to say that no matter how big our sin is, there is more than enough grace to cover it. God's grace and love is bigger than our sin. Where sin abounded, Paul teaches, grace SUPER-abounded (**Romans 5:21**). That does NOT give anyone license to sin though! True grace PRODUCES good works. But many preachers get it backwards. They think our good works come first. But please note that I teach someone who is under true grace will be obedient and feel indebted to live righteously as **Romans 8:12-13** says. Look at how Paul describes how God's love and grace led him to be more obedient, to work harder....

1 Corinthians 15:9-11

For I am the *least* of the apostles, who am *not worthy to be called an apostle*, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; **but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.**"

SATAN –HATES us being BELOVED

Now let's get into something very important. We know when Yeshua was baptized a voice was heard saying, "this is my BELOVED Son, in whom I am well pleased." That's in **Matthew 3:17 and 1 Peter 1:17.**

Then in Matthew 4, Yeshua is led by the spirit to the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. In all of the 3 temptations mentioned, Satan begins by questioning if he was the son of God. "IF you are the son of God...." But what is he leaving out? Have you noticed that?

But Abba hadn't just said he was the "son of God". **Satan purposely left out a KEY word here.** You get it? He left out "beloved". If he could get Yeshua wondering if He was the *beloved* son, he could maybe get a temptation in there.

Are you getting this? SATAN wants us believing we are no longer beloved for one reason or another.

One study I came across long ago says that it's far easier for people to do wrong, or give up, or commit suicide, when they feel nobody cares much anymore, or that they've

fouled up SO BADLY that there's no coming back – then they just give up and sin more or even end their life.

But in fact, we are “accepted in the Beloved” – **Ephesians 1:6**

We are “**beloved of God**, called saints” – **Romans 1:7**.

God will call people who were not beloved, “Beloved” – Romans 9:25.

We are elect of God, holy and beloved – Colossians 3:12.

Accept that God the Father has accepted you and brought you into His love.

When a sinner feels REJECTED by loved ones, family, friends, the church – society – whatever, and rejected by God even because he/she thinks they see God in the way His people are treating him or her – it's over. That's when people do desperate things. That is when sin abounds. That is when depression and even suicide happens.

That is why Paul instructs in **2 Corinthians 2**, to bring back the repentant sinner. He didn't want him languishing out there thinking “God's children” have all rejected him permanently.

So some are taught that when we sin, especially the really “bad” sins – that we've screwed up SO bad that even God really casts us away. And we think of verses like **Isa 59:1-2** that our sins have separated us from him. In the Old Covenant, that could be true. But when Christ came, He brought the means of *reconciliation* with Abba, and shows us ABBA.

AND He teaches us that Abba loves US – even we who have been sinners – as He loved Yeshua (John 17:23). Don't let the Adversary (Satan) tell you that you are no longer beloved. Once he can convince of you that, you will actually sin more easily or just give up.

On the other hand, when you EXPERIENCE God's grace, in that loving Grace, you come confidently into our Daddy's presence knowing He's going to forgive you once more and hug you and tell you – “Yes, I still love you”. I will prove that as we go along in this and the next sermons.

Our FATHER EXTENDS HIS LOVE – especially when we have sinned and *come to our senses in repentance* – because he wants us to know we can “come home” to Him, be loved by Him, be accepted by Him in Christ.

Who were the ones Yeshua had the harshest words for? The terrible cheats, liars, thieves and sinners called the Publicans, or those women who were prostitutes or adulteresses – or what? NO, his harshest words were for those who had an outward appearance of being righteous, who tried their best to do all 613 points of Torah perfectly – but NEVER GOT IT! They were constantly “at church”, constantly fasting it seems – but never got it! Never understood they needed mercy and love! Never understood they needed the Lamb!

His harshest words were not for the sinner, especially repentant sinners, but for the outwardly righteous – the Pharisees, scribes and priests. The cities he preached to – Nazareth, Capernaum on the shores of the sea of Galilee, were outwardly decent cities, but he said EVEN SODOM would have responded to his teachings better than they did! He said WOE to you Capernaum, Bethsaida and other cities, for if the works I've done were done in Sodom they would have repented!

I'll speak much more on this point of God the Father and our relationship to him when we sin – in my next sermon. Do we step out of his love when we sin? Do we? God is LOVE. Does HE become something or someone different than LOVE when we sin? We'll go into that in detail in the next sermon.

When do you know someone really, really loves you?

When do you really know someone loves you? I would say when someone knows everything there is to know about you – *everything* – and still loves you. I mean when someone knows every dirty little thought and deed you've EVER had, EVER – and that person still loves you, now that's true love.

NO human on earth knows everything about anyone else. You don't even know everything about your wife or husband or your children. You just don't.

And thank God we don't! We would feel so hurt, so disappointed, so let down – if we knew every time our "loved ones" said or did things that showed a lack of love or respect for us. We simply would find that very hard to deal with and almost impossible to love such a person.

If you wonder about that, just look what happens when there's been some discovered infidelity. It ruins many marriages that seemed happy on the surface before that. The hurt party simply can't take it. That's understandable. But some incredible people CAN experience adultery and forgive the guilty spouse and go on when there's repentance.

But our Abba says he DOES know EVERYTHING about us (Psalm 139:1) – and still loves us!

Psalms 139:1-6

Yehoweh, **You have searched me and known me.**

**2 You know my sitting down and my rising up;
You understand my thought afar off.**

3 You comprehend my path and my lying down,

And are acquainted with all my ways.

**4 For there is not a word on my tongue,
But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.**

5 You have hedged me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;

It is high, I cannot attain it.

Our loving Abba knows ALL about you and me – good and bad – and still loves you and me. That's what is so amazing. He even knows the very number of hairs on each of our heads (Matthew 10:29-31). He knows when a sparrow falls to the ground. Yeshua assures us we're worth more than many sparrows.

He knows all my thoughts, all my worries, all my fears, all my joys, all my lusts, all my good thoughts and all my bad thoughts – ALL of them. He knows what I need before I do. He knows the words I'm about to speak – before I speak them. And He knows every lie you and I have ever told. He knows every sin big and small – ever committed – that NOBODY else on earth knows.

And knowing everything about you and me – He STILL LOVES YOU AND ME! WOW, WOW, WOW, Daddy in heaven, dear ABBA – wow!

- In fact he knew you and me before we were even conceived (Jeremiah 1:4-5). I know – that's about Jeremiah, but that applies to us too. We weren't an accident or mistake!
- In fact He says "all the days of your life were written in my book" BEFORE I was even born (**Psalm 139:15-16**). Go FATHOM that one!
- He says HE knit us together in our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13).
- He says HE was there, on the day we were born (**Psalm 71:6**), carefully watching over everything – in fact, HE was the one who helped you be born, it says.

Is this the ABBA you know? I'm coming to know this great and wonderful Daddy in heaven. It brings me great joy when I think of Him.

WE LEARN WHAT ABBA IS LIKE BY WATCHING YESHUA

But again, if we can't hear or see our Father, how will we really get to know him? Jesus teaches us in **John 14:9** that if we've seen him, or come to know HIM, we also have to come to know ABBA. He says they are ONE.

In Hebrews 1:3 –it says Yeshua (Jesus) is the EXACT REPLICA of His father (the "express image", the perfect expression of who and what Abba is). So even though no man has seen or heard God the Father at any time, we get a real good idea of what Abba is like because Yeshua is an EXACT COPY of the father – except for one thing. Do you know what that is?

Except that the Son says "My father is GREATER than I" (John 14:28). So:

- As much as we experience Yeshua's love – Father's love is MORE, is GREATER
- As much as we experience his joy – the joy in the father's presence is even *greater*.

So one way to learn about Abba is to learn about Yeshua and look to him, learn about him – and in doing so, we will also learn about Abba. Yeshua teaches us a lot about Abba. He says

- Our Abba is the PERFECT father (Matthew 5:48).
- He says our Father provides all our needs if we just seek the Kingdom and HIS righteousness first (Matthew 6:31-33).
- James the brother of Yeshua– teaches us what Yeshua must have taught him, that EVERY perfect gift we could ever receive COMES FROM Abba's hand (James 1:17).
- Do you know Yeshua as a servant? He said he came to SERVE, not be served. Abba will be even MORE so. Your Abba wants to do MORE for you than you could ever possibly imagine (Ephesians 3:20). He says Israel of old "limited the Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 78:41)
- Do you know Yeshua who could be moved by the sufferings and hungers of others, and wept over Jerusalem? Abba – would be even more so. Are you getting it? "My Father is greater than I." That means Abba feels more, serves more, loves more even than Yeshua. "He is greater than I." And Yeshua is the exact replica of the father (Heb 1:3).

- Do you picture Yeshua as the Shepherd who carries his lost lambs lovingly? Abba more so – **Isaiah 40:10-11**. Remember as Yeshua is, so is Abba – more so.
- In Zephaniah 3:17 we're told He wants to quiet us with his love and he sings when He rejoices over us. Do you know your Almighty God that way?

Zephaniah 3:17

YHVH your Elohim (the LORD your God) in your midst,
The Mighty One, will save;
He will rejoice over YOU with gladness,
He will quiet you with His love,
He will rejoice over YOU with singing."

Have you EVER thought of your Abba that way? Singing over you? He does.

NOW LET'S LOOK AT MORE OF OUR FATHER'S LOVE, as seen through YESHUA

There are SO MANY stories I could tell about Yeshua – and how he demonstrated Abba's love. For now let's turn to Luke 15.

The LUKE 15 PARABLES

Luke 15 [let's start with the context]

Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. 2 And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." 3 So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

Now notice the context. And I must ask you, as I read thru this – do you REALLY see our Father this way about YOU?

The Parable of the lost Sheep

4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' 7 ***I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.***"

WHEN YOU go astray into sin or off the Way of our King, there's a heavenly search party going on for you! You've seen those on the news? Nothing like what goes on when WE go astray spiritually. He doesn't give up on us. No – he comes for us, looking for us, and REJOICES when we're reunited with him. IN the same way, when we repent there is great joy. **STUDY EZEKIEL 34:11-16**

Then follows the parable of the lost coin and great joy

The Parable of the Lost Coin

8 "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' 10 Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

In the original Greek, it says 10 drachmas – not silver coins. A drachma was worth about a day's earnings, according to one commentary. IF this is all she had, losing even one was a big deal. We may not feel we're worth that much, but we're all objects of rejoicing when we're found again. Married women of that day often wore 10 drachmas in a garland-like necklace. If one was lost, it ruined the necklace.

The FATHER OF THE PRODIGAL SON

The Parable of the Lost Son

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood.

Younger would have pictured the sinful tax collectors and those coming to hear him. The older would have depicted the Pharisees, scribes and priests.

Younger son was denying his family ties at this point – as if to say, "Dad, I can't even wait until you die. I don't want to wait that long. I'd like my share now." That was very unkind and disrespectful.

BOTH sons apparently were given their inheritance ("he divided to THEM his livelihood.") This would not have been a 50-50 split, because the firstborn son always got a double portion, so the older son would have been given more to begin with. The son would have been given value in cash, or sellable items. The older son retained the property, land, barns and most of the flocks.

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with wasteful/prodigal living. 14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

When Yah is our shepherd, we shall not want, or be in want. Psalm 23:1

15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 "But **when he came to himself**, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "**Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you**, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."

20 "And he arose and came to his father. **But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.** 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

So the son turned his life around and changed the direction he was going and came back home. Father saw him a long ways away – so he must have been looking. Father SPRINTED. It was not dignified for anyone over 30 to run ... but Dad was SO overjoyed, he sprinted to this reprobate son.

Had the Father even heard a single word of repentance yet? NO. But he STILL ran to MEET him, love on him, and welcome him back home – and assure him of the Father's love! WOW! This is about GOD THE FATHER, folks. Do you know Abba this way? I pray you will.

***“Fell on his neck”** = gave him a tight, close hug; threw his arms around his neck and KEPT kissing him – warmly, fervently.*

What would YOU have done when you saw him a long ways off after all you'd heard about what he'd done, throwing money at prostitutes, how he'd shamed the family name and all he had said about his dad and family? (Discuss)

About what the son said: NOTICE, THE FATHER interrupts the son's prepared speech (v 22) and the son (v. 21) never got to say the part “make me as one of your hired servants”. NO, this man was the father's SON. Regardless of what he had done, he was still his son.

***Do you quit loving your son or daughter because they do evil?** Especially if and when you see they've come back home and first words out of their mouth are words of contrition – “I have sinned against heaven (God) and you...not worthy to be your son.”*

So what do we learn about our ABBA from this story?

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out **the best robe and put it on him, and put **a ring** on his hand and **sandals** on his feet. 23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; 24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.**

Father sees him looking like, smelling like – a slave. Barefoot, shabby pig-stained garments – and he restores his position as a son – and immediately goes into celebration mode. God LOVES to see us be found. Abba loves it when we come to our senses. And even though we've done evil, as this man had, when we repent and come back to father, NOTHING separates us from His love if we continue to seek him.

There IS a cost to reconciliation. MUCH of the estate had been squandered – lost. And the fatted calf had to shed its blood for there to be a celebration. Oh yes, there will be a celebration in God's presence in heaven someday – but that too, is with cost. True repentance and forgiveness is costly.

25 "Now his older son [the elder] was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'

28 "But he was angry and would not go in. **Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.** 29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

SO many are like this. When someone is "bad enough" – they should never be allowed back into the house of God, they say. For example the Corinthians weren't that eager to welcome back the evil man who was openly having sex with his step-mother, and in 2 Cor. 2 Paul had to remind the Corinthians to BRING HIM BACK and not let him stay out there all alone, for we are not ignorant of Satan's ploys! Paul said don't leave him outside; bring him into the house of God again. '

In this case, it was the older brother who stayed out of the House because he was holier than thou" and didn't want to welcome back his sinful brother. But notice that the Father went out to THAT son as well. Hallelujah, Father, you are amazing!

Also notice what the older son – picturing the Pharisees who were criticizing Jesus for accepting the repentant publicans – notice what he focused on: He focused on himself; on the things HE was doing and had done. "I've served you faithfully for years; I never broke a single one of your rules" – all focused on what HE had done and not on the many things the Father had done.

31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. 32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

Yes there was a penalty for the younger son. He had lost his inheritance. But Father still wanted to welcome him back, and the younger son could start over, and with a lot of work and help from his father (grace), he could still make a decent life of it in the end. But there were consequences. The farm and buildings and flocks and herds were all the older son's.

But the point is: there's GREAT JOY when a son of God repents and comes back home to Abba. And folks, God our Father loves dancing and music in his house. Just go ask King David, who implemented 24/7 praise and worship, around the clock, in the Tabernacle of David. (Check out my sermons on that topic.)

I ask again – what kind of father would you have been in the story? It doesn't really matter. For the point is – what kind of Abba do WE have.

Google for a song called "When God Ran..." It's an awesome song by Benny Hester. A sister in the faith introduced it to me and here are some of the words, based on the story of the Prodigal son.

**The day I left home, I knew I'd broken His heart,
And I wondered then if things could ever be the same
Then one night, I remembered His love for me,
and down that dusty road, ahead I could see....**

It was the only time; It was the only time I EVER saw Him run,
and then He ran to ME,
He took me in His arms, held my head to His chest,
said, "My SON'S come home again",

Lifted my face, wiped the tears from my eyes, with forgiveness in His voice
he said, "Son, do you know I still love you?"

He caught me by surprise, and he brought me to my knees,
when GOD ran . . .

I saw Him run to ME....
I was so ashamed, and all alone and so far away
But now I know that He's been waiting FOR this day....

I saw him RUN to me,
He took me in his arms, held my head to his chest
Said, "My Son's come home again"
Lifted my face, wiped the tears from my eyes
with forgiveness in His voice, he said, "SON..."
He called me "SON"....
He said "SON, do you know I still love you?"

He RAN to me.
I saw him RUN to ME. And then I ran to HIM...
When God ran.....

Brothers and sisters, you are children of God Most High – of our heavenly Daddy, our Abba. He REJOICES when you repent after you sin. There are the biggest parties going on in heaven when you come back to Abba and leave your sinful way. he wants to see you so much he runs to you, hugs you, kisses you over and over.... before you even get to say very much!

THAT'S my Abba! That's my GOD MOST HIGH.

Picture the SCENE when we all get to finally meet our great God, our Abba:

- Very dignified, beautiful, I'm sure... I do believe the wedding Supper is in heaven.
- But when the doors to the grand hall open, to the temple in heaven after our resurrection, I wouldn't be surprised if Abba can't help but get up from the throne and RUN to greet His children He's meeting face to face for the first time!

I DO that when my grandsons come to see me, and I'm just a flesh-and blood imperfect Poppy, grandpa.... Won't the perfect Abba, the one who puts the love of a father into us – can you see that He just might live out the Prodigal son story? We ALL have been the prodigals!

Next time I want to continue this theme – and really get into the issue of how God looks at us, once we are his children, once we have received Yeshua and have been adopted into His

family as His OWN children – and then after that, when we stumble in sin, do we step out of our Father's love?

I hope we've begun to answer that, especially in the parables of Luke 15. I'll really get into it deeply next sermon. But the prodigal son was enthusiastically welcomed home even before the father heard a single word of contrition or repentance. Just amazing.

Can anything separate us from the love of God? What does scripture say?

Romans 8:31-39

"What then shall we say to these things? If **God is for us**, who can be against us? **35 WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST?** Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written:

"For Your sake we are killed all day long;

We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Did you get that?

Your Abba – who sent His eternal companion to die for YOU, and Yeshua also personally died for YOU as well, on his own volition – your Abba is pure LOVE personified. He's not going to stop loving you! He sometimes has to administer "tough love" to wake us up – and more on that next time, -- but Abba is not going to stop loving you.

FINAL POINT:

Romans 5:5 – the love OF GOD has been poured out in our heart by the Holy Spirit. ("shed abroad in our hearts" KJV). GOD'S LOVE has been given to us by and through His Holy Spirit. It's one of the things the Spirit does for and in us (See/hear my sermon on "22 Things the Holy Spirit Does")

WE have the opportunity to have inside us this very agape love I've been speaking about. It's not love FOR God that has been shed in our hearts – but love OF God.

We love you Abba. Help us see you and "get it" that you are not the kind of hostile, irritable Being you are often depicted as (in contrast to Christ), but you are the perfect Abba, the best heavenly daddy anyone could ever dream to have.

Thank you for everything you've done for us and we look forward to meeting you in person, dear Abba. And we know that because of our beloved Yeshua, you will gladly greet us and we can come in confidence and boldness. Amen. Amen. We love you, Abba. Help us grow in that love for you, and in your OWN love.