

2 Deadly Deceptions About God's Fatherhood

One of the main ministries of the Holy Spirit is to reveal who the Lord is in all of His glory. Through the Holy Spirit we come to know God as our Father. This is why Paul spoke of the Spirit of adoption. He creates in our hearts a cry from revelation of "Abba Father!" Romans 8:15 declares this Spirit of adoption that brings us into this awareness of who God is. We functionally through the Spirit of adoption know who God is to us: "For you have not received the spirit of slavery again to fear. But you have received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"

"Abba" is a term of endearment very similar to our term of Daddy. "Father" on the other hand is a term of authority. The Holy Spirit in operation will reveal both aspects to us.

This is one of the main challenges we have in the body of Christ today. In my opinion in some groups there is an out-of-balance emphasis on the grace of God. Some have called it the hyper-grace movement. These groups of people only want to see God in His "Abba" place. They only want to talk of God as Pappa or Daddy. Their concept of God is one who is only interested in blessing us and making our life as comfortable as possible. Yet Paul said the Holy Spirit would not only reveal God as "Abba" but also as "Father." It is true that God is "Abba." He is kind, gentle and more extravagant in His love than we could possibly ever imagine. He is also "Father" who is committed to our growing up. Which means He will use His authority to correct us and adjust us so we can carry His authority in the earth.

Hebrews tells us of this authority of the Father that is released in discipline: "'For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges every son whom He receives.'" Endure

discipline; God is dealing with you as with sons. For what son is there whom a father does not discipline? If you are without discipline, of which everyone has partaken, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers, and they corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed disciplined us for a short time according to their own judgment, but He does so for our profit, that we may partake of His holiness" (12:6-10).

As "Abba" He secures us in His love. As "Father" He disciplines us so we become qualified to carry His authority. We are told in the previous Scriptures that if we are not disciplined, then we are not really sons. Every negative thing is not from the devil. Sometimes it is correction from the Father. We must know that correction is not rejection. It is in fact the love of the Father being manifest.

"Abba" reveals His unconditional love. "Father" challenges and presses us to grow up so we can take our place of authority in His kingdom. We must see both aspects of God as the Holy Spirit reveals them. In fact, if we are not seeing both aspects, then we should ask ourselves if we are truly receiving revelation from the Spirit of God. The Spirit will send the cry of "Abba, Father" into our heart and not just Abba.

We see this tension between these two facets of who God is in other places of Scripture as well. Romans 11:22 speaks of the goodness and severity of God: "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God—severity toward those who fell, but goodness toward you, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off."

Notice that we must continue in His goodness or we can experience His severity. I know this is not popular theology in today's church. God is so very good, yet there is a severity of judgment that can come if we do not allow that

goodness to hold us close to Him. If we rebel or fall away, He as "Father" will use His authority to retrieve us if possible. This is where the fear of the Lord comes in. The fear of the Lord is always aware of God's love yet demand for holiness. As our Father, God creates in our heart a deep desire to live that holiness out.

In the early church in Acts 9:31 we see the combination of this fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit: "Then the churches throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and were built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied."

Notice the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit brought multiplication. They had an awareness of God as "Abba, Father." This produced a church that was taking ground for the kingdom of God. We desperately need to know the tender side of God as Abba. Equally though, we need to understand Him as Father that is committed to our growing up and maturing as full sons of God. This produces a church not only of soft tender love, but also of power and authority. It is not a question of either or. It is both. When both aspects of God are revealed through the Spirit of adoption, the church receives a grace that doesn't just forgive sin, but empowers us to live above sin. We then become qualified to carry the authority of the Father into the earth.

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