

To God Alone Be The Glory

What's more important: Mother's Day or Father's Day? If you asked 1000 people, the overwhelming majority would probably say "Mother's Day." There would be some with gifted fathers or troubled mothers who would likely weigh in on the Father's Day side. And then there are those who would stop and think about it long enough to realize: fathers and mothers are both important to the physical, emotional, and spiritual upbringing of children. And that's why I'm glad to see Father's Day growing in its celebration. Granted, a lot of that has to do with clever marketing on the part of merchants. But they're only jumping on a wagon that has been gaining momentum for quite some time. Fathers are being told, more and more, what is expected of them in the home and how they can truly serve their family as the loving head of the household. But what's even more exciting is how fathers have been stepping forward and saying, "Teach me how to be a better father." And so fathers are changing diapers, or laundering clothes, or helping the kids with homework, or staying home with the kids because mom has a better job. Fathers today know how to make a pretty good stew, turn on the vacuum, clean toilets. But the number one criterion of a good father is that he be a man of faith in the true God, just like Abraham, because a man of faith will teach his children to be children of the Savior.

Today might be a good time to look at Abraham for lessons on being a good father, but there's an even better Father than Abraham for us to study. And in studying about our heavenly Father, we're going to find encouragement for a lot more people than just fathers. The Holy Spirit would have us **all** become like Abraham in his faith. And so today, let's ponder this truth: **LIKE FATHER ABRAHAM, GIVE GLORY TO YOUR GREAT GOD.**

Think about giving glory to God. We understand glory. It has to do with praise. If Lebron James showed up after church today, what would you talk about with him? Basketball, of course! And somewhere in your conversation, you might say something like, "You are the greatest basketball player ever to live." Do you think he knows that already? If he's heard it once, he's heard it a few thousand times. So your telling him does nothing for him. Why then is it important that we, and especially fathers, give glory to God? God certainly knows he's greater than Lebron James, or anything else. God doesn't need us to praise him lest he forget that he's God. He is not less glorified if we forget to praise him, nor is he more glorified when we do. So why give glory to our great God? Because we need to give him glory for all that he's done on our behalf.

But do you know how easy it is for us not to give God glory? Sometimes we simply take our eyes off him for so long that we either forget how great God is, or worse yet, maybe we stop caring for a while. I wonder how many Christians have taken their eyes off God during these last three months when we weren't allowed to gather into groups, not even for worship. They could still watch worship videos on TV or on the internet, or they could get printed worship materials. I wonder how many Christians during these last three months have stopped caring how great God is. Dear friends, that's the opposite of giving God glory. It's like saying, "God doesn't deserve my praise," which is a contradiction of the obvious.

There are other ways we can deny God the glory due him, like sinning. How long has it been since you sinned? Did you irritate anyone this morning by your thoughtlessness? Or maybe you were the irritated one, and instead of stopping and praying for strength and patience, you snapped and used God's gift of your tongue to lash someone into a change of behavior. Have you indulged any unkind thoughts this morning? Have you thought about anything besides yourself? Sinning denies God glory.

You know, a lot of people would say, "What's the big deal? It's not like I

intended to deny God glory. I just forgot, or I just didn't care for a while, or I was just selfish—it had nothing to do with God." But that's just it. We were created to have *everything* to do with God. Doing the opposite **is** a big deal. And minimizing sin is just one more way to deny God the glory due him. And getting irritated during the sermon because your conscience is being pricked by the law of God is another way.

If you are like me, you are ready to confess just how much sin is still a part of you. It is to God's glory when we admit our inability to please God on our own. When we are down on our knees desiring God's mercy, that's when we especially see the greatness of God, because he did something to extricate us from our predicament. To God be the glory!

That's how Abraham felt. To God be the glory! Remember how God had come to Abraham when he was 75 years old and said, "I will make you the father of many nations" (Gen 12)? Later, God said, "Come on, Abraham, let's go outside. I want you to count the stars. Oh? Can't do it? So shall your offspring be" (Gen 15). I suspect we would have to be childless, beyond the years of child-bearing, and in a culture where children are prized more than money and power in order to

understand what this promise meant to Abraham. When Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 89, and they were still childless, God renewed his promise. Now if you're Abraham, don't you start to say to yourself, "My old lady is going to have a baby? That became physically impossible, oh, say, at least 35 years ago." Not Abraham. Our text reminds us: *19Without weakening in his faith, [Abraham] faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God.* It was simple for Abraham: "God said it. Therefore it will happen. End of story."

Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful to have a faith like Abraham's? If fathers want to have a happy Father's Day, let them ask God for a simple, child-like faith such as Abraham had. That's where he got his faith, you know. Faith isn't something we come up with on our own. It's not an in-born trait that some of us have and some don't. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit who makes faith our very own. And when in faith we rely fully on God's promises in the same way that a child relies on its parents, in the same way that Abraham did when in spite of being too old to have children, he believed that God had

the ability to give him a child—when we simply take the Lord at his Word, that's one way we give God the glory he deserves.

Because children naturally trust their parents, God says, "Teach your children in the way they should go, and when they are old, they will not depart from it" (see Proverbs 22:6). If you are really scared for your grand/children because the world is such a tempting place to lose faith in Jesus, do your best to bring up children in God's teachings. When we adults take God at his Word and make our highest priority 'feeding the faith of everyone who comes under our roof,' God is glorified, and he will bless us.

It's like the fishermen who were enjoying themselves out on one of the Great Lakes. The weather unexpectedly changed, and a dense fog settled over the sea. None of these fishermen knew which way to go. So they focused on the compass in their boat and headed due west toward the closest shore. At times they felt certain they were actually heading north or east. Some were even convinced they were going in circles. But the pilot stayed focused on the compass, and soon enough they reached land. Feelings can shift like the fog. When we stay focused on the compass of God's Word, we are definitely heading in the right direction. Fathers who

teach their children and grandchildren to focus on the compass of God's Word set up their descendants for a lifetime of glorifying God and getting safely out of the fog and back to shore.

But you know, we haven't even gotten to the best part of why God deserves our glory. Let's get to it by looking through Abraham's eyes. Do you think that Abraham was only concerned about having a child because he wanted a child? Oh, no. There was much more to it than that. See, the Lord had also promised Abraham, "*Through you all the nations on earth will be blessed*" (Gen 12:3). Now some have taken that to mean that the three great religions of the world—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—would all consider Abraham a spiritual father. But where does that leave the Shintoists, the Buddhists, the spirit-worshippers of Africa, and others? No, this promise had to do with the Serpent-Crusher. Abraham knew that someday, the Lord was going to send an offspring of Eve to crush the head of the tempter in Eden. So when God said, "Through you, Abraham, all nations on earth will be blessed," he was tying the Serpent-Crusher to the child he promised Abraham.

You see, Abraham's trust in God's promise of a child went a lot further than, "Dum-de-dum-de-dum. God

says I'm gonna be a daddy. Okay. Happy Father's Day to me." It was more like, "Almighty God has made a promise that he actually has the power to keep, even if my wife and I are too old to bear children. And this child of mine will be a forefather of the Savior, the one who will rescue us from our sin and all its evil consequences."

And that's exactly what Jesus did: he rescued us from all the times we have denied God his due. Our text reminds us how God the Father delivered Jesus over to death because of our sins. That may sound like bad news if you focus on the punishment part of it. But if you realize that Jesus' death means you and I are delivered from death, this is good news. The text also says that Jesus was raised from death because God the Father had forgiven us all our sins through Jesus.

Do you see how great God is? A few minutes ago we were without hope of fixing our problem for ourselves. And now we see that God was willing to deliver his Son over to death in order that we might be delivered over to life eternal. To God be the glory. God raised Jesus from the dead to show us that we are not-guilty in his sight. To God be the glory. And God sent us his Holy Spirit who has produced in our hearts faith in Jesus as our Savior from sin. To God be the glory.