

The Fatherhood of God

A Sermon

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“Our Father which art in heaven.”—[Matthew 6:9](#).

I THINK there is room for very great doubt, whether our Saviour intended the prayer, of which our text forms a part, to be used in the manner in which it is commonly employed among professing Christians. It is the custom of many persons to repeat it as their morning prayer, and they think that when they have repeated these sacred words they have done enough. I believe that this prayer was never intended for universal use. Jesus Christ taught it not to all men, but to his disciples, and it is a prayer adapted only to those who are the possessors of grace, and are truly converted. In the lips of an ungodly man it is entirely out of place. Doth not one say, “Ye are of your father the devil, for his works ye do?” Why, then, should ye mock God by saying, “Our Father which art in heaven.” For how can he be your Father? Have ye two Fathers? And if he be a Father, where is his honor? Where is his love? You neither honor nor love him, and yet you presumptuously and blasphemously approach him, and say, “Our Father,” when your heart is attached still to sin, and your life is opposed to his law, and you therefore prove yourself to be an heir of wrath, and not a child of grace! Oh! I beseech you, leave off sacrilegiously employing these sacred words; and until you can in sincerity and truth say, “Our Father which art in heaven,” and in your lives seek to honor his holy name, do not offer to him the language of the hypocrite, which is an abomination to him.

I very much question also, whether this prayer was intended to be used by Christ’s own disciples as a constant form of prayer. It seems to me that Christ gave it as a model, whereby we are to fashion all our prayers, and I think we may use it to edification, and with great sincerity and earnestness, at certain times and seasons. I have seen an architect form the model of a building he intends to erect of plaster or wood; but I never had an idea that it was intended for me to live in. I have seen an artist trace on a piece of brown paper, perhaps, a design which he intended afterwards to work out on more costly stuff; but I never imagined the design to be the thing itself. This prayer of Christ is a great chart, as it were: but I cannot cross the sea on a chart. It is a map; but a man is not a traveler because he puts his fingers across the map. And so a man may use this form of prayer, and yet be a total stranger to the great design of Christ in teaching it to his disciples. I feel that I cannot use this prayer to the omission of others. Great as it is, It does not express all I desire to say to my Father which is in heaven. There are many sins which I must confess separately and distinctly; and the

various other petitions which this prayer contains require, I feel, to be expanded, when I come before God in private; and I must pour out my heart in the language which his Spirit gives me; and more than that, I must trust in the Spirit to speak the unutterable groanings of my spirit, when my lips cannot actually express all the emotions of my heart. Let none despise this prayer; it is matchless, and if we must have forms of prayer, let us have this first, foremost, and chief; but let none think that Christ would tie his disciples to the constant and only use of this. Let us rather draw near to the throne of the heavenly grace with boldness, as children coming to a father, and let us tell forth our wants and our sorrows in the language which the Holy Spirit teacheth us.

And now, coming to the text, there are several things we shall have to notice here. And first, I shall dwell for a few minutes upon *the double relationship mentioned*: “Our Father which art in heaven.” There is *sonship*—“Father;” there is *brotherhood*, for it says, “Our Father;” and if he be the common father of us, then we must be brothers; for there are two relationships, sonship and brotherhood. In the next place, I shall utter a few words upon the spirit which is necessary to help us before we are able to utter this—“*The spirit of adoption*,” whereby we can cry, “Our Father which art in heaven.” And then, thirdly, I shall conclude with *the double argument of the text*, for it is really an argument upon which the rest of the prayer is based. “Our Father which art in heaven,” is, as it were, a strong argument used before supplication itself is presented.

I. First, THE DOUBLE RELATIONSHIP IMPLIED IN THE TEXT.

We take the first one. Here is *sonship*—“Our Father which art in heaven.” How are we to understand this, and in what sense are we the sons and daughters of God? Some say that the Fatherhood of God is universal, and that every man, from the fact of his being created by God, is necessarily God’s son, and that therefore every man has a right to approach the throne of God, and say, “Our Father which art in heaven.” To that I must demur. I believe that in this prayer we are to come before God, looking upon him not as our Father through creation, but as our Father through adoption and the new birth. I will very briefly state my reasons for this.

I have never been able to see that creation necessarily implies fatherhood. I believe God has made many things that are not his children. Hath he not made the heavens and the earth, the sea and the fullness thereof? and are they his children? You say these are not rational and intelligent beings; but he made the angels, who stand in an eminently high and holy position, are they his children? “Unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my son?” I do not find, as a rule, that angels are called the children of God; and I must demur to the idea that mere creation brings God necessarily into the relationship of a Father. Doth not the potter make vessels of clay? But is the potter the father of the vase, or of the bottle? No, beloved, it needs something beyond creation to constitute the relationship, and those who can say, “Our Father which art in heaven,” are something more than God’s creatures:

they have been adopted into his family. He has taken them out of the old black family in which they were born; he has washed them. and cleansed them, and given them a new name and a new spirit, and made them “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;” and all this of his own free, sovereign, unmerited, distinguishing grace.

And having adopted them to be his children, he has in the next place, *regenerated them by the Spirit of the living God*. He has “begotten them again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” and no man hath a right to claim God as his Father, unless he feeleth in his soul, and believeth, solemnly, through the faith of God’s election, that he has been adopted into the one family of which is in heaven and earth, and that he has been regenerated or born again.

This relationship also involves *love*, If God be my Father, he loves me. And oh, how he loves me! When God is a Husband he is the best of husbands. Widows, somehow or other, are always well eared for. When God is a Friend, he is the best of friends, and sticketh closer than a brother; and when he is a Father he is the best of fathers. O fathers! perhaps ye do not know how much ye love your children. When they are sick ye find it out, for ye stand by their couches and ye pity them, as their little frames are writhing in pain. Well, “like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” Ye know how ye love your children too, when they grieve you by their sin; anger arises, and you are ready to chasten them, but no sooner is the tear in their eye, than your hand is heavy, and you feel that you had rather smite yourself than smite them; and every time you smite them you seem to cry, “Oh that I should have thus to afflict my child for his sin! Oh that I could suffer in his stead!” And God, even our Father, “doth not afflict willingly.” Is not that a sweet thing? He is, as it were, compelled to it; even the Eternal arm is not willing to do it; it is only his great love and deep wisdom that brings down the blow. But if you want to know your love to your children, you will know it most if they die. David knew that he loved his son Absalom, but he never knew how much he loved him till he heard that he had been slain, and that he had been buried by Joshua “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” He knows then how deep and pure is the love that death can never sever, and the terrors of eternity never can unbind. But, parents, although ye love your children much, and ye know it, ye do not know, and ye cannot tell how deep is the unfathomable abyss of the love of God to you. Go out at midnight and consider the heavens, the work of God’s fingers, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained; and I am sure you will say, “What is man, that thou shouldst be mindful of him?” But, more than all, you will wonder, not at your loving him, but that while he has all these treasures, he should set his heart upon so insignificant a creature as man. And the sonship that God has given us is not a mere name; there is all our Father’s great heart given to us in the moment when he claims us as his sons.

But if this sonship involves the love of God to us, it involves also, the duty of *love to God*. Oh! heir of heaven, if thou art God’s child, wilt thou not love thy Father? What son is

there that loveth not his father? Is he not less than human if he loveth not his sire? Let his name be blotted from the book of remembrance that loveth not the woman that brought him forth, and the father that begat him. And we, the chosen favourites of heaven, adopted and regenerated, shall not we loose him? Shall we not say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with thee? My father, I will give thee my heart; thou shalt be the guide of my youth; thou dost love me, and the little heart that I have shall be all thine own for ever."

Furthermore, if we say "Our Father which art in heaven," we must recollect that our being sons involves the duty of *obedience to God*. When I say "My Father," it is not for me to rise up and go in rebellion against his wishes; if he be a father, let me note his commands, and let me reverentially obey; if he hath said "Do this," let me do it, not because I dread him, but because I love him; and if he forbids me to do anything, let me avoid it. There are some persons in the world who have not the spirit of adoption, and they can never be brought to do a thing unless they see some advantage to themselves in it; but with the child of God, there is no motive at all; he can boldly say, "I have never done a right thing since I have followed Christ because I hoped to get to heaven by it, nor have I ever avoided a wrong thing because I was afraid of being damned." For the child of God knows his good works do not make him acceptable to God, for he was acceptable to God by Jesus Christ long before he had any good works; and the fear of hell does not affect him, for he knows that he is delivered from that, and shall never come into condemnation, having passed from death unto life. He acts from pure love and gratitude, and until we come to that state of mind, I do not think there is such a thing as virtue; for if a man has done what is called a virtuous action because he hoped to get to heaven or to avoid hell by it, whom has he served? Has he not served himself? and what is that but selfishness? But the man who has no hell to fear and no heaven to gain, because heaven is his own and hell he never can enter, that man is capable of virtue; for he says—

"Now for the love I bear his name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
I pour contempt on all my shame,
And nail my glory to his cross"—

to his cross who loved, and lived, and died for me who loved him not, but who desires now to love him with all my heart, and soul, and strength.

And now permit me to draw your attention to one encouraging thought that may help to cheer the downcast and Satan-tempted child of God. *Sonship is a thing which all the infirmities of our flesh, and all the sins into which we are hurried by temptation, can never violate or weaken*. A man hath a child; that child on a sudden is bereaved of its senses; it becomes an idiot. What a grief that is to a father, for a child to become a lunatic or an idiot, and to exist only as an animal, apparently without a soul! But the idiot child is a child, and the

lunatic child is a child still; and if we are the fathers of such children they are ours, and all the idiocy and all the lunacy that can possibly befall them can never shake the fact that they are our sons. Oh! what a mercy, when we transfer this to God's case and ours! How foolish we are sometimes—how worse than foolish! We may say as David did, "I was as a beast before thee." God brings before us the truths of his kingdom; we cannot see their beauty, we cannot appreciate them; we seem to be as if we were totally demented ignorant, unstable, weary, and apt to slide. But, thanks be unto God, we are his children still! And if there be anything worse that can happen to a father than his child becoming a lunatic or an idiot, it is when he grows up to be wicked. It is well said, "Children are doubtful blessings." I remember to have heard one say, and, as I thought, not very kindly, to a mother with an infant at her breast—"Woman! you may be suckling a viper there." It stung the mother to the quick, and it was not needful to have said it. But how often is it the fact, that the child that has hung upon its mother's breast, when it grows up, brings that mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave!

"Oh! sharper than a serpent's tooth
To have a thankless child!"

ungodly, vile, debauched—a blasphemer! But mark, brethren: if he be a child he cannot lose his childship, nor we our fatherhood, be he who or what he may. Let him be transported beyond the seas, he is still our son; let us deny him the house because his conversation might lead others of our children into sin, yet our son he is, and must be, and when the sod shall cover his head and ours, "father and son" shall still be on the tombstone. The relationship never can be severed as long as time shall last. The prodigal was his father's son, when he was amongst the harlots, and when he was feeding swine; and God's children are God's children anywhere and everywhere, and shall be even unto the end. Nothing can sever that sacred tie, or divide us from his heart.

There is yet another thought that may cheer the Little-faiths and Feeble minds. *The fatherhood of God is common to all his children.* Ah! Little-faith, you have often looked up to Mr. Great-heart, and you have said, "Oh that I had the courage of Great-heart, that I could wield his sword and cut old giant Grim in pieces! Oh that I could fight the dragons, and that I could overcome the lions! But I am stumbling at every straw, and a shadow makes me afraid." List thee, Little-faith. Great-heart is God's child, and you are God's child too; and Great-heart is not a whit more God's child than you are. David was the son of God, but not more the son of God than thou. Peter and Paul, the highly-favored apostles, were of the family of the Most High; and so are you. You have children yourselves; one is a son grown up, and out in business, perhaps, and you have another, a little thing still in arms. Which is most your child the little one or the big one? "Both alike," you say. "This little one is my child near my heart and the big one is my child too." And so the little Christian is as much a child of God as the great one.

“This cov’nant stands secure,
Though earth’s old pillars bow;
The strong, the feeble, and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now;”

and they are one in the family of God, and no one is ahead of the other. One may have more grace than another, but God does not love one more than another. One may be an older child than another, but he is not more a child; one may do more mighty works, and may bring more glory to his Father, but he whose name is the least in the kingdom of heaven is as much the child of God as he who stands among the king’s mighty men. Let this cheer and comfort us, when we draw near to God and say, “Our Father which art in heaven.”

I will make but one more remark before I leave this point, namely, this,—that *our being the children of God brings with it innumerable privileges*. Time would fail me, if I were to attempt to read the long roll of the Christian’s joyous privileges. I am God’s child: if so, he will clothe me; my shoes shall be iron and brass; he will array me with the robe of my Saviour’s righteousness, for he has said, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him,” and he has also said that he will put a crown of pure gold upon my head and inasmuch as I am a king’s son, I shall have a royal crown. Am I his child? Then he will feed me; my bread shall be given me, and my water shall be sure; he that feeds the ravens will never let his children starve. If a good husbandman feeds the barn-door fowl, and the sheep and the bullocks, certainly his children shall not starve. Does my Father deck the lily, and shall I go naked? Does he feed the fowls of the heaven that sow not, neither do they reap, and shall I feel necessity? God forbid! My Father knoweth what things I have need of before I ask him, and he will give me all I want. If I be his child, then I have a portion in his heart here, and I shall have a portion in his house above. for “if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,” “If we suffer with him we shall be also glorified together.” And oh! brethren, what a prospect this opens up! The fact of our being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, proves that all things are ours—the gift of God, the purchase of a Saviour’s blood.

“This world is ours, and worlds to come;
Earth is our lodge, and heaven our home.”

Are there crowns? They are mine if I be an heir. Are there thrones? Are there dominions? Are there harps, palm branches, white robes? Are there glories that eye hath not seen? and is there music that ear hath not heard? All these are mine, if I be a child of God. “And it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” Talk of princes, and kings, and potentates: Their inheritance is but a pitiful foot of land, across which the bird’s wing can soon direct its flight; but the broad acres of the Christian cannot be measured by eternity. He is rich, without a limit to his wealth. he is blessed, without a boundary to his bliss. All this, and more than I can enumerate, is involved in our being able to say, “Our Father which art in heaven.”

The second tie of the text is *brotherhood*. It does not say *my* Father, but *our* Father. Then it seems there are a great many in the family. I will be very brief on this point.

“Our Father.” When you pray that prayer, remember you have a good many brothers and sisters that do not know their Father yet, and you must include them all; for all God’s elect ones, though they be uncalled as yet, are still his children, though they know it not. In one of Krummacher’s beautiful little parables there is a story like this: “Abraham sat one day in the grove at Mamre, leaning his head on his hand, and sorrowing. Then his son Isaac came to him, and said, ‘My father, why mournest thou? what aileth thee?’ Abraham answered and said, ‘My soul mourneth for the people of Canaan, that they know not the Lord, but walk in their own ways, in darkness and foolishness.’ ‘Oh, my father,’ answered the son, is it only this? Let not thy heart be sorrowful; for are not these their own ways?’ Then the patriarch rose up from his seat, and said, ‘Come now, follow me.’ And he led the youth to a hut. and said to him, ‘Behold.’ There was a child which was an imbecile, and the mother sat weeping by it. Abraham asked her, ‘Why weepest thou? Then the mother said, ‘Alas, this my son eateth and drinketh, and we minister unto him; but he knows not the face of his father, nor of his mother. Thus his life is lost, and this source of joy is sealed to him.’ ” Is not that a sweet little parable, to teach us how we ought to pray for the many sheep that are not yet of the fold, but which must be brought in? We ought to pray for them, because they do not know their Father. Christ has bought them, and they do not know Christ; the Father has loved them from before the foundation of the world, and yet, they know not the face of their Father. When thou sayest “Our Father,” think of the many of thy brothers and sisters that are in the back streets of London, that are in the dens and caves of Satan. Think of thy poor brother that is intoxicated with the spirit of the devil; think of him, led astray to infamy, and lust, and perhaps to murder, and in thy prayer pray thou for them who know not the Lord.

“Our Father.” That, then, includes those of God’s children who differ from us in their doctrine. Ah! there are some that differ from us as wide as the poles; but yet they are God’s children. Come, Mr. Bigot, do not kneel down, and say, “My Father,” but “Our Father.” “If you please, I cannot put in Sir. So-and-So, for I think he is a heretic.” Put him in, sir. God has put him in, and you must put him in too, and say, “Our Father.” Is it not remarkable how very much alike all God’s people are upon their knees? Some time ago at a prayer-meeting I called upon two brothers in Christ to pray one after another, the one a Wesleyan and the other a strong Calvinist, and the Wesleyan prayed the most Calvinistic prayer of the two, I do believe—at least, I could not tell which was which. I listened to see if I could not discern some peculiarity even in their phraseology, but there was none. “Saints in prayer appear as one.” for when they get on their knees, they are all compelled to say “Our Father,” and all their language afterwards is of the same sort.

When thou prayest to God put in the poor; for is he not the Father of many of the poor, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, though they be poor in this world. Come my sister, if thou bowest thy knee amid the rustling of silk and satin, yet remember the cotton and the print. My brother, is there wealth in thy hand, yet I pray thee, remember thy brethren of the horny hand and the dusty brow; remember those who could not wear what thou wearest, nor eat what thou eatest, but are as Lazarus compared with thee, while thou art as Dives. Pray for them; put them all in the same prayer and say, "Our Father."

And pray for those that are divided from us by the sea—those that are in heathen lands, scattered like precious salt in the midst of this world's putrefaction. Pray for all that name the name of Jesus, and let thy prayer be a great and comprehensive one. "Our Father, which art in heaven." And after thou hast prayed that rise up and act it. Say not "Our Father," and then look upon thy brethren with a sneer or a frown. I beseech thee, live like a brother, and act like a brother Help the needy; cheer the sick; comfort the faint-hearted; go about doing good, minister unto the suffering people of God, wherever thou findest them, and let the world take knowledge of thee, that thou art when on thy feet what thou art upon thy knees—that thou art a brother unto all the brotherhood of Christ, a brother born for adversity, like thy Master himself.

II. Having thus expounded the double relationship, I have left myself but little time for a very important part of the subject, namely, THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION.

I am extremely puzzled and bewildered how to explain to the ungodly what is the spirit with which we must be filled, before we can pray this prayer. If I had a foundling here, one who had never seen either father or mother, I think I should have a very great difficulty in trying to make him understand what are the feelings of a child towards its father. Poor little thing, he has been under tutors and governors; he has learned to respect them for their kindness, or to fear them for their austerity, but there never can be in that child's heart that love towards tutor or governor, however kind he may be, that there is in the heart of another child towards his own mother or father. There is a nameless charm there: we cannot describe or understand it: it is a sacred touch of nature, a throb in the breast that God has put there, and that cannot be taken away. The fatherhood is recognized by the childship of the child. And what is that spirit of a child—that sweet spirit that makes him recognize and love his father? I cannot tell you unless you are a child yourself, and then you will know. And what is "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father?" I cannot tell you; but if you have felt it you will know it. It is a sweet compound of faith that knows God to be my Father, love that loves him as my Father, joy that rejoices in him as my Father, fear that trembles to disobey him because he is my Father and a confident affection and trustfulness that relies upon him, and casts itself wholly upon him, because it knows by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit, that Jehovah, the God of earth and heaven, is the Father of my heart. Oh! have you ever felt the spirit of adoption? There is nought like it beneath the sky. Save heaven itself

there is nought more blissful than to enjoy that spirit of adoption. Oh! when the wind of trouble is blowing and waves of adversity are rising, and the ship is reeling to the rock how sweet then to say “My Father,” and to believe that his strong hand is on the helm!—when the bones are aching, and when the loins are filled with pain, and when the cup is brimming with wormwood and gall, to say “My Father,” and seeing that Father’s hand holding the cup to the lip, to drink it steadily to the very dregs because we can say, “My Father, not my will, but thine be done.” Well says Martin Luther, in his Exposition of the Galatians, “there is more eloquence in that word, ‘Abba. Father,’ than in all the orations of Demosthenes or Cicero put together.” “My Father!” Oh! there is music there; there is eloquence there; there is the very essence of heaven’s own bliss in that word, ” My Father,” when applied to God, and when said by us with an unfaltering tongue, through the inspiration of the Spirit of the living God.

My hearers, have you the spirit of adoption? If not, ye are miserable men. May God himself bring you to know him! May he teach you your need of him! May he lead you to the cross of Christ, and help you to look to your dying Brother! May he bathe you in the blood that flowed from his open wounds, and then, accepted in the beloved, may you rejoice that you have the honor to be one of that sacred family.

III. And now, in the last place, I said that there was in the title, A DOUBLE ARGUMENT. “Our Father.” That is, “Lord, hear what I have got to say. Thou art my Father.” If I come before a judge I have no right to expect that he shall hear me at any particular season in aught that I have to say. If I came merely to crave for some boon or benefit to myself, if the law were on my side, then I could demand an audience at his hands; but when I come as a law-breaker, and only come to crave for mercy, or for favors I deserve not, I have no right to expect to be heard. But a child, even though he is erring, always expects his father will hear what he has to say. “Lord, if I call thee King thou wilt say, ‘Thou art a rebellious subject; get thee gone.’ If I call thee Judge thou wilt say, ‘Be still, or out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee.’ If I call thee Creator thou wilt say unto me ‘It repenteth me that I made man upon the earth.’ If I call thee my Preserver thou wilt say unto me, ‘I have preserved thee, but thou hast rebelled against me.’ But if I call thee Father, all my sinfulness doth not invalidate my claim. If thou be my Father, then thou lovest me; if I be thy child, then thou wilt regard me, and poor though my language be, thou wilt not despise it.” If a child were called upon to speak in the presence of a number of persons, how very much alarmed he would be lest he should not use right language. I may sometimes feel when I have to address a mighty auditory, lest I should not select choice words, full well knowing that if I were to preach as I never shall, like the mightiest of orators I should always have enough of carping critics to rail at me. But if I had my Father here and if you could all stand in the relationship of father to me, I should not be very particular what language I used. When I talk to my Father I am not afraid he will misunderstand me; if I put my words a little out of place he

understands my meaning somehow. When we are little children we only prattle; still our father understands us. Our children talk a great deal more like Dutchmen than Englishmen when they begin to talk, and strangers come in and my, “Dear me, what is the child talking about?” But we know what it is and though in what they say there may not be an intelligible sound that any one could print, and a reader make it out, we know they have got certain little wants, and having a way of expressing their desires, and we can understand them. So when we come to God, our prayers are little broken things; we cannot put them together but our Father, he will hear us. Oh! what a beginning is “Our Father,” to a prayer full of faults, and a foolish prayer perhaps, a prayer in which are going to ask what we ought not to ask for! “Father, forgive the language! forgive the matter!” As one dear brother said the other day at the prayer meeting. He could not get on in prayer, and he finished up on a sudden by saying, “Lord, I cannot pray to-night as I should wish; I cannot put the words together; Lord, take the meaning take the meaning,” and sat down. That is just what David said once, “Lo, all my desire is before thee”—not my words, but my desire, and God could read it. We should say, “Our Father,” because that is a reason why God should hear what we have to say.

But there is another argument. “Our Father.” “Lord, give me what I want.” If I come to a stranger, I have no right to expect he will give it me. He may out of his charity; but if I come to a father, I have a claim, a sacred claim. My Father, I shall have no need to use arguments to move thy bosom; I shall not have to speak to thee as the beggar who crieth in the street: for because thou art my Father thou knowest my wants, and thou art willing to relieve me. It is thy business to relieve me; I can come confidently to thee, knowing thou wilt give me all I want. If we ask our Father for anything when we are little children, we are under an obligation certainly; but it is an obligation we never feel. If you were hungry and your father fed you, would you feel an obligation like you would if you went into the house of a stranger? You go into a stranger’s house trembling, and you tell him you are hungry. Will he feed you? He says yes, he will give you somewhat; but if you go to your father’s table, almost without asking, you sit down as a matter of course, and feast to your full, and you rise and go, and feel you are indebted to him; but there is not a grievous sense of obligation. Now, we are all deeply under obligation to God, but it is a child’s obligation—an obligation which impels us to gratitude, but which does not constrain us to feel that we have been demeaned by it. Oh! if he were not my Father, how could I expect that he would relieve my wants? But since he is my Father, he will, he must hear my prayers, and answer the voice of my crying, and supply all my needs out of the riches of his fullness in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Has your father treated you badly lately? I have this word to you, then; your father loves you quite as much when he treats you roughly as when he treats you kindly. There is often more love in an angry father’s heart than there is in the heart of a father who is too kind. I will suppose a case. Suppose there were two fathers, and their two sons went away to some

remote part of the earth where idolatry is still practiced. Suppose these two sons were decoyed and deluded into idolatry. The news comes to England, and the first father is very angry. His son, his own son, has forsaken the religion of Christ and become an idolater. The second father says, "Well, if it will help him in trade I don't care, if he gets on the better by it, all well and good." Now, which loves most, the angry father, or the father who treats the matter with complacency? Why, the angry father is the best. He loves his son; therefore he cannot give away his son's soul for gold. Give me a father that is angry with my sins, and that seeks to bring me back, even though it be by chastisement. Thank God you have got a father that can be angry, but that loves you as much when he is angry as when he smiles upon you.

Go away with that upon your mind, and rejoice. But if you love not God and fear him not, go home, I beseech you, to confess your sins, and to seek mercy through the blood of Christ; and may this sermon be made useful in bringing you into the family of Christ though you have strayed from him long; and though his love has followed you long in vain, may it now find you, and bring you to his house rejoicing!