

Developing a Father's Heart

Introduction

As we saw in our previous lessons, there are two aspects of the Work of the Lord. The work of the Kingdom of God falls into the purposes of the Father and is of particular interest to Him and the building of the Church is the prerogative and focus of Jesus, who is fulfilling the work of the Father for which He was sent and establishing His own work within the purposes of God.

In the natural, to carry on a family business the children must develop the heart of the father for the business understanding the original goals and purpose of the business and the methods and procedures for achieving the goals. It is the same in our Father's business. He does not allow anyone in the work of His business that has not developed His heart about the business and learned His methods and procedures.

Growing Up

As our life progresses, there are two major phases: we are first sons and later we become fathers. So, we reach a point where we are both sons and fathers. We have to learn to be a son before we can become a father.

There are three stages of growth in the Lord:

1. Servant
2. Son
3. Father.

Under the Old Covenant, the people of God were servants. He was their God and they were His people and they were to obey and serve Him. We have a better Covenant under the New Testament—He is our Father and we are His Children.

Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. ([Galatians 4:6-7 NASB](#))

Our problem is that we don't grow up as Sons to become fathers but instead remain at the level of a servant.

Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. ([Galatians 4:1-2 NASB](#))

God puts us under teachers to learn how to administrate the father's business as a son. Until that time, the heir is no different than a servant. It is important that we learn to serve but it is more important that we grow up and learn how to take our place as the heir.

We can get a picture of the Father's heart in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

And He said, "A man had two sons. "The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving *anything* to him. "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate. "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. "And he summoned one of the servants and *began* inquiring what these things could be. "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' "But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him. "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'" (Luke 15:11-32 NASB)

The son took his inheritance and wasted it upon himself and his own pleasure. When it was gone, he had nothing and was reduced to the lowest possible job, which did not provide enough for him to have food to eat. He decided that servants in his father's house had it better than he did, so he went home with the intention of being a servant if his father would have him. But the father had enough servants, what he wanted was his son and refused to receive him as a servant but instead placed him back into the family as his son.

The oldest son was offended that his father would receive the younger son back and was jealous of his reception. His justification for his offense was the fact that he had *served* his father for all

of his years. The essence of the father's answer was you have always been my son, but you didn't act like it, but, instead, have acted as a servant.

This idea is also reflected in Jesus' words toward His disciples.

"No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. (John 15:15 NASB)

The disciples had grown up enough that they could understand the purpose of the work of the Lord. They had reached a point that they could participate in the purposes of God. Jesus revealing to them all that He had heard from the Father had achieved this. In other words, He had shown them the full expression of the Father's heart, which included His plans and purposes. They had reached a point where they could understand the paternal plan of the Father.

The Paternal Plan

It is the Father's intention to bring many sons to glory. This is His paternal plan. There are four phases of this plan:

- 1) to be – created by God
- 2) to become -- Sonship – participation in the Family
- 2) to share -- heirship – appropriation of the inheritance
- 3) to reign -- throneship – qualification for the Father's work

Phase 1 of the Paternal Plan

When God created Adam, he had the full *potential* to fulfill the purpose of God. However, he never realized that potential because sin *disqualified* him from it. Therefore, in our unregenerate state, we are simply creatures of God, separated from Him and strangers to His plans.

Phase 2 of the Paternal Plan

Through, Jesus, the Son, God has made a way that we might become the Sons of God and as sons participate in the family purpose.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13 NASB)

Our participation in becoming sons of God is revealed by our need to be led by the Spirit of God.

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:14-15 NASB)

If the Spirit does not lead us, we are not acting as sons but are only servants as discussed earlier. The purpose of becoming a son is that it causes us to be able to inherit--to become an heir.

Phase 3 of the Paternal Plan

A son becomes an heir when he has received the father's instructions and obeyed them from his heart. In other words, he has been imbued with the father's heart. Normally, the “black sheep” of a family doesn't receive the inheritance because the father doesn't trust him to take care of it.

and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:17-18 NASB)

Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:7 NASB)

As children we become heirs of God and join-heirs with Christ. This is conditional on us suffering with him. We appropriate our inheritance by identifying with the suffering of Jesus so that we can be glorified with Him also.

Phase 4 of the Paternal Plan

Once we share in his heirship then we must be qualified to reign with Him. He is now on His throne in the heavens. We, as believers, are made to sit together in the heavenly places; however, we are not sitting with Him in His throne.

and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:6-7 NASB)

However, for us to reign with Him (sit with Him in His throne) we have to qualify. Reigning with Him is something that He only grants to those who overcome. (This is not salvation that we are talking about.)

'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (Revelation 3:21 NASB)

To overcome requires us to do some things. You cannot overcome by being passive. As Jesus said, “the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force”.

What is it then that we are to overcome? The same things that Jesus overcame, 1) the desires of the flesh; 2) the power of the world system; 3) the deception of the Enemy. We have His example in these areas; but, we have to learn how to do it through the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are some things that we receive from the Lord as gifts: His life, His spirit, and His nature. There are other things that must be developed: His character, His mind, and His vision. Fulfilling His purpose is a product of training, overcoming, discipline, trials, hardship, and intensive spiritual qualifying.