

## **GOD, A FATHER TO THE FATHERLESS**

By Velma Jean Sanders

Psalm 68:4 – 6 (NIV). Sing to God, sing in praise of his name, extol him who rides on the clouds; rejoice before him—his name is the LORD. **A father to the fatherless**, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

In light of whom God is as Father to the fatherless, and a defender of widows, the Psalmist David exhorts us to praise God with singing and to extol Him who rides on the clouds. We are summoned to celebrate gloriously with praises and acknowledge with joy and gladness the goodness of the Lord.

The love of God is extended to all mankind; regardless of what state of life they may be in. But, the Bible reveals that God has a special concern for the weak, the poor, the homeless, the forgotten, the lonely, the abandoned and the outcast.

This is amazing when we consider just who God is. David says, “He rides on the clouds and that He dwells in holiness; His name is the LORD.” After reading these words, the farthest thing that we would think would come to His mind are weak and feeble creatures of the earth; humanity. God who is the creator, possessor and sustainer of all things; God, who knows everything; has all power; and, works all things after the counsel of His own will. God, the great I AM; who requires nothing or no one to sustain Him. And yet, the Bible has revealed to us that this Almighty God is father to the fatherless, and a defender of widows; helper of the lonely and company to the prisoner.

These are special graces of mercy that God has divinely willed to come along side of to aid and assist those who are in some type of relational lack. In each of these groups of people we notice that there is someone important lacking in their lives. Some are destitute of fathers; others of spouse; some have no friends and others are isolated from society altogether. God cares for those who are alone and He upholds those who are isolated and cut off from others. In Psalm 68, we notice that it is to the fatherless that God’s care is first extended. The name and title given to God in this verse is, “Father of the Fatherless.”

## **GOD, THE PERFECT FATHER**

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The family institution is the oldest earthly institution created by God. Immediately after creating Adam as the first man, God creates a wife for him. And, soon thereafter children were born to this union. When we read the Bible, we can see that because of sin, the image of father was marred and Adam does not have much to show us about being a good father.

But, the Bible reveals in both the Old and New Testaments that God is the perfect Father. He is first of all, the Father of Jesus Christ. Secondly, He is Father in relationship to Israel. Thirdly,

Father is He to those who have trusted Him through faith in His Son and have been redeemed through His blood. Lastly, in His mercy, He becomes also a Father to the fatherless. He is a loving, kind, compassionate Father who nourishes, protects, chastises, defends, guides and upholds His children.

### **WHAT IS SO IMPORTANT ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE FATHER**

Because the role of a father is eternal in its being and its nature, it is like no other position on earth. I believe that it is the highest position that can be granted to a man. The reason is because father and fatherhood (the role and responsibilities of a father) is before time and reaches into the eternal realm. Isaiah reveals this truth when He spoke of the Mighty God and called Him, the Everlasting Father.

Earthly, human fathers are meant to be a reflection of who God is as Father. The role of a father is to nourish, protect and uphold children; spiritually, emotionally and physically. Father and fatherhood is an office, a position, a privilege, a responsibility and it is a calling. It has spiritual obligations and responsibilities as a prophet, priest and a king. The father was made by God to provide structure, dignity and as a vehicle to bring about opportunities for grace, growth and glory in children.

### **THE SAD TRUTH OF FATHERLESSNESS**

One of the many results of Adam's disobedience to God is fatherlessness. If it had not been for sin, everyone would have a perfect father and the family structure would have remained in-tact (with husband/father; wife/mother; children). Everyone would, of course, walk in the way of righteousness and in full fellowship with God. But, as we sadly know, sin entered into the world through Adam's disobedience. And, its result has been deadly and devastating; shattering, fracturing, distorting and counterfeiting the God-ordained family structure. One of sin's sorrowful effects is fatherlessness. Fatherlessness is nothing new. It is something that has existed since the fall of man.

So deep was the fall of man, that occurred thousands of years ago, and here we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the problem of fatherlessness has not lessened; instead it has increased and made its presence known in every aspect of society. Unfortunately, fatherlessness has not disappeared. As long as there is mankind and humanity, there will be this social and even spiritual problem.

Perhaps someone reading this article may be in the state of fatherlessness. Maybe you have been abandoned. To you, there is hope in God. God's Word is a source of comfort and strength, hope and guidance. It is God's desire that you be healed and whole. And, for that reason God has undertaken to become a father to everyone who yields to Him through faith. God can fill the longing and the emptiness of a fatherless-heart.

We know that everyone is not fatherless. There are many who are blessed to have good and strong fathers. That is a blessing! But, there is a significant number of people within our society, and an even larger number in the world who are without fathers.

Some of the categories of fatherless children are:

- Those who have been abandoned (through rejection, irresponsibility and neglect).
- Those whose father has passed through death (accidental, natural causes, murder and war).
- Those whose father has been separated (through fractured families).
- Those children who have been stolen from their parents and are being exploited, e.g., missing children.
- And then, there are those who physically and biologically have and know their fathers. However, for various reasons, they have no substantial relationship with them; and may even have suffered some type of abuse and blatant neglect from them.

God created children to have both a mother and a father. Although, single family homes can be successful in many ways, there is still some lack without the father being in the home or actively involved in the lives of the children. If we are not careful, we may think fatherlessness is natural and normal. But, it is not; fatherlessness is a result of sin. There is much fruit on the tree of fatherlessness: stunted psychological and emotional growth, poverty; bitterness, unresolved emotional issues; the inability to form long-lasting quality relationships; being unable to trust others; an improper view of God; aimlessness; violence; a burden upon society. Fatherlessness is a root cause of so many ills of society.

### **GOD'S CARE FOR THE FATHERLESS**

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However, God is able to take the devastation of fatherlessness and manifest his presence, provision, peace in the midst of that situation. God undertakes and takes on the responsibility of being a Father to the fatherless. And, there are many fatherless children, both young and old, who are a living testimony of the power of God.

God defends the cause of the fatherless through His Word. In the Old Testament He gave many laws for their protection. Laws were given so that they would be provided for and strong warnings were there to warn those who would harm or mistreat them. For example:

Exodus 22:22. You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child.

Deuteronomy 24:19 – 21. When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

Deuteronomy 27:19. Cursed *is* the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen!

Psalms 146:9. The Lord watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked He turns upside down.

Isaiah 1:17. Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow.

Jeremiah 22:3. Thus says the Lord: Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger (foreigner), the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.

In closing, oftentimes God uses people to be an expression and an extension of His love. There is an obvious need in our day for those who are able to step-up-to-the-plate and be a father to the fatherless. This, too, is a reflection of God's merciful care for hurting humanity. God wants to use many good men to be a blessing to someone who desperately needs to see an expression of God's love and to be a means of His protection and provision.

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