

Everlasting Father – Is. 9.6

One of the most unique relationships in life is that of a Father with his children. Dads tend to be tough on the outside but are almost always tender on the inside when it comes to their kids. Dads ache when their children ache, they feel a sense of pride when their children excel and will do anything in their power to help their children accomplish what they want to accomplish.

Now I realize that some Fathers are not like this. Some fathers see their children as an inconvenience. Some are more harsh than soft. I know people who feel they have worked hard all their lives but cannot do anything to please their dads. I am aware that there are fathers who are like that however I believe they are the exception rather than the rule.

I started my message today about the relationship a Father has with his children because the next title of Jesus that we examining in our study of Isaiah 9.6 is the title, "Everlasting Father". Two weeks ago we looked at the first title, "Wonderful Counselor," a title that reminded us of the Savior's incredible wisdom and advocacy.

Last week we discussed the second title, "Mighty God" and were reminded of our Savior's power and his willingness and ability to fulfill His promises and meet our needs. And today in the title, "Everlasting Father" we are reminded about the compassion and love of our Savior.

It is easy to get sidetracked when we talk about Jesus as the "everlasting father". How can the Son be the Father? As soon as you ask that question you step into the minefield that we like to call the doctrine of the Trinity.

Scripture affirms that there is one God who is manifest in three distinct and separate "persons" or personalities: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit and the Spirit is not the Father. But they are all one God! I know, I know, it's mind bending isn't it?!!

Jesus is not called Everlasting Father because there is confusion about the nature of God the Father and God the Son. Jesus is called the everlasting Father because of His

father-like qualities. He is still God the Son, but His love and grace is like that of a Father with his children.

Charles Spurgeon, a 19th century English Baptist preacher put it this way: *How complex is the person of our Lord Jesus! Almost in the same breath the prophet calls him a "child," and a "counsellor," a "son," and "the everlasting Father." This is no contradiction, and to us scarcely a paradox, but it is a mighty marvel that he who was an infant should at the same time be infinite, he who was the Man of Sorrows should also be God over all, blessed forever; and that he who is in the Divine Trinity always called the Son, should nevertheless be correctly called "the everlasting Father."*

The depth and complexity of this should remind us of the to study Scripture carefully to gain an accurate understanding of the person of God whom we call our Lord Jesus Christ! We cannot understand him by just skimming the surface. We need to study deep and long, to meditate on His words and action so that we can gain knowledge of the one we call Savior.

Today I want to draw your attention to four things I believe we learn about Jesus through the title "Everlasting Father".

First, he has given us life. Our biological father is the one who united with our mother and gave us physical life. I know, there are folks who consider their "dad" to be the one who nurtured and supported them rather than the one who was their biological father. But, generally speaking, a Father gives us life.

Jesus is our Everlasting Father in the sense that He is the one who brings us to spiritual life. In John 14:6 Jesus told us that "no man comes to the Father, except through Him". We are new creatures *in* and *because* of Jesus. It is because of Jesus that we have the opportunity to know eternal life. It is because of Jesus that we can know a new and life-giving relationship with the Father.

Paul wrote to Titus, "Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled by others and became slaves to many wicked desires and evil pleasures. Our lives were

full of evil and envy. We hated others, and they hated us. But then God our Savior showed us his kindness and love. He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit. God generously poured out the Spirit upon us because of what Jesus our Savior did. He declared us not guilty because of his great kindness and now we know that we will inherit eternal life.

Charles Swindoll once related a story that draws an appropriate picture of what Jesus has done, Eight-year-old Monica broke her leg as she fell into a pit. An older woman, Mama Njeri, happened along and climbed into the pit to help get Monica out. In the process, a dangerous black Mamba snake bit both Mama Njeri and Monica.

Monica was taken to Kejave Medical Center and admitted. Mama Njeri went home, but never awoke from her sleep. The next day a perceptive missionary nurse explained Mama Njeri's death to Monica, telling her that the snake had bitten both of them, but all of the snake's poison was expended on Mama Njeri; none was given to Monica.

The nurse then explained that Jesus had taken the poison of Monica's sin so that she could have new life. It was an easy choice for Monica. She then received Jesus as Lord and Savior on the spot.

Charles R. Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart and 1501 Other Stories*,

Jesus makes the spiritual life possible. He gives us an appetite for the things of Heaven. It is Jesus and Jesus alone who makes it possible for 1) a rebel to be brought to faith; 2) a criminal to be turned in a new direction; 3) a professed atheist to become a believer; 4) an adherent of a false religion to be persuaded of the truthfulness of the gospel; 5) a person who seems to have everything see that they have nothing apart from Jesus; 6) a religious person to stop trusting their own goodness and start trusting that Jesus is the one who gives new life.

The second thing we can learn about Jesus from this title is that he provides for us. One of the of definitions of a good Father is a "provider". In this day and age when the

family income is often brought in by both the mother and father that definition may not be as accurate as in the past but in many ways the emphasis often seems to be on the father's ability to provide for the home. Every good father wants to provide for his family. He wants to provide a good home, good food, adequate clothing, and as many opportunities for growth as possible.

As a good father, our Lord provides for us too. In Philippians 4 the apostle Paul wrote, *"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."* Last week I suggested that the name "Mighty God" pointed to Jesus' resurrection power and his ability to meet our needs.

Knowing that Jesus is the everlasting Father, shows us that he is not only able to meet these needs he is also willing to meet them. He provides what we need for eternal life but He also provides for us in many other ways.

1) He provides the words for tough situations 2) He provides the guidance we need for tough decisions 3) He provides the comfort we need in times of heartbreak 4) He provides the clothing, food, and support we need 5) He provides opportunities for us to make a real difference in life

6) He provides people who will stand alongside us and teach us 7) He answers our prayers and provides healing for our diseases 8) He opens our minds to spiritual truth 9) He gives us strength when we feel we can't go on. I'm sure you can think of more that He provides but you get the idea, right? Our everlasting Father provides for our every need.

From this title we also learn that he cares about us. It may sound a little strange to us but one of the ways a father shows his care by the way he disciplines his children. An uncaring parent provides no boundaries. They don't know where their children are, or care what their children are doing.

Often a parent is seen as mean or unfeeling because they refuse to give a child everything they want, or because they allow the child to pay the consequences of a their foolish behavior (like making them pay for the broken

window, or refusing to bail them out of jail until the next morning). But the truth is that it is loving parents who will take these kinds of stands.

A good parent will set limits and help a child learn to budget their time and their resources and also help them manage their emotions and desires. A good parent will try to teach a child about decisions and consequences while those decisions and consequences are small. A good parent will teach a child about appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.

It is the same way with our Lord. The Bible reminds us that those the Lord loves, He disciplines. (Hebrews 12:5-11). Discipline is too often seen as synonymous with punishment. However, it is better to see discipline as synonymous with involvement and love. God cares enough about us to get involved in leading and directing our lives. He takes an interest in developing our character.

We may see God's delays as indifference, but God may simply be waiting for the right time. We may see the trials of life as proof that everything happens by chance but in reality, those trials may be God's attempt to teach us to stand by faith.

We may see the struggles of our lives as a sign that God doesn't love us, when it is more likely that God is turning our hearts from the things of the world so that we can enjoy His love more fully.

A father also shows his care by the prayers he prays. There is nothing that drives a person to pray more than having children. It's not that children drive their parents crazy (well, sometimes they do!) it's that parents know that they can't be with and protect their children all the time so they turn to the one who can always protect and walk with them.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is constantly interceding for us (Hebrews 7:25) This is a great picture, but I must admit I find it a bit confusing. Jesus is God. He is in heaven with God the Father. Why would he have to pray? Perhaps this is one of those times when the Bible tries to draw a picture that reveals God's character. I think we are supposed

to see that our Lord has that same kind of intense concern for our lives that a parent shows in their prayers.

The Lord is committed to our growth and protection. He is committed to us. He is in heaven but has not forgotten us. He made a sacrifice for our sin but He is not content to leave things at that. Our Lord is deeply invested in our lives. I think that might be what we are supposed to get from the phrase, "He is always lives to make intercession for them" (that is through those who approach God through him).

Finally, the title "Everlasting Father" tells us these things will be true forever. A parent will always love their child. No matter what a child does a parent loves them. I believe that even in cases when a parent and child seem to lose their relationship, what that parent wants more than anything else is to restore that relationship with their child.

Our relationship with our children changes over the years but our love does not waver. It is no easier to see your adult child suffer than it is to see an infant suffer.

Jesus is called the *Everlasting* Father because His love will never end. In Romans 8:35-39 we are asked the question:

Who shall separate us from the love of Jesus? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Bible tells us the Savior loved us before the creation of the earth. In fact, it was His love for us that brought Him to earth and led Him to the cross. He loved us in spite of what we had done. His commitment to us is complete.

A loving parent may not like everything their child does. In fact, it is certain that a loving parent will not like all the decisions and choices their child makes but they continue to love their child. In the same way there are things

that believers do that do not please the Father. In these times He does not condone our actions. He will take action against our sin and rebellion but He does not stop loving those who belong to Him.

You may feel that you don't deserve God's love, so ashamed of what you have done that you wonder if He could ever love you again. There is good news! He can! He does! He never stopped loving you. All you need to do is turn from your sin and like the Prodigal son return to the One who has been waiting with open arms.

Let me wrap things up by drawing three conclusions. First, it is important to remember that God is the Everlasting Father only to those who are part of His family in and through Jesus. The notion of the universal fatherhood of God may sound nice but it is not Biblical. The Bible tells us quite clearly that those who will not trust God are enemies of God. They are called children of the Devil not children of the Everlasting Father.

With this in mind, it is essential that we ask ourselves an important question, "What family do I belong to?" If you have not placed all your confidence for salvation in what Jesus has done for you, if you have not entrusted the Lord with your life, then you are not part of God's family. But you don't have to stay on the outside looking in!

The Lord is willing to adopt you into His family just like He has done for so many of us here. All it takes is a simple act of faith. Stop running away and instead turn toward Him and then you will be saved.

That's what Cindy and those who were baptized earlier have done. They have stopped running away, turned to Jesus, and have been saved and adopted into the family of God.

Second, we need to remember that the fact that He is the everlasting Father means that we must never think of our Lord in the past tense. We must not think of Him as the one who "once lived". He still lives! He is the "everlasting father". Other religions have a faith built on past relationships, we build our faith on a present relationship with Jesus. He is not just our Savior in the past but He is also the one who guides

and cares for us in the present and will continue to do so for all eternity.

At Christmas do talk about history, the birth of Jesus and the events surrounding his birth. But we are not just talking about history. Our focus is on what those historical events mean to our present spiritual reality. Because of what happened in Bethlehem, on Calvary, and at the tomb we now have a *present* relationship with God. Christmas is worth celebrating because it changed the way we live TODAY.

Lastly, when we find ourselves questioning the events in our lives we need to remember that He is the everlasting Father. He may allow us to struggle because He knows it is for our good. He may stand back on occasion to see how we will handle certain situations, but He will never abandon us. He will never allow us to be destroyed. He is our shield, and our Rock, and He loves us like only a Father can.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Amen.