

June 19, 2016
Sunday Morning Service
Fathers' Day
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Genesis 18:17-19.

1. How is God's action toward Abraham similar to God's action regarding fatherhood?
2. Give some examples of evidence that fatherhood is not honored in our culture.
3. How should we respond to the culture's attack against the institution of fatherhood?
4. What are some ways you can show honor toward your father?
5. What can fathers do to enhance their God-given position?

THE GREAT CHALLENGE OF FATHERHOOD **Genesis 18:17-19**

Gloria Feldt is a well known leader of feminism, former president and CEO of Planned Parenthood, New York Times best selling author, and nationally recognized spokesperson for women's rights. She recently had an interview with Leon Silver, a lifelong supporter of women's rights and co-founder of The Liberty Project. Feldt began the interview by saying: "You recently welcomed your first grandchild to the world, a baby boy named Greg. Looking forward to his future, can you tell me what you want the world to look like 25 years from now—in terms of gender roles and relationships both at work and at home?"

Silver's response is the standard, acceptable position and expectations of much, if not most, of your culture. He replied: "Simply put, I'd like for us to not to have to talk about gender roles. I would like to see an equality of judgment and an equality of merit. I don't want Greg to live in a world where you are defined by your gender or by other people's expectations for what you ought to be because of your gender. I'm not a fan of defined gender stereotypes or judgments or conclusions that get made based on gender differences." (*Huffpost Women*, "The Evolution of Male-Female Relationships: An Interview with Leon Silver," 10/04/2015).

That is politically correct speak in modern America. Take the opposing view, that fathers are unique, special, and ought to lead their homes, and you will be ostracized, mocked and possibly in the near future persecuted for such a caveman opinion.

God never has been and never will be politically correct. And that does not bother Him. Does it bother you to be considered backward and uneducated because you try to believe God and act accordingly? I wonder, "How do the cutting-edge thinkers like Feldt and Silver celebrate Father's Day?" Do they simply tolerate it like they do Easter? And, if so many people in our culture side with these experts, why do Father's Day and Mother's Day celebrations continue? Is it because, as the National Retail Federation reports, Americans will spend \$12.7 billion on gifts for Dad on this day? That works out to average of \$115.57 per person for Dad's gift. I hope none of you guys feel slighted today!

That the institution of Fatherhood has been under relentless assault in American culture for over a generation is obvious. That we are reaping the harvest of this assault is undeniable. That the harvest is bitter fruit is clear in our daily news reports. That God planned a different conclusion for His creation is hardly known today. What is God's plan for fatherhood? Answer that question and you will understand why the institution is under attack. What can we father's do about it? How should we respond?

The Example of God's Choice of Abraham (Genesis 18:17-19).

We need to be familiar with the setting in which this part of the Abraham story takes place. That information is found in verses

sixteen through thirty-three of this chapter. We read that God was preparing to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. The sin of those two cities as well as the surrounding cities reached a level God refused to tolerate. There is little doubt that the people knew by nature that they were wrong. But like many sinners, they could not restrain themselves from gross wickedness.

Therefore, in this one case, God chose to destroy the people of the area, which could serve as a warning and example to subsequent generations. But apparently it does not. At least not yet. By relegating this Bible story to the realm of legend and fairy tales, our generation heeds no warning from it.

In that situation, God desired to tell Abraham what He planned to do. Obviously, God Himself was one of the three men who appeared to Abraham as he rested under the oaks of Mamre (18:1). We call such appearances a theophany. A theophany is an appearance of God in human form. In this case, He was accompanied by two angels.

Abraham was quite interested in what God planned to do to those cities because his nephew Lot lived in Sodom with his family. That explains the extended negotiation between Abraham and God we read about in verses twenty-three through thirty-three. Abraham had been like a father to his nephew, and genuine fathers are concerned for those under their responsibility.

God agreed that Abraham ought to be interested. God wanted him to know His plans because Abraham was special. That is the thrust of our text. *The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him"* (Genesis 18:17-19).

Notice that God reveals that He had chosen Abraham to become a great and mighty nation. God didn't choose him because Abraham was good, or nice, or special in any way. It was not that Abraham deserved God's choice. It was simply God's choice.

And most of the world for most of history has chaffed at God's choice. Anti-Semitism is as common in the world today as it has ever

been. Especially the posterity of Ishmael despise the posterity of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. Why does the whole world seem to rise up against God and say, "God, You have not been fair to choose Abraham and the Israelites above other people of the earth!"?

Maybe the answer to that question lies in the fact that God chose that through Abraham, He would bless the entire world. God fulfilled this promise through giving us the Savior Jesus Christ, Son of Abraham, Son of David, thoroughly a Jew. Jesus is the difference. He is and has been throughout history, the line of division, the point of distinction, between all peoples. While nearly the whole world over the last 2,000 years has spoken favorably of Jesus, they do not truly love Him. If they loved Jesus, they would keep His commands. Frankly, it seems likely that when we cut through all the blather, we discover that most of the people of the world would crucify Jesus all over again given the opportunity. To that end, all the false religions of the world unite to accuse God of being unfair to offer His blessing ONLY through Jesus Christ, relative of Abraham. The world does not agree that God is free to choose to do what He wants to do with whom He wants to do it.

God also chose that, because Abraham was His ordained leader, he needed to command his children. The text states that Abraham needed to command his children to keep the way of the LORD. The way of the LORD is revealed in His rules, precepts, and laws. The world hates the way of the LORD. Therefore, we must conclude that God chose Abraham to be different from the world.

That difference would be especially obvious in that God also chose that Abraham would teach his children to do righteousness and justice. That kind of teaching swims upstream against the current in any age. God's rules, precepts, laws put into practice result in righteousness and justice. This is not righteousness according to human opinion but righteousness according to God's eternally immutable standard.

Now notice thirdly that God chose Abraham to teach his children to enjoy God's blessings. The result of knowing God's character, knowing God's rules, and obeying God's rules is to enjoy God's blessing. Therefore, singing "God Bless America" must be accompanied by a genuine desire to know God and obey Him.

Without the accompanying desire to obey God, “God Bless America” is a silly song at best and blasphemous at worse.

God chose Abraham because that was God’s will and desire. For centuries, Satan has goaded the world to shake their fingers of accusation in the face of God and criticize Him for making this choice. Ultimately, Satan has convinced the world that the Bible is not true, and, therefore, the record of God’s choice is irrelevant. So why hate the Jews if God’s choice is irrelevant? Maybe Satan working his influence in the world has something to do with the problem.

The Attack Against God’s Choice.

Just as God chose Abraham out of all the other people of the world, so God has made particular choices regarding fathers. The Bible clearly states that God chose the male to lead. This choice began to be manifested from the moments of creation when God created the male first. In the beginning God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit said, “Let us make man in our image.” The Hebrew word for man in this statement is *awdawm*. The word does not refer specifically to the male species but is a reference to humanity or mankind in general.

The Hebrew word that speaks of the male gender as opposed to the female gender is *iysh*. It shows up shows up 1,432 times in The Old Testament. In each of those times, the word reveals that God makes a distinction between the genders. For example, when God did create “mankind” in His image, He created the *iysh*, the male. From the male God created the female and brought her to the male. *Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:23)*. Thousands of years later while writing part of the New Testament, Paul verified that God made this intentional distinction. He wrote, *For man was not made from woman, but woman from man (1 Corinthians 11:8)*.

And so in God’s paradise, male and female became one unit for God’s glory. But at one point, the male/female unit chose to live for their own glory, disobeyed God, and brought sin into the world. When they did, God made another distinction between the male and

the female. In the setting of sin and disobedience, God accused the female for sinning first and attached a particular curse to that failure. The eternal record reads like this: *“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (Genesis 3:6)*.

Again the Apostle Paul reaffirmed this fact in a letter he wrote to Pastor Timothy. *Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor (1 Timothy 2:14)*. The woman was deceived by Satan and the man chose to side with the woman and Satan against God. And yet from that point on for eternity, whenever God mentions the introduction of sin into His perfect creation, He holds the man responsible. From the beginning, God had made a distinction between the genders because that was His choice

God illustrated His plan with Israel. The Old Testament uses another Hebrew word to draw a firm and unarguable distinction based on gender. The word *zawkawr* speaks specifically and only of the male. This is the term that is used in connection with circumcision. For obvious reasons the rite or action of circumcision applies only to the male. It was the critical sign that God gave to show that a man was part of the covenant family of God, the nation of Israel. Obviously, the sign only applied to the male not the female. In fact, God gave no corresponding sign of the covenant relationship for the female.

Likewise, in God’s law for Israel we find the provision for the kinsman redeemer. That law never allowed for a woman to redeem her relative or property. The kinsman redeemer had to be a male who would redeem a woman relative in order to care for her and protect her. The law and the practice was well illustrated by Boaz and Ruth.

God also made distinctions between the genders when He defined the hierarchy of the family in the New Testament. God intends for the father, not the mother, to be the head of the family. Through Paul God said, *But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God (1 Corinthians 11:3)*. To that end, God intends for the wife to submit to her husband’s leadership. He requires, *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22)*.

And *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them (Colossians 3:18-19). And Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives – when they see your respectful and pure conduct (1 Peter 3:1-2).*

More distinction between the genders is obvious in that God specifically chose that fathers first should lead the children. For example, the collection of wise sayings for the benefit of the son came from Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: (Proverbs 1:1) the father. Maybe Solomon learned this responsibility to teach his son from the Psalm Asaph wrote: *I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done (Psalm 78:2-4).*

In the New Testament God's requirement is, *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).* We always include the mother in this command, and in the broader sense it is true that she is involved in the teaching. However, in this statement, the Greek word is quite specific. The word *pater* always speaks of the male, or male head. It is never generic or speaks of the female. God holds fathers responsible first to teach the family about Himself. And yet it is true that the mother shares this role of teaching. Solomon also wrote on multiple occasions, *“Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching” (Proverbs 1:8).* But God's intent is that the father will take the lead as the teacher in the home, especially in teaching the truths and principles of God's Word to his children.

These words, these ideas, these truths I have just revealed to you from the Word of God are shocking to modern ears. Most people, including most professing Christians cannot endure such teaching. To hear such things sends shock waves through their souls. They are aghast that anyone actually believes that God intends for us to make distinctions between men and women, fathers and mothers, simply based on God's choice. Little is as frightening to modern thinkers

than these truths. Therefore, unbelievers dismiss the instruction of the Bible out of hand. Professing Christians, who are influenced by the world, reinterpret God's teaching as cultural ideas that no longer exist in the civilized world.

God's choice of the headship of the father is as clear as His choice of blessing Abraham. The world does not like God's choice and so an assault against God's choice is real. Satan has led the charge of this assault from the beginning. Think about it. Why did Satan choose to tempt Eve instead of Adam? Satan hates God, desires to replace God, and, knowing that he loses in the end, desires to damage God's plan as much as possible. Therefore, the family is the central focus of Satan's attack against God. God created the family as the foundation on which all human society would be built. Therefore, Satan seeks to destroy the family knowing that if that foundation is eroded, the rest of culture falls into his hands.

The culture we live in is simply the pawn of Satan. We should not be surprised that almost everything about modern culture is opposed to God's plan for the male to lead the family as father. As a result, fathers throughout history have not been faithful to their calling. They often fail through sin and infidelity. They ruin their own reputation and render themselves untrustworthy. In doing so, they bring a blight and reason for disdain against the institution of fatherhood.

Often the reason fathers crash is because of the temptation of culture. Because father's have not been exemplary, and even if we had been, culture makes the institution a target of mockery. What institution of society is more mocked, belittled, criticized, and attacked than fatherhood? Have you ever seen a father presented by Hollywood as wise and worthy of trust since “Father Knows Best” in the 1960's? Satan's plan was to make fatherhood unnecessary and even unwanted in the culture. His plan has been a smashing success in America. Statistics prove conclusively the fatherless homes produce more dropouts, more criminals, more confused and messed up boys and girls than homes led by fathers.

The degradation of fatherhood has led to a generation of young people who are biologically, unarguably born as men or woman (just like we all have been since God created Adam and Eve), but who imagine they are not what they appear to be. And the entire culture is

in upheaval and on the brink of collapse into anarchy because of such unnatural, imaginary divisions.

As if the culture is not enough alone to make fatherhood challenging, we also have to deal with the enemy called our flesh. The curse God placed on the female gender that she will desire to have her husband's position of leadership is an integral part of the flesh for every woman. The result is regular conflicts between husbands and wives about who is supposed to be in charge. Also, we fathers must fight natural temptations to fail God and fail our responsibilities. Beyond those stresses is the culture we live in that continually inflames those passions of the flesh. Trying to be a father as God intended for us to be is challenging to say the least. How should we respond to the battle?

The Defense of God's Choice.

Father's must act. We must be familiar with God's plan. That requires that we know God by knowing His Word. It requires that we stay in fellowship with God through reading His Word and praying daily. If we neglect God's Word, we will be unfamiliar with His plan and will without a doubt be sucked into Satan's plan being worked out in our culture. When Dad is sucked into Satan's trap in culture, he either relinquishes his leadership role to his wife or children, or he just walks away from the responsibility for another woman or man.

Father's need to determine that they are going to step up to the plate and be what God intended them to be. In the face of ridicule and mockery from society, we need to determine to be the leader at home. We need to determine to teach our family who God is, what God expects, and how to stay in fellowship with God. Yes, this decision flies in the face of political correctness. It is opposed to all that culture says is acceptable. By standing for God's choice against Satan's plan, the father will bring pressure on himself and also on his family. But stand for God we must.

The wife was also required to act. She must accept God's plan for herself and her husband. This will require that she acknowledge

that God's plan is contrary to modern culture and expect pressure from the members of culture. She will need to acknowledge that her flesh chafes against God's choice and plan for her to submit to her husband. She will need to pray for God's help to be what He desires for her to be.

The wife will also need to determine to support and encourage her leader. That means she will pray for her husband. She will encourage her husband to step up to the plate, because chances are he doesn't want to. She will need to live contrary to popular attitudes.

Even the children need to take action in this war against fatherhood. As Scripture requires, children will need to honor God's choice to put Dad in charge of the family. This decision is to realize that your first obedience is to God. Honoring Father and his position is much easier for those who have trusted God for salvation first. Having been born again and, therefore, having the indwelling Holy Spirit helps the child to trust God, causing him to live like Christ. In that state of fellowship with God, it is easier to accept God's plan for the father to be in charge.

Then also, in a very practical way, children will need to submit to and obey Dad. To submit is simply to arrange your desires, plans, and purposes according to Dad's desires, plans, and purposes. To obey is a bit different than submission. Obedience does what Dad says you should do even when you don't want to.

Fatherhood is under attack and about to collapse. Working according to God's plan and choice is the only hope for American culture. We cannot change the tide of the culture, but we each can submit to God's plan for His glory.