

**TEACHING FATHER
PS. 94**

NEED: A SUBMISSIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD AS OUR TEACHER.

PROPOSITION: GOD RELATES TO THOSE WHO BELONG TO HIM AS A FATHERLY TEACHER.

OBJECTIVE: TO LEAD GOD’S PEOPLE TO SUBMIT TO GOD’S TEACHING WORK IN THEIR LIVES.

INTRODUCTION:

God relates to every human being in one of two ways. To some He relates as a stern judge. To others he relates as a teaching father. Your response to Him determines how He relates to you.

In our psalm of the morning, the Psalmist brings both aspects of God’s relationship to us to light. He first presents God as the one who administers vengeance upon the wicked. These are people who are in rebellion against Him and are destructive in their relationships with their fellow human beings. Psalmist addresses God in this way, “O Lord, the God who avenges, shine forth. Rise up, O judge of the earth; pay back to the proud what they deserve. How long with the wicked, O Lord, how long will the wicked be jubilant?” The Psalmist knows that God relates to the wicked as a holy judge so he is ready for God to deal with the obvious injustices and wrongs that are going on in Israel.

That is the only way some people see God. Every time they think of God they think of Him as the God who administers justice and pours out vengeance. Their knowledge of

God cripples them spiritually and prevents them from responding to God in an appropriate manner.

Such people are to be the object of our prayers and concerns.

But there is another group of people to whom God relates as a faithful and teaching father. The Psalmist celebrates this in the central verse in the Psalm: “Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord, the man you teach from your law.” Even though there is no reference in the Psalm to God being Father and His people being His sons and daughters, it is still the underlying theme. It surely fits in with what we find in the New Testament where the writer of Hebrews declares, “God disciplines every son that He receives.” Part of the Father-Son relationship between you and God is that He is your teaching Heavenly Father. He is the great instructor in your life.

Some of us have pursued “higher” education in our lives, but this is the “highest education.” To be related to God in this manner opens your life to the very highest education of the soul that it is possible to know. I want us to look at the teaching Father as the Psalmist sets him forth in these beautiful words of poetry of old.

I. The Teacher.

Those of us who have enjoyed education at any level know that the one indispensable element in education is the teacher. As I was preparing this sermon I reflected on some of the great teachers that I have been related to across the years. I have been taught by

some good and wonderful teachers in my educational experience. However, none of them can ever begin to compare to our Heavenly Father as the teacher of our lives.

1. He knows us fully.

In his words about the attitudes and activities of the wicked, the Psalmist quotes them as saying, “The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob pays no heed.” This prompted the Psalmist to make a response. He warns these wicked persons to take heed because they are demonstrating the utter folly of their lives. Then he confronts them with some questions that reveals the very nature of our God. “Does He who implanted the ear not hear? Does He who formed the eye not see? Does He who disciplines the nations not punish? Does he who teaches man lack knowledge? The Lord knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile.”

This is a very impressive word concerning our teacher. He is the one who made the ear so surely he has the capacity to hear. He is the one who engineered and formed the eye so surely He has the capacity to see. He is the one who is the first and basic teacher of all human kind. He approaches each human life with a thorough knowledge of the thoughts that fill the mind of that individual, of the motives that fill the heart and of the deeds that come out from the life. He knows us completely.

As I reflected on my years in the university, especially my years in a state university, some of the classes were so large that there was no way that the instructor could have ever known me. He never made an attempt to know my name because it would have

been impossible. He could know nothing about what was going on in my life. I remember when I was in Dr. William Hendricks theology class at Southwestern Seminary. It, too, was a rather large class. Some four or five years later I was speaking on a program with Dr. Hendricks and when I walked up to him to introduce myself, before I could say a word he said to me, “You are D. L. Lowrie – historical theology 32, 1962.” And he was right. He had memorized my name, associated it with my face, so that he recognized me. I was extremely impressed but God knows everything about me. He knows just the lesson I need to learn in this specific point in my life. The same is true in your life.

2. He keeps us.

One of the great assurances in this chapter concerning our teacher is: “For the Lord will not reject His people; He will never forsake his inheritance.” This statement lets us know something of our relationship to the Lord. We are “His people” and we are “His inheritance.” He relates to us because He has this special interest in us. When we are slow learners, he does not reject us or abandon us. Once you come into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and become a part of His people, that relationship will never end. He will never stop being the father-teacher in your life. He will never give up on you. He is long suffering and patient with His inheritance.

3. He loves us.

Listen to this word from the Psalmist, “When I said, ‘My foot is slipping.’ your love, O Lord, supported me. When my anxiety is great within your consolation brought joy to

my soul. This relationship that we have with the teaching father is one of love. Teaching is not a duty that burdens our Heavenly Father. It is His joy to teach us because He loves us. We have had teachers in our past that cared for us for us but we have had a few teachers that really loved us. We have had a few teachers to whom we really mattered. But each of us has this teaching father who relates to us out of His love and out of His concern.

It is important that we see the teacher!

II. THE TOOLS

What does our Teacher use in this highest education? What are His resources for instructing us? In this central statement in the text, the Psalmist points us to the primary tools that our teacher uses.

1. Discipline/life experiences.

This inspired statement says, “Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord.” It is another of those congealed statements of wisdom found often in the scripture that we call beatitudes. He is celebrating the special favor, the blessing that comes from God upon this particular person. The person he identifies is one who is being “disciplined” by the Lord. The older version translates the word “chastens.” The Hebrew word used in this statement was used of the discipline that a father would inflict upon a son. Such discipline might involve the use of a rod and the infliction of pain. But the infliction of

the pain was always to develop understanding in the life of the child, it was a means of education.

It would seem in this context that the Psalmist understands that the experiences that God's people are going through should be understood as "the discipline of the Lord". The insight we are to receive here is that God uses the things that happen to us in life to teach us what He wants us to know. This makes it absolutely mandatory that we respond to what ever happens in our lives with a teachable attitude. If we get angry about the things that happen to us in life, the things that cause pain, we will never learn what God wants us to learn through that particular experience. In another Psalm the Psalmist writes: "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees." That is the perspective that we need as the children of God. Whenever pain and affliction comes into our lives, we should understand the great teaching Father is seeking to give us instruction through this painful moment in our lives.

2. The law

The rest of the inspired statement reads, "The man you teach from your law." This is God's second tool that He uses in instructing His children. By the term "law" the Psalmist understood the revealed and recorded word that God had entrusted to His people. At this point in the history of God's people, it probably involved nothing more than the earliest books in our Bible. But he understood that through the revealed word of God, God was instructing His people. Fortunately for us it is a much more complete word that includes the gospel message and the instructions that attended in the New

Testament. God wants to take His word that He has caused holy men to write and to use the word to teach us what we need to know so we can be what he wants us to be.

This is an impressive idea that the sovereign God of this universe has committed Himself to be your instructor through His Word. This means that you and I need to arrange our lives so that we can spend quite and uninterrupted time with Him to receive instruction from Him through His Word. This makes our Bible a very special book – it is the teaching tool of the Teaching Father.

III. THE TASK

What is the task of this teaching Father? What are His teaching goals? The Psalm is not exhaustive at this point but it is extremely suggestive. Let me just walk through a part of this Psalm with you so that you can understand what the Father is trying to accomplish in your life as He teaches you.

1. Salvation from days of trouble.

The Psalmist declares that God is seeking to do something special for you. As he addresses the Lord he said, “You grant him relief from days of trouble, till the pit is dug for the wicked.” The all-wise God who made the ear and the eye knows what can lie out ahead for you in your life if you are not instructed. So he has chosen to relate to you as the Teaching Father so that he may keep you from falling into the pit of corruption that is being prepared for the wicked and may save you for His own holy purposes. He will give

you patience and calm in the midst of life with all of its adversities. God is accomplishing something important when He teaches you.

2. He protects his inheritance.

He continues the discussion with this important word, “For the Lord will not reject His people; he will never forsake His inheritance. Judgment will again be founded on righteousness and all the up right in heart will follow it. God is protecting His inheritance when he teaches us. You and I have something at stake – the destiny of our souls. God has something at stake – the accomplishment of His purpose. You and I have been chosen for this special relationship to the Lord because He has purposes that He is fulfilling through us. To make sure that His purposes are not aborted, he becomes the teaching Father in our lives. It is a means of protecting his very own inheritance.

3. He is establishing righteousness.

“Judgment will again be founded on righteousness and all the upright in heart will follow it.” God is establishing His purpose of righteousness when He is disciplining and instructing us in the paths of righteousness. His ultimate purpose in teaching us is that He might develop in us holiness of character. He wants us to become like Himself as the God of righteousness.

4. He is bringing peace into our lives.

“When anxiety was great in me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.” A part of what God is seeking to accomplish is to bring us to the place that we joyfully know His

peace within. He wants to bring us to the place that we can stand in the midst of the storms in the dark of night and be unafraid because of our relationship with Him. As a teacher His purposes are good, His goals for you are right.

5. He is bringing us to stronger faith.

After all of His words about corruption of the wicked and their need of condemnation the Psalmist writes: “But the Lord has become my fortress and my God, the rock in whom I take refuge. He will repay them for their sins and destroy them for their wickedness; the Lord our God will destroy them.” The development of stronger faith is always on the teaching Father’s agenda.

When you put all of these together what you have is a life that has become strong in the Lord and useful to the Lord. That is what He is doing in your life. As the teaching Father He is developing in you life that is strong in the Lord and useful to the Lord.

This makes it important for you and me to respond to the Lord with submission and meekness. We need to rejoice in this special relationship that we have with Him. We need to give thanks that God is not the angry judge who is confronting us with threats but is rather the teaching Father who is faithfully working through everything that happens in our lives to develop us into the person we ought to be. Maybe we need to say to the Lord from the depth of our heart this morning, “O God, my father, thank you for being my teacher. Thank you for the discipline that you exercise in my life. Thank you, Lord, for the lashes that I have received from your rod, thank you, Father, for the instruction you

have given me in your Word. I want you to teach me everything that you in your wisdom know that I need to know.” This could be the beginning of a much more meaningful relationship with God in your life if you would begin to see Him as a loving and faithful, teaching heavenly Father.