The Greatest Father of All
Psalm 103:8-18

Please turn with me in your BIBLES to the one hundred and third Psalm.

READ: PSALM 103:8-18

PRAYER

*I N T R O D U C T I O N*

Many of us can probably remember years ago when Churches used to give out special awards on Father’s Day.

For example……

They might give a pair of ATHLETIC SOCKS to the Father who was the MOST ATHLETIC.

Or they might give AN APRON to the Father who was the BEST COOK.

Or they might give A HAMMER or A WRENCH to the Father who was THE HANDIEST AROUND THE HOUSE.

While those awards were always given out in a spirit of good humor and with the best of intentions, I couldn’t help but wonder if those fathers who didn’t receive an award were made to feel like failures.

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Years ago one of my kids gave me one of those baseball caps with
the words: “World’s Greatest Dad” imprinted on it. When I put that cap on and smiled for a few pictures, I felt a sense of unworthiness to be wearing such a distinct title as “World’s Greatest Dad.”

Illustration: Last June, after receiving several calls from concerned neighbors, Sheriff’s Deputies from Laurel County Kentucky were sent to the home of Terry Cornett, age 42, to check on the welfare of his 2-year old child.

Whey they got there they discovered the living conditions were deplorable. But worst of all, they discovered Terry Cornett, the father of the child, was running a “meth lab” out of his home.

Terry Cornett as arrested on a variety of narcotics charges and his child was put in the hands of child protective services.

Oh by the way, when Terry Cornett was booked and photographed he was wearing a “World’s Greatest Dad” tee-shirt.

This is why I only wear tee-shirts that read: “Average Dad at Best”

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When it comes to “The Greatest Father of All” there is only One truly deserving of that honor and that is GOD, OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

Its interesting that out of all the beautiful Names and Titles for God in the Bible, the one that appears most often is the name, “FATHER.”

Now what does that tell us? It tells us that more than anything else God desires a close, loving, personal relationship with you and me. He loves to hear us call Him, “Father.”

We learn a great deal about WHAT KIND OF FATHER God is in this 103rd Psalm. Let’s spend just a few minutes together looking at some of our Heavenly Father’s wonderful attributes that serve as an example to all us Christian fathers.

First of all..........
I. We Need to Be Patient With Our Children As Our Heavenly Father Is Patient With Us (verse 8)

verse 8 “The LORD is compassionate and gracious, SLOW TO ANGER.............”

1. To be “slow to anger” tells us God is a very PATIENT Father. He doesn’t have a “bad temper” or “a short fuse.” He doesn’t “fly off the handle” and say things or do things He later regrets.

2. This eighth verse is actually a quote of something Moses had written almost five hundred years earlier. It is recorded in Exodus 34.

Remember at the time Moses was on top of Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments from God, the children of Israel were at the bottom of the mountain engaging in drunkenness and immorality.

These people whom God had just delivered from Egypt, had fashioned a “golden calf” and were giving all their praise and thanksgiving to this idol for what God had done.

When God informed Moses as to what was going on down at the bottom of the mountain, Moses came down the mountain and angrily shattered the original copy of the Ten Commandments.

God was so angry with the Children of Israel He wanted to destroy them. But in answer to Moses’ pleading on the people’s behalf, God reconsidered.

3. God instructed Moses to return to the top of Mt. Sinai and there He would give him a new copy of “The Ten Commandments.” But before God began dictating the commands a second time He passed in front of Moses proclaiming........

“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, abounding in love in love and faithfulness.”

4. Like any parent, God our Heavenly Father has times when
He does get angry. God reveals this about Himself in the scriptures. But we must realize His anger is a righteous anger, not an “explosive” anger. Our Heavenly Father puts up with a whole, whole lot before His anger is ever aroused.

**GOD IS A VERY PATIENT FATHER!**

5. Fathers, think of all the times you and I have SINNED and fallen far short of the glory of God. Think of all the times you and I have “messed up” and made “stupid mistakes. Think of all the times you and I have made “unwise choices” and “foolish decisions.” Think of all the times you and I traveled down some paths we shouldn’t have traveled.

And yet despite all OUR SINS….OUR STUMBLES and OUR STUPIDITY……GOD our Heavenly Father has been very, very patient with us.

6. Fathers, there is a valuable lesson to learn here and that is: If we want to be the best fathers we can be we should strive to show our children the same kind of patience that our Heavenly Father shows to us.

Verses 13, 14 tells us, “As a father has compassion on His children, so the LORD has compassion on all who fear Him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust.

- Like us, fathers, our children will sin.
- Like us, they will “mess up” and make “stupid mistakes.”
- Like us, they will make “unwise choices” and “foolish decisions.”
- Like us, they will “travel down a few paths” they shouldn’t travel.

Children aren’t perfect! Children make mistakes! Why? Because, just like you and me DAD, our children are made of DUST…..not steel….not iron….but DUST!

But not only do we need to BE PATIENT WITH OUR CHILDREN AS OUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PATIENT WITH US........
II. We Need to Love Our Children Like Our Heavenly Father Loves Us (verse 11)

Notice what David says about God's love in VERSE 11

\[ v.11 \text{ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him.} \]

1. One of our greatest needs as human beings is to be LOVED. We all need love! We need to know that we are important to somebody and that somebody truly cares for us.

   We need to know that somebody wants us and accepts us unconditionally.

2. You and I can rest assured that NO ONE, I repeat, NO ONE loves you and me as much as OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

   David is telling us in this eleventh verse that God’s love stretches as “high as the heavens are above the earth.”

   That simply means God’s love for us is so great it can’t even be measured.

3. There is nothing you and I can do to make OUR HEAVENLY FATHER love us any more or any less than He already loves us.

4. Our Heavenly Father’s love for us is UNCONDITIONAL!

   That means GOD’S love for you and me is CONSTANT and CONSISTENT.

* It is a love we don’t have to “earn.”

* It is a love that is NOT based on “feelings” or “emotions.”

* It is a love that does NOT change when our circumstances
change.

As Romans 8 tells us, “There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.”

5. FATHERS we need to remember to love our children in the same way OUR HEAVENLY FATHER loves us.

Our sons and daughters should never feel as though they have to “earn” our love. In other words, Fathers, our love should not be based on “merit” or “performance.”

ILLUSTRATION: I have sat at ballgames, and I’m sure you have too, and heard FATHERS (and mother’s too, I might add) holler and scream at their son or daughter when they make a mistake on the field or on the ball court. Do you think at that moment that son or daughter is thinking, “Wow, listen to my dad holler at me. He must really, really love me!”

NO! If that Father could see inside his son or daughter’s heart at that moment they would see their “self-esteem” and sense of worth wilting like a dying rose.

Our children need to know that we love them regardless of whether they WIN or LOSE! They need to know we love them regardless of whether they SUCCEED or FAIL.

6. Now its not uncommon at all for a SON or DAUGHTER to grow up and make some “life choices” we don’t approve of that totally contradict everything we tried to teach them.

-DAD, do you stop loving them if they marry someone you don’t approve of?

-DO you stop loving them if they quit going to Church? Or go to a different kind of Church than you raised them in?

-Do you stop loving them if they take up self-destructive habits?

-Do you stop loving them if they choose a career path different from what we would have chosen for them?

-Do you stop loving them if they spend their money foolishly?
7. Now let’s be honest here! When our adult children do things like that we want to give them a “good, swift kick in the seat of the pants, and say, ‘What is wrong with you? I raised you better than that!’

8. But Dad’s, here’s a better question to ask ourselves, and that is this: “Would my heavenly Father stop loving me if I did any of those stupid things my son or daughter is doing?”

We find our answer to that question in Verse 17......

“But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD’S love is with those who fear Him.”

9. You know what that means? It means GOD’S LOVE never “GIVES UP” on us!

10. Father’s may our LOVE, never “give up” on our children!

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We need to BE PATIENT WITH OUR CHILDREN LIKE OUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PATIENT WITH US.

We need to LOVE OUR CHILDREN THE WAY OUR HEAVENLY FATHER LOVES US.

And thirdly........

III. We Need To FORGIVE Our Children As Our Heavenly Father FORGIVES Us (verses 9, 10)

1. Let me draw your attention once again to VERSES 9, 10
9 He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever.

10 He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

2. In Isaiah 57:16, God says, “I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry, for then the spirit of man would grow faint before me—the breath of man I created.”

3. Fathers, if OUR HEAVENLY FATHER kept throwing all our sins in our face, and kept dragging up every failure and every mistake we ever made, what would that do to you?

   I’ll tell you what it would do to me. It would beat me down and discourage me so much I would lose all hope.

4. Thankfully, OUR HEAVENLY FATHER isn’t like that! GOD is a FORGIVING FATHER.

   Once you and I have confessed our sin to God and sought His forgiveness, HE FORGIVES AND FORGETS! He doesn’t keep accusing us! He doesn’t stay angry with us! He doesn’t keep throwing our sins in our face! HE FORGIVES AND FORGETS!

5. Oh Fathers, what an example for us to follow! As dads we can be and often are too hard on our children. This is why the apostle Paul warns us dads in Ephesians 6:4…….

   “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the LORD.”

6. Dads, just as we desire OUR HEAVENLY FATHER’S forgiveness when we SIN and FALL SHORT of His glory, may we offer FORGIVENESS to our sons and daughters when they FALL SHORT of our “expectations.”

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C O N C L U S I O N

As we close, I want to share this little piece written by the
late Erma Bombeck on the importance of a father.

If I had to tell someone's son what a father really does that is important, it would be that he shows up for the job in good times and bad times. He's a man who is constantly being observed by his children. They learn from him how to handle adversity, anger, disappointment and success.

He won't laugh at their dreams no matter how impossible they might seem. He will dig out at 1 a.m. when one of his children runs out of gas. He will make unpopular decisions and stand by them. When he is wrong and makes a mistake, he will admit it. He sets the tone for how family members treat one another, members of the opposite sex and people who are different than they are. By example, he can instill a desire to give something back to the community when its needs are greater than theirs.

But mostly, a good father involves himself in his kids' lives. The more responsibility he has for a child, the harder it is to walk out of his life. A father has the potential to be a powerful force in the life of a child. Grab it! Maybe you'll get a greeting card for your efforts. Maybe not. But it's steady work.

Fathers, let's face it, none of us are perfect. And none of us had a perfect father. But we can be our very best when we follow the example of OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

Let us BE PATIENT with our Children as OUR HEAVENLY FATHER is patient with us.

Let us LOVE our Children as OUR HEAVENLY FATHER Loves Us.

Let us FORGIVE our Children as OUR HEAVENLY FATHER forgives us.

Today we honor GOD, THE GREATEST FATHER OF ALL