

**Tuesday, 6/30/20**

**SERIES: FAMILY DONE GOD'S WAY**

**SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD**

**TITLE: The Body of Christ Pt. 2**

Well, hello friends. Today we are wrapping up our series, “Family Done God’s Way” and *why* family matters to God. Yesterday we began to look at God's spiritual family. That includes you and me as members of the body of Christ. Those who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ are His children.

Some will say we are all God’s children. Well, it is true that God created mankind, so in one sense, we all are His creation or His children, but not in the truest sense. Why? Because of what Adam and Eve did: They sinned and created a break in the relationship between God and man.

Yesterday, we looked at the question of God's response to sin in His Creation as a whole. And what we discovered was, God made His Creation good.

But when he made mankind at the height of His Creation, He said, it is *very* good. And God was in a beautiful relationship with Adam and Eve. He would walk in the cool of the garden with them. There was a beautiful reality present in that garden. But Satan cast the seed of doubt in Eve's mind, and she bit into the fruit, and her eyes were opened, and Adam followed right behind. And unfortunately, our nature has been tarnished ever since. There has been a break in the relationship.

We, by nature, were enemies of God. When we are born, we are born with a sin nature, and we are born enemies of God. In fact, Paul writes in Ephesians 2 (ESV), “*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*” (Vs. 1-3)

But then, in verse 4, Paul writes, “*but God.*” These are two of the sweetest words I think in all of Scripture. “*But God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved-*”(Vs. 4-5)

Wow, God loves His Creation, and He loves His Creation that was very good, so much so, that according to John 3:16, He loved the world so much “*that He gave his only begotten - a one of a kind - Son - God in the flesh - that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*” (NASB) **What is His response to sin in His Creation? He hates it. He cannot tolerate it. And because there is no other way back to God, He would send a solution. That's His response.** But He doesn't force us into reconciling the relationship. No, no.

As my professor, Doctor Clay Jones, would say, forcing us to love God is like spiritual rape. I know that's harsh, but I think he's right. By grace through faith, He allows us to partake in the relationship, period. Now, does he choose us? Yes. Do we respond in faith? Yes. How does that work? I don't know, but I know it's what Scripture teaches, and I know it's true. That's His response to sin in His Creation.

So the second question we need to address that we began yesterday is: **Now that we have a solution to the sin in the Creation, and we become his spiritual children, how does He treat His children?**

Remember what we read yesterday in Romans 8, verse 15 (ESV). Paul writes, *“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’”*

**Because we are His children, we get to call him *Abba*, Father.** A better translation for today would be *Daddy*. There is not a sweeter sound to me than to hear my children say, Dad or Daddy.

It's hard to picture this, but imagine a person who has hurt you, humiliated you, mocked you, berated you, thrown stones at every window in your house, lit your house on fire, stolen your identity, and you open up the door, and you say to that person, “You are forgiven; I'm going to restore the house, and you get to come in, and now it's yours, and you get to call me, Daddy.” Well, that's *exactly* what God has done for us. God, the person that we hated the most- the Bible says we are enemies of God – and yet, He tells us, “You get to call me Daddy, because I love you, and I saved you on purpose, and for a purpose.”

And because He loves us, because he paid a great price for us - the death of his son - He says, because my Son lives, you also shall live. **Jesus said, *I came that you might have life and life to the fullest.***

So many people today think that Christianity is a life of monotony and prudence, and unfortunately, bigotry. Those who have that picture of Christianity are so wrong. Christ came so we could *all* have a life to the fullest, to seek and save the lost. God provides us life, unlike any other period. It's a life of adventure, of mission, and purpose, and freedom. Some people mock the fact that Jesus Christ, to many said, “Follow me. Come to me. My burden is easy; my yoke is light.”

Some people mock that – they say that's just a life of more religion. Wrong. Religion says, “Here is what you have to do to experience Salvation or Nirvana or Enlightenment.” It's all about what you can do, but God says, “It's about what *I did for you*. There's *nothing* you can do now, except to rest in My grace”, and He says, “This is a great way of living, so ‘Follow me’”.

Here is how I've communicated it in the past: Think of it like a train. You know, a choo-choo train. Well, I want you to think for a moment, is a train free, or is it restricted by its train tracks? It doesn't matter if I've asked this question in a business seminar, in a conference, or in a church service. If you are like most people, you think a train is restricted by its train tracks.

But answer me this – what happens when a train goes off the train tracks? Yes, it is *derailed*. It is stuck. It is *useless*. Its purpose is not being fulfilled. But when a train glides on the train tracks, it is *free* to go wherever the train tracks lead. Think about all the places train tracks lead across

America. You may think, if I go off to the left or to the right here, with no train tracks, it's a straighter shot, but friends, you'll end up stuck. This is a great picture of what living life by God's standards, and in His best way, provides us. **It's a life of freedom and purpose. That is His response to His children. He provides a better way**, just like you and I do to our children. We say, "Yes, you can go and do those foolish things, but there is a *better* way. And as parents, when our children get out of line, what do we do to discipline them? We don't punish them, or at least we shouldn't. We teach and correct them because we love them. And that's exactly what God does for us.

## **DISCUSSION:**

N: Now, let me turn to my discussion partners, Arnie Cole and Cara Whitney. Cara, how do you recognize God's discipline in your life?

C: Well, I feel it. I mean, He beats me over the head with his corrections all the time. I would say usually I'm having conversations with people, and they're not really, I mean, even if I'm not talking about something specifically, God is revealing things to me through sermons, or conversations that I have with people. That just go, "Oh, wow, I need to change that, or do this differently". And I love it. I love it. I want to be better, you know?

N: Well, and I think so often God's discipline, it does look different than what maybe our kids' experience, you know, through our correction and our discipline. I know my son has often asked after he gets disciplined, "Well, how does God discipline you? Because I don't see you walking around here, all, you know, crying and upset because of your decisions." And I said, "Well, you've got to understand buddy, that God is disciplining me. There are consequences to my sinful actions. Sometimes it's in how the relationship with Mom works. Sometimes it's maybe financial consequences. There are so many ways, but yes, it does look different, but the discipline is consistent."

So I think that's an important piece, that God disciplines us, based on who we are and the circumstances, but it surely will look unique, but I do love what you said about revealing: God reveals it to us. And I think one of the ways He does so often is in His Word. It helps us see our deficiencies and the sin in our life. And that can be a really rude awakening.

C: There's nothing more eye-opening than the Holy Spirit smackdown, [Right. Oh yeah.] You're like, "Wow, Yeah, I need to change some stuff."

N: Arnie, Jesus said in John 10:10 (ESV), "[The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.](#)" - Or as I like to say - to the fullest. What does that kind of life look like? Is it really money, fame, and power?

A: I suppose it's possible, but that's certainly not the key thing that Jesus brings, because money, fame and power always leaves you empty. I remember as a nonbeliever, I had a boat named *Uno Más* and it was true: life was a joke and there was always something better. And there was always one more thing, whether it be one more, you name it, so a pretty empty life. So I think what Jesus is offering, and which is much, much better than money, fame, or power - which you may have as a Christ follower - but the thing that Jesus brings, is peace that passes all understanding. And I can remember specifically, the despair that I had with my boat, *Uno Más*,

and then several years later, as a Christ follower, and I'm in ICU and I'm bleeding out, I just had that peace that passes all understanding. And it wasn't that feeling, "Oh man, I gotta' have one more day, or I gotta' this." It's just this peaceful thing that is, you know, beyond belief. And that's what Jesus offers, which money, fame, and power can't buy.

N: Right. And I think what you said there is so beautiful. I mean, the reality is the peace that God offers us with Him, and even with each other, far outweighs any human endeavor or reward we could possibly ever experience. And I think it's the thing that people desire most today, is peace: peace with God and with each other.

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Listen to what the writer of Hebrews says in Chapter 12, verses 3 through 8 (ESV), "*Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. <sup>4</sup> In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup> And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?*

*"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
nor be weary when reproved by him.*

*<sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and chastises every son whom he receives."*

*<sup>7</sup> It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup> If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons."*

In other words, he says **God will discipline his children because He loves them**. And if you're not being corrected, in other words, disciplined, for your sin, you must not be His child. Now we know that God extends mercy and grace all the time; that's not what we're talking about. If we fall into habitual sin, God will correct us. And if He doesn't, there's a problem. And if He does and we don't respond, there's a problem. So, God, He disciplines His children, because He loves them. He paid a great price for us.

As we begin to understand our relationship with God in His family, we see that as God's children, He will discipline us. Why? Because He loves us. But also we know that **He provides for His children**. Remember what Jesus said, *do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow has enough worries of its own*. Instead, Jesus said, *your Heavenly Father knows what you need, so seek first God's Kingdom*, in other words, God's way, *and all these things that you need will be added to you*. Isn't that beautiful friends? God loves His children, so he provides, and He directs.

So how do we live as a spiritual family? In other words, why does this matter? Let me tell you quickly.

**First, we function as a team.** 1 Corinthians 12 paints a beautiful picture of this. Listen to Paul's words, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many.... If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (Vs. 12-14, 26, ESV).

Friends, every one of us, when we are adopted as sons and daughters of the King, He gives us spiritual gifts. Why? To serve the body of Christ, period. To see the church, His bride functioning in a healthy way. What is the purpose of the church? Well, we are *to worship God*; we find that in Colossians 3:16. We are *to develop each other in discipleship*; you find that in Colossians 1:28. And we are called *to evangelize the world*; Matthew 28:19. So we function as a team.

**Second, we function as equals.** Remember, this is exactly what Paul just said in First Corinthians 12:13a (ESV), “...in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -Jews or Greeks, slaves or free.”

But Paul would go on to say we are given spiritual gifts, and not one is better than the other. Each one contributes. He used this imagery of a hand talking to a foot or an eye talking to a finger. The point is, it doesn't matter which one you are. You are vitally important to the whole. Paul would back this up even further in Galatians 3:28. There Paul says, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*”

The church is made up of all different kinds of people: Young and old, rich and poor, black and white. When we see the body of Christ as it really is, it is a beautiful tapestry. It is a painting. It is an orchestra. That is exactly what God had intended to do: to tear down all barriers and to let people see they are valued, and they are important to the body of Christ. This is only made possible by the blood of Jesus Christ, and being adopted into His family. This cannot be realized by rules or laws or declarations. We function as equals.

**Third, we function as ambassadors.** We represent Jesus Christ to the world around us. Our goal is to remove the barriers, so people see Jesus clearly. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, “*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*” This is why it's important we understand the purpose of the church. Again, it is to glorify God through worship. It is to create disciple-making disciples. And it is to evangelize the world. And when we live on purpose, for a purpose; when we live on God's train tracks, we will represent Him accurately and powerfully to a broken world. Remember, Jesus came to seek and save the lost. And He calls us to be His messengers.

**And last, we function as servants of King Jesus.** Ephesians 1:22 says *God put all things in subjection under his feet and gave Christ as head over all things to the church.* Colossians 1 says that Jesus is the head of the body, the church. Therefore as an act of our worship and an act of our love, we do all things as servants of the King. It's like that Chris Tomlin song, “I Will Follow” says, “Where You go, I'll go. Where You stay, I'll stay. When You move, I'll move. I will follow You.”

Friends, I know there is so much more we could say about the body of Christ, the bride of Christ. You and I make up the body. But I want you to walk away from the series, knowing that family matters to God. So you see, it doesn't matter if you're a husband, a wife, a parent, grandparent, a great grandparent, or a single. We are all called to lead, and we're all called as His children to love God and to love each other. Is it easy? No. Is it doable? Only by His grace. It is our prayer here at Back to the Bible, that you will live a life on purpose and for a purpose. It's our prayer that you would stand firm. Stand faithful. And stand on God's Word. Because when we do, we will show the world God is real. He cares. And He cares for His Creation.

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N: Cara, compare teamwork within the family of Christ to teamwork within your own family.

C: Well, just this morning, my son who's 13, him and I had a little battle this morning, because I didn't think he was pulling his weight in the family. He has been lazy. So I said, you know, "We all live in the same house. So when the garbage gets full, you take the garbage out; you put a new bag in". I mean, all those things. So, just like the family of Christ, we all have different skillsets, jobs, spiritual gifts, and we should all have the same goal. And that's, you know, not living in conflict in those things. So although sometimes, conflict, like this morning, is necessary, to keep each other on track. So I would say, it's the same. You're a family, especially my sisters in Christ, man. We just, we rally. So, you know, we're a team, just like a family.

N: Yeah. I think that today, it's challenging to discuss lovingly rebuking, or pointing out, maybe, deficits in our behavior. But I think it's absolutely crucial as the body of Christ, that we hold each other accountable lovingly, to make sure that we are fulfilling our obligation as Christ followers, as the body of Christ. That's true in the household. And it's true in the church as a whole. And it sounds like you are committed to doing so.

C: Well. You know, those dudes that were lowering the paralytic down the roof to get him to the Lord, that should be us; whatever it takes to get people to Jesus, do that.

N: Right. That's what we all need to remember. No gift is greater than the other. All of us, at the end of the day, are called to be servants of the King, no matter how that manifests itself.

And I think speaking of spiritual gifts, no matter what gift it is, it impacts the family of Christ. Arnie, can you give us an example of that?

A: You know, it's kind of like working here at Back to the Bible. We have a very talented staff. Some, as you may know, are great Bible teachers, and other people are great programmers. We have a ton of tremendously talented, gifted. So as a body of believers here at Back to the Bible, we're not very effective by ourselves, but as a team, we can really make an impact with such a small staff, to a lot of people, just because we appreciate each one's gifts, know we're gifted differently, but as a family of believers, or a body of believers, we can really become effective, if that makes sense.

N: A hundred percent. And I think that's such a good reminder, that no one person is more valuable than the next. God has given us different spiritual gifts, but they all serve a purpose. And some people they'd say, "Well, I'd rather be that person, I'd rather have that gift." And I think the reality is, each one has its own burden and responsibility. And so I think instead of desiring what the other person has, rather lean into what God has given you, and maximize that all for His glory.

Cara, how can parents explain the concept of being an ambassador for Christ to their kids?

C: I'm using current events right now, Nat. So the latest example that I gave to my kids and my husband is mask-wearing, because we had to go to the orthodontist, and we are required to wear a mask, which I may or may not agree with. But I told my son, I said, "We're going to wear a

mask, and we're going to show people the Lord through our mask. And we're going to be kind, because this is what they've asked us to do. These people are happy to be working right now, and they don't want to hear our mask-wearing opinions. We're just going to try to be a light in the world right now. Right?" So that's one of the ways I was able to explain to my kids that we don't always have to agree, but we have to be kind, and we have to be sweet and salty.

N: Well, I want to applaud you, because you're not just explaining, but you're teaching an action, which I think is so important. So often we do the devotional, but we don't take the time to let it sink in through practice. And I think for this to become reality in our homes, not only must we teach it, but we have to model it, and provide opportunities for our children to model it as well. So, excellent job on that. Arnie, we have a lot of mature Christians listening today. Give us a reminder of our role as ambassadors.

A: Yeah. Especially if you're talking about older as mature, I think I want to speak to that group, but I think it applies to all. As you get older, your abilities change, you're fighting a lot of things. Maybe it's health, maybe you're slowing down at work, or maybe you've been laid off, or all that comes with old age. And one of the things people tend to forget as they get older, is they are an ambassador for Jesus Christ. So a classic example: if you're at the doctor's office, or you're going through some tests, and the tech has totally screwed everything up, and you've wasted your whole morning, well, you know, you're grumpy, you're old. And are you going to show the tech Jesus? Or are you going to show what it was like before you became a believer? So those kinds of things you may not think is much. But I remember, before I became a Christ follower, I did not want to be like one of those old cranky Christians, who threw the Bible at everybody that walked down the street, and in my opinion, told them how bad they were. And to me, I didn't mind the preaching so much, as they looked like they were miserable. And why would you want to have something that kept you so miserable? If that makes sense?

N: Totally. Well, it sounds like your story was not just a theoretical, but maybe actually something you've experienced in the past. And so I can only trust that you represented Christ well, but what about the mature, in just the sense of people who have been following Christ faithfully? So it doesn't matter age; how would you encourage them to be ambassadors for Christ, and why it matters?

A: That's a huge, huge thing. And it sounds really easy to have a trite answer. What I see is, if you're not moving closer to Jesus today than you were yesterday, you're not a very good ambassador. So if you're not headed in a direction, you're not doing really anything. You're not doing anything bad though. You know, you're not cursing, you're not doing sin. You're just there. You're the kind of ambassador that has no impact. And for me as a new believer, that was so important to me, that I prayed almost daily as a new believer, "Lord put me on the front lines, so that I don't become lukewarm, so that I don't just become used to being a Christian, or a Christ follower." And that's all it is.

N: And that's a dangerous prayer, because that's a prayer that gets answered. But I think you would admit that it was one of the best prayers you could have ever prayed. [Yep.] Arnie, when it comes to our relationship with God, why is it so important to understand that what he wants, is a daily ongoing relationship with us?

A: Because that's what a relationship is. It's daily. And in order, it's just like you want to maintain health physically. What do you do? You eat three times a day. Some of us maybe four or five, six times a day, but it's the same in a relationship with Jesus Christ. He wants it to be daily, not compartmentalized, not on Sunday. It's just, He wants it all. He gave it all. He wants the same from you.

N: Yep. It's all about relationship.

C: Well, I don't know any relationship where I can show up for one hour a week and things are going to be cool. You know, you have to have a daily conversation with your spouse. I mean, if you showed up and just met your spouse one hour a week, there's going to be some problems, because then you're going to be off the rails the rest of the week.

N: Yeah, I think so often we treat God like just another trinket, or maybe a statue on a wall, and we forget the necessity of the relationship, and in fact, the privilege of the relationship. And I think we can do that, but we can also turn to that posture where we just go, "Well, it's God, you know; He'll forgive us. He understands I'm busy," but the reality is, why would we do that with any other human relationship? And if we did, we know the results. How much more for a Holy God, who paid a great price to restore the relationship with us?