

God has a Tender Heart for Orphans

By Dr. Samuel Telemaque

Director Adventist of Possibility Ministries, IAD

Sermon for Orphan's Day on November 18, 2023

God has a tender heart for orphans. Bible writers used various metaphors to convey the *perspectives* of God towards orphans. We read in Psalms 68:8 that He is the Father to the fatherless or to orphans. Orphans are deprived of their fathers and mothers. Despite this deprivation, God remains a Father to orphans. The Fatherhood of God to orphans has *five* possible meanings.

First, God sustains orphans (Psalms 146:9). The word sustain, (*kûl*) conveys the idea of nourishment. The Psalmist argues that God nourishes the fatherless. He nourishes them with his compassion, companionship, and “daily bread.” These elements help orphans to survive feelings of loneliness, abandonment, depression, and sometimes helplessness. Orphans cannot survive these horrible feelings on their own. They need God’s help to overcome these permanent or intermittent feelings.

Second, God rescues the fatherless who have none to assist them (Job 29:12). The word rescue evokes many Old Testament images in our minds such as Noah’s ark and deliverance from Egypt. The word is loaded with significance. A primitive root of (*yaw-shah*) rescue means to be open, to be free, to have salvation, to save, and to be victorious. Jesus, by his death, resurrection, and ascension, paid the ransom for all orphans to be saved. This gift of salvation awakens gratitude in the hearts of orphans. Gratitude heals feelings of abandonment, depression, rejection, and loneliness. God made it possible for all orphans to be saved. He rescues the fatherless who have none to assist them (Job 29:12).

Third, Orphans are powerless to save themselves. In Ephesians 2:1-2, Paul aptly describes the hopelessness of sinners without Christ. He says, “they were spiritually dead, practicing trespasses and sins as their regular pattern of life (Eph. 2:1), and were dominated by Satan (Eph. 2:2). We are powerless to save ourselves. Jeremiah puts it bluntly. Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil (Jeremiah 13:23, Col. 2:13, Rom. 5:17, Rom. 6:23).

Ellen G. White echoes the words of Jeremiah. Education, good manners, and willpower all have their place in helping us to do the right things. But they cannot change our hearts and make our lives pure. Only a new life from above, a power working inside us, can change us from being sinful to being holy. “That power is Christ. His grace alone can give life to our dead souls and draw us to God and holiness” (Steps to Christ, p. 13).

Fourth, God saves orphans by grace through faith in Christ. Grace is pardon for sins. Orphans who express faith in God’s power to give them salvation will be recipients of God’s grace-which is pardon for sins. For instance, Abraham believed God was able to fulfill his promise to him (Romans 4:21-22). This implicit faith in God’s power to fulfill his promises is the basis for grace. Faith precedes grace. Grace is pardon for sin. Jesus died so that orphans might receive grace, which pardons for their sins. This is good news!!

Fifth, God invites us to minister to orphans in various ways. Orphans tend to feel lonely due to the absence of their fathers and mothers. God made us to live in relationship with others. Companionship is an important human need. This need is expressed in the phrase “leave and cleave” and become “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). James 1:27 gives a remedy for orphans’ loneliness. He admonishes us to “visit” (episkeptomai) orphans. The word means to “look upon in order to help or to benefit.” We are to visit the orphans to see, hear, and feel those issues

affecting their lives. God invites us to think of *innovative ways* to minister to orphans in your church and communities. How could the life of an orphan be different through your ministry to him or her? God's love for you influences your compassion for orphans.

Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love for God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by trying to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance. —Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 383, 384

To convince others of the power of Christ's grace, we must know its power in our own hearts and lives. The gospel we present for the saving of souls must be the gospel by which our own souls are saved. Only through a living faith in Christ as a personal Savior is it possible to make our influence felt in a skeptical world. If we would draw sinners out of the swift-running current, our own feet must be firmly set upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.

The call to mission is always a call to bless and be blessed. When we recognize that the call of God to us, as humans, is rooted in Genesis 1:26–28, this understanding can lead us, through our various talents and skills, to draw people toward the blessing of flourishing that God intends for us. Our witness to others should be combined with sharing the plan of salvation. Ultimately, the life that salvation makes possible will give meaning to the call God has given us. Therefore, our call is to live out the blessings of God in such a way that people see and desire what we have in God. This idea means that your workplace, your home, and your circle of friends are the primary locations where you live out the call of God. While preaching and handing out literature have their place, the primary fulfillment of the call to Abraham and to you

includes, living an intentional life to help others learn about Jesus and surrender to Him. But remember that the call of God is a twofold blessing. As you live out the call in your daily life, expect and look for blessings to come back toward you from people whom you may not even expect (*Teacher Comments in Sabbath Lesson October 14-20, 2023*).

God has a tender heart for orphans. He is the Father of all of humanity. Today, God invites us to partner with Him to provide orphans with compassion, companionship, acceptance, tolerance, identify in Christ and assurance of salvation in Christ. To all our orphans we say, “happy orphan day!!”