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## *Is it Fear or Terror?*

Recently our family went on a road trip. We spent hours in the car traveling through the southwest. There was a lot of time spent playing license plate bingo and listening to the radio. During a lull in the bingo action, a song came on the radio that struck me deeply. As with any good country-western song, it told the story of a man's regrets. As the singer went through his list of things he wished he had done different he said, "He wished he had gone to church but he was afraid of God".

The fear of the Lord is often misunderstood, and this song is a classic example. The fear of the Lord is a reverent fear, not a terror. When people talk about being afraid of God, they clearly don't understand what He has done for us (and likewise, when people curse His name and casually dismiss the sacrifice of His Son, they clearly don't understand who He is).

*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."*

*~Romans 8:15*

Through the sacrifice of Jesus, God made it possible for us to come to Him for forgiveness without fear. The Apostle Paul taught that the Spirit we received (through salvation) was not a Spirit of fear but instead, one of sonship. This is why Paul calls God "Abba, Father".

The word Abba is best translated as "daddy"... it is an informal name that indicates a closeness in relationship, and certainly not a fearful one. "Father" on the other hand is much more formal, and indicates patriarchal leadership, and authority. This is where the reverent fear comes in.

So, the best way to think of "Abba, Father" is "Daddy, Sir".

As children then, we are entitled to all the benefits of our “Abba”. Among these benefits are His grace (getting the good things that we don’t deserve) and His mercy (not getting the bad things that we do deserve). We are also, as children, entitled (and subject) to the authority and discipline of the “Father”.

In the Old Testament the people did not have direct access to God. There was a curtain in the temple to separate “the most holy place” (where the Spirit of God resided) from the rest of the temple. To enter the most holy place was to take your life in your hands. The high priest was the only one allowed to enter most holy place, and then, only once per year. The custom was to tie a rope to the high priest’s ankle before he entered the most holy place; that way if he entered the presence of God in an unworthy manor, and died, the rope could be used to pull his body out.

When Jesus died, the curtain that was used to separate the most holy place from the rest of the temple was torn in two (indicating that the way to God had been made available to everyone) and it was torn from the top to the bottom (indicating that God was the one who tore it).

*And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.  
At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom....  
~Matthew 27:50-51*

So then, Jesus’ sacrifice not only covers our sin, but it also makes the way clear for us to come to God to ask for forgiveness! If God has done all this for us, why are people afraid to come to Him to receive forgiveness from their sins? It comes back to “Daddy-Sir”... You see a father does not arouse fear in the child who is obedient and doing right, but in the child who is doing wrong. If you want to be free from fear of the one in authority then repent (stop doing what you know to be wrong), ask for His forgiveness, and He will receive you.

*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.  
If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and  
purify us from all unrighteousness.*

*~1John 1:8-9*

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