

## Father's Day Blessings from Our Father in Heaven

✦ **A river of thanksgiving** (vv.13-15)

✦ **An eternal horizon** (vv.16-18)

In the name of Jesus, our Savior and Brother, dear children of the heavenly Father:

What we believe has a profound effect on how we celebrate Father's Day. Far too many children grew up with abusive fathers. All of us fathers wish we could have done better in one area or another. And millions of men suffer in silence from grief too deep to realize it's because of an abortion over which they may or may not have had any choice. God's Word has answers. His Gospel brings hope and help.

**Father's Day Blessings** come first from knowing why. Our Old Testament Lesson about the Fall into sin shows why we sons and daughter of Adam always default to strife. Just as a glass will always fall to the floor if you let go, without God's help, we can only fall into sin. Don't you feel as if you're listening to teenagers when Adam and Eve blame God and each other for their sin? Unfortunately, none of us ever really outgrows our natural bent toward making excuses. And yet instead of crushing us and starting over, God gave the first Gospel promise to Adam and Eve while He spoke to their enemy Satan: ***"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."*** (Genesis 3:15 NIV84) So it was when Christ died and rose again.

Since all of us inherited Adam's sinful nature, the real surprise is every father who does fear God, love and honor his wife, and raise his children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Every good and faithful father is a miracle of God's grace. And if you did not have such a father yourself, the family of God in a Christian congregation will supply you with many **Father's Day Blessings from Our Father**. Fact is, the good ones are miracles of God to be cherished. In Christ they sail down...

✦ **A river of thanksgiving** (vv.13-15)

"We can't help it," Paul is saying. "Like ancient believers, ***'I believed; therefore I have spoken.'*** ***With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.***" Literally, Paul says God **Our Father** will *stand us with* Jesus and the apostles in the glorious homecoming of heaven. *Standing with* someone shows strength and loyalty like so many examples we heard this week from WELS World Missions. One really sticks in my memory. A Pakistani doctor offers free surgeries for poor Christians and real help to neighbors. In spite of the danger he and his children bring food and Christian love to flood ravaged Muslims. They share *The Promise*, a WELS booklet about Jesus Christ the Savior of all. Gratitude for God's grace overflows the doctor and his family in **A river of thanksgiving** that refreshes everyone along its banks. "We can't help it," the doctor would agree.

***"All this is for your benefit,"*** Paul continues, ***"so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God."*** Before the day of planes, trains and automobiles, living along a river meant prosperity upstream and down. Most cities were built along rivers because waterways bring blessings. When God makes **A river of thanksgiving** flow to your heart and home, it washes away the anger and bitterness that make so many families miserable. In Christ, just as He promised, God has forgiven all your sins without exception – fully, freely and forever. His free flowing forgiveness overflows from you to others, especially family. When you're busy giving thanks, there's no time to be bitter, sad and lonely. You're overflowing with blessings all around.

One father and his family in China come to mind. About twelve years ago they moved to Shenzhen across the border from Hong Kong. Not finding any Christian churches teaching God's Word in its truth and purity, they began to worship in their apartment – father and mother, son and daughter. Soon so many friends joined them that they had to find more space. Last time we were there 1500 people worshiped Jesus. The father sold all his businesses and kept a couple buildings – one for their church, the other for a lay ministry training school. His daughter serves as secretary, his son as their IT Department. Plus he drives us visitors through traffic you would not believe, more smoothly than any driver I can remember. As we sat down to lunch the first time at his school, this layman-turned pastor smiled with great joy and said through our interpreter: “This is God's grace!” Your gifts of thanksgiving here flow over into more **thanksgiving** there as he keeps inviting us back to teach in his school.

But sometimes things don't work so well. Paul gives a reality check in the next few verses:

### ✦ **An eternal horizon (vv.16-18)**

*“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”* Sometimes the weight of ministry piles troubles high and overwhelming like waves along the shore. Too low in the current, you can swallow lots of water. One woman found this out rescuing her son and his friends from a riptide in the ocean. She now teaches people how to keep their head up and focus on the **horizon**. “Don't fight the current,” she says, “but realize you can deal with it and make it back to shore.” How vital for us to focus on **An eternal horizon!**

That's what Moses did in Egypt. Remember how he got his name? Pharaoh was killing all the Jewish baby boys in Egypt. So Moses' mother hid him in a basket of reeds. You have to admire big sister Miriam. When Pharaoh's daughter found her baby brother, Miriam didn't panic. She offered to find him a nurse, then got their mother. So Moses grew up with godly instruction from his Jewish mother while enjoying the protection and education of prosperous Egypt. Yet the Holy Spirit shows us how Moses *“chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.”* (Hebrews 11:25f NIV84) He kept his eye on **An eternal horizon**. High priorities are a priceless **Father's Day Blessing from Our Father**.

Every problem takes on a whole new look in the light of the cross of Christ and His empty tomb. With your eyes on the **eternal horizon** God opens up in Christ, you can actually laugh at your troubles. Just test them two ways: for weight and durability.

Remember that friend in school who turned away in spite of your best efforts? In your heart of hearts put him/her on a balance scale. Then set your Friend Jesus on the other side. Jesus weighs much more. Hold up that angry relative and say, “You're temporary; I've got my best Friend Jesus forever.”

You know the job you lost that you thought you just had to have? It was so temporary it couldn't last through the hiring process. Put that job on the balance scale and see how light it really is compared to the weight of heaven's glory. Service in heaven will be about as hard as going up north to your brand new cabin, to launch your shiny new boat with your beautiful wife and excited kids. Only you never have to come back, the wife and kids are never crabby, and neither are you! Feast of Tabernacles forever!

Don't do this out loud, but you can even hold up your selfish, impatient boss and say, “You're only temporary. I have a real boss whose Name is Jesus. He paid my bill with God.” Then you can be loving, kind and respectful to undeserving coworkers because Jesus has been all of that to you. Light weight, temporary, passing away – don't let troubles weigh you down. They disappear like the wake of a boat. **Father's Day Blessings from Our Father** put us on this **river of thanksgiving**. We're headed for **an eternal horizon** where love and joy overflow. Sail on, family of God! Sail on! Amen.