

EVERLASTING FATHER ISAIAH 9:6 (D)

Time is a precious commodity to all of us. But it is especially so to a professional athlete in the prime of his or her career. Even an athletic career devoid of injury is usually brief compared with most non-athletic careers. So it was not surprising that Ruth Rathfarb was concerned as she entered the 14th year of her athletic career.

Now Ruth had some advantages going for her. For one thing, she was a long distance runner, and runners generally have longer careers than many other athletes. And then she had been careful about her training. Ruth had trained for 3 years before she even entered her first 10 kilometer race, so she was carefully prepared. But Ruth had also made some mistakes as well. For instance, after running for several years in the 5 and 10 kilometer races under the sponsorship of Avon, she had been on vacation with some girl friends in Canada. All the girls were runners of sorts, but none had really planned on doing any running. But then they arrived in Ottawa, and they learned that a local marathon was being run there. One of them suggested that they all enter the event. Ruth was quiet, while the others started to talk excitedly. Ruth had never trained for the marathon, had never run in one before. And she was not prepared mentally for such a feat. Such an impetuous decision could ruin her career. But every one else decided to enter it, so Ruth compelled by the peer pressure decided to run as well. Fortunately Ruth not only completed the course, but she surprised herself with how well she did. Ruth continued to run marathons after the one in Ottawa. Her record became impressive- 7 gold medals, 3 silver medals in international marathons run from

Russia to Australia. She even took the gold medal at the 14th world games in New Zealand. And what is perhaps most amazing is the fact that Ruth began her athletic running career when she was 72 years old. That's right. Ruth Rathfarb won the gold medal at the 14th world games in New Zealand when she was 85 years old.

Now Ruth Rathfarb is an unusual person indeed. Not everyone is able to navigate with complete independence at the age of 85, yet alone run marathons. But even though Ruth Rathfarb defied the law of the averages, there came a day when she could no longer run. Like everyone else on this earth, Ruth had to finally hang up her running shoes for the final time. And this reality that comes to each of us, the prospect of growing older and eventually passing from this world's existence, is a source of frustration to us.

It frustrates us because God originally made the first humans as eternal creatures, designed to live forever in an heavenly environment right here on this earth. Even though Adam and Eve brought death into this world through their sin so that we all must now face the prospect of physical death, we all still have that sense of eternity in our hearts. This makes us rebel against the thought of death, because we have an intuitive desire to live forever. Solomon said in the book of Ecclesiastes- "He (God) had made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their hearts, without which men will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end." Eccl. 3:11.

This verse seems to suggest that God so made our hearts that we have a deep craving for that which is lasting and eternal. And that, of course, brings a great

deal of frustration to us being in a world that is temporal and changing. We paint our houses and they peel several years later. We buy a car and it rusts several years later. Babies grow up to be young men and women so quickly. We look in a mirror and find that time is fleeting by. So we sense the frustration of having been created an eternal person in a temporal world.

It is because of this most basic need that we all have that Jesus Christ can fill an important void in each of our lives. Christ can add a new dimension to our lives, a dimension that is sorely needed for it is an eternal dimension. He can do this because his name is everlasting father.

During this Christmas season, we have been looking at the names of Jesus Christ given by the prophet Isaiah hundreds of years before his coming.

He would be called wonderful- showing his distinctiveness in our lives

He would be called counselor- because he helps us with decisions in life

He would be called the mighty God- for he alone is strong enough to deal with the demands of life

He would be called the prince of peace - for he comforts our disturbances in life.

And now this morning- he would be called everlasting father- for he came to give to us new dimensions in life. READ Isaiah 9:6.

ISA 9:6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Now very frankly, this specific name raises some immediate questions in our minds –more than the other 4 names Isaiah used. We even have a tendency to wonder if Isaiah hasn't lost his train of thought for a moment here. After all, he is giving a Messianic prophecy, speaking to the coming of the incarnate child of God, Jesus Christ, born in the Bethlehem stable. And suddenly in the names that he is giving for the Christ-child, he calls him the everlasting father.

Aren't you confusing the members of the trinity Isaiah? You should be speaking of the 2nd person of the trinity not the first one. You should be speaking of God the son, not God the father. How could Isaiah call Jesus Christ, everlasting father?

The answer to this apparent dilemma is found, of course, in the Jewish use of the term "father". In the Hebrew language, the word "av" is the common term to use of the head of the household, the one whom we would refer to as the father. But this is not its only meaning. This very word is also used of one who is the originator or author of something. In Genesis 4:20, for instance, this very term is used when it says- "Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock." Now this meaning of the term "av" or "father" is most clear isn't it? Obviously, everyone who was a herdsman did not descend from Jabal. We know that Abraham and his descendents didn't because Jabal was of Cain's line, Abraham came from Seth's line. So the term "av" is not speaking a physical descent here, but rather it means that Jabal was the originator of the nomadic lifestyle, that he started a new way of living, and so he fathered it in that

manner. The New Testament picks up this same usage of father at times. Jesus, for instance, called Satan the "father of lies" in John 8:44.

So it is clear from the context that Isaiah is not confusing the persons of the trinity, for he is not speaking of Christ's person here as being confused with the father. Rather, Jesus Christ being called everlasting father simply means that Christ is the originator of eternity, he is the author of all that is everlasting and eternal. Now this is a great truth that has tremendous implications in each of our lives- for the realization of Jesus Christ as everlasting father, the originator of all that is eternal, can bring an entirely new dimension into each of our lives.

In what ways is the name everlasting father an appropriate name for Jesus Christ?

1. Note with me first of all that Jesus Christ came to reveal eternity to us. The Apostle John began his epistle by saying, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched- this we proclaim concerning the word of Life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the father and has appeared to us." I John 1:1,2.

Jesus Christ, the most complete revelation from God revealed that which was eternal to us, so that we could know the concept of eternity for the first time. Whereas creation had revealed the fact of God, that there is a God, and that he is a powerful and wise being, and whereas the law revealed something of the character of this God, that he is holy and just and that he desires his people to be holy, when Jesus Christ came to this earth, eternity invaded time. Dust and deity were

mingled. Jesus Christ was born into this world, but he was not only born, he was given. 'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.' The eternal God took on human flesh, and a sense of eternity was revealed to man. So Jesus Christ came to reveal eternity to us.

2. But that is not the complete picture. Jesus Christ came for the purpose of dying for us, and through that death Christ shared eternity with us.

One of the most familiar verses in the entire Bible is found in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Now we can never totally understand how this process takes place, but knowing Jesus Christ as everlasting father, as the originator of eternal life, enables us to experience this wonderful process. Just as a human father begins the process of a new human soul through his seed, so Jesus Christ, the originator of eternal life, is able to initiate everlasting life in those who are born again into his family. When a person trusts in Jesus Christ as his savior, the Holy Spirit of God quickens that person bringing new spiritual life to him. That person is now made alive spiritually. And this life is not mere physical life, but rather it is the very life of Christ the father, the originator.

Perhaps Peter speaks most clearly of this process. Listen to what he says, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these

last times for you sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." I Peter 1:18-23.

Do you see that wonderful truth Peter is speaking of here? Jesus Christ came as the living Word of God to reveal eternity to us- He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for our sakes. And then Christ died to share eternity with us- through him we believe in God. . . and have been born again not of perishable seed, but of imperishable (eternal), through the living and enduring word of God." Who is that word of God? It is Jesus Christ, the living word of God.

Later, Peter would add, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in his divine nature." 2 Peter 1:3,4.

When we believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior, when we accept his provision for our sins trusting in him alone for our justification or righteousness before God, then the Bible says his divine seed is implanted within us so that we become a partaker of his very divine nature. That nature grows within us and blossoms into a mature, Christ-like nature. Because the seed and nature is Christ's, the life given

is eternal. It will never end.

Oh, yes, we will come to the place where this earthly life will cease. We will come to the time when we will breathe our last, and this frail body of dust will crumble and wither away. But that is because this earthly life is temporal, marred by sin and its effects. But the life that Christ initiates within us is eternal life. He is called everlasting father, originator of eternity. And he originates eternity within every single one of his children.

So we can just begin to see the volumes of truth contained within this single name, “everlasting father”. Jesus Christ came to earth as everlasting father to reveal eternity to us. Then he died upon the cross as everlasting father to share eternity with us.

3. But let's note in closing that Jesus Christ ascended back into heaven and lives today at the right hand of the father so that he might work his eternal purposes through us.

People will almost do anything, expend any amount of time and energy, just to be a part of something that will last longer than they do. It's always been that way.

Some of the earliest written history that we have tells of Pharaohs of ancient Egypt who spent a whole lifetime building a gigantic pyramid that they considered to be indestructible. Hundreds of thousands of laborers worked their entire lifetime on these projects, not only because they had to, but also because they felt that they were contributing to something that would outlast them. And the Pharaoh died, and his people died, but the pyramid continued to stand in the sands of the desert as a silent testimony to their existence.

Herod the Great spent a good portion of his life remodeling and rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. There was no hope that he would ever live to see it finished- in fact, it did take almost 80 years to be completely finished, but that really didn't matter. He just wanted to be a part of something that would last beyond his own existence.

Martin Luther spent countless hours in exhausting projects. He translated the entire Bible from the Hebrew and Greek languages into German, he tirelessly taught the word of God to anyone who would listen, he carefully prepared a defense against all the accusations that were made against him and presented them at the diet of Worms even though he knew that he would not receive a fair hearing, he disciplined Melancthon and others to carry on his work of reformation. He devoted his entire life to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Today, many of the pyramids are covered with sand, all of them we know of have been plundered so that there is nothing of value left in them. Only six years after the final touch of renovation had been completed on the temple, the Roman General Titus came into Jerusalem and leveled it to the ground. All of Herod's designs and efforts went for nothing.

But Martin Luther is looked back upon today as the father of the reformation. His efforts have been multiplied to the place where the entire world, not just the nation of Germany, has been affected. Luther knew a truth that the others did not understand. He speaks briefly of it in the song which he authored. He wrote, "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; the body they may kill: But God's truth abideth still; His kingdom is forever.

In the novel, "Papillon", the central character is a criminal named Papillon who was imprisoned for life for crimes committed against the French State. A good portion of the book describes the dreams that this prisoner had while incarcerated in prison. One dream that he had was so characteristic of a basic fear of many. In this dream, he is standing before a tribunal for a crime, and he is pleading with the judge that he was not guilty for the crime for which he was being tried. Convinced of his innocence, the criminal is presenting a very convincing case, when the judge interrupts him. "You don't understand, the judge says, you are not being tried for that crime, but rather you are here before me for the most heinous crime of the human race." "What is this terrible crime?" asks Papillon. The judge stares at Papillon and pronounces "It is the crime of a wasted life." At those words, Papillon's defense turns into silence as he weeps while the judge repeats, "guilty, guilty, guilty".

Jesus Christ lives today at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, and because he lives that nightmare need never come true in our lives. He desires for us to allow his eternal purposes to be worked through us. When we walk in his will, our accomplishments become eternal accomplishments as they help to build his eternal kingdom. This fulfills a basic longing that we each have within our souls, and it gives our lives true meaning and purpose.

Isaiah called Jesus everlasting father. This simply means that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is the author or originator of all that is eternal. As he has existed in eternity past without beginning, and as he will exist in eternity future without ending, as he is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, so he is able to

give a sense of eternity to everything that he touches. When he touches a life, the spiritual seed that is implanted is an eternal one so that the one born again receives everlasting life. And when he leads his children through His power and authority, whatever that disciple does, whether it be teaching children, or sharing the gospel, or working on a project or planting a tree or washing dishes, whatever that follower of Christ does for the Savior is touched with eternity, for it is a building block in his eternal kingdom.

Jesus Christ came to reveal eternity to us, he died to share eternity with us, and he lives today to work his eternal purposes through us. His name is everlasting father, originator of all that is eternal.