

Patria (Family)

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Date: 17 November 2024

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- [0 : 00] Well, tonight we are continuing our series called Five Cool Greek Words. And the aim of this series is, as most of you will know by now, is to learn five very cool Greek words, which is of course the original language that the New Testament was written in.
- And the reason we're doing this is because what I hope we're going to see is that learning the Greek word itself is going to give us just a fuller and broader understanding of the concept that lies behind that word.
- And the hope is that the more we understand it, the more it will build us up in our faith, the more we'll be able to apply the gospel to our lives. Our five words are homologeo, aphiemi, logizomai, patria, and makrothumia.
- And we started by looking at homologeo, which is the Greek word for confess. It literally means to say the same thing. And we looked at that word to highlight two things, the fact that when we confess our sins to God, we are just saying the same thing.
- We're just acknowledging before Him what He is always known, and that confession is what restores our relationship with Him. But also as a church, we want to confess the same faith, the same gospel we want to always hold on to the core truths that lie at the heart of the Christian faith.
- [1 : 19] One word was aphiemi, which is the Greek word for forgive, but it's a very broad word, which we saw that it has the, it conveys the idea of leaving behind, letting go, even sometimes used to grant permission.
- And all of that's reminding us that when we think of the forgiveness in the gospel, God is leaving our sins behind. He is letting them go, and He is giving us new life and new permission to know Him, serve Him and follow Him.
- And of course, the then the consequential implication of that is that as we interact with others, we always have to be ready to show the same forgiveness.
- We need to let things go and leave things behind. Our third word last week was logizomai, which is where we get the word logic, the same kind of word family as the word logic.
- And that speaks of the beautiful logic of the gospel. Logizomai can mean to count or to reckon or to understand, and it all points us to the beautiful, magnificent exchange that takes place at the cross.
- [2 : 27] Our sin counted to Jesus, His righteousness imputed to us, and all the damage of sin is undone.
- Everything is dealt with in a beautiful, magnificent logic of the gospel. Right we come to our fourth word, which is patria.
- So you can see it there. You remember from maths, that's pi, the first letter, so it's the p sound, and then the alpha looks like an a, the t looks like a t.
- The r sound in Greek looks like what we would write as a p, but that right there is an r, and then the ia sound. So patria. And it's actually quite a rare word.

It only appears three times, Luke 2, 4, and Joseph went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was the house and lineage of David.

- [3 : 23] At 325, you are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your father, saying to Abraham, and in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And then Ephesians 3, 14 to 15, for this reason I bow before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

The Greek word patria is this word, this word, and this word. It's the Greek word for family.

But it's helpful for us to think a little bit more about it, because patria is connected to the Greek word pateir, which is the Greek word for father, and that's where we get the words paternity, paternal, all that kind of stuff.

And so this word is especially referring to the family line derived through your father. And so that's where lineage is a good translation in Luke 2, 4.

And the reason I chose this as one of our five cool Greek words is actually because of a talk I was listening to by an American theologian and author called Ed Clowney.

- [4 : 35] He is now home with Jesus, but he lived, he died I think in something like 2004 or something like that. He was a wonderful preacher and writer.

And when he was speaking about this word, he translated it very literally, and he said, a patria is really a fatherdom.

That's really the kind of literal language, literal concept that's been expressed. And he highlighted that by doing a comparison with the Greek word for kingdom, which is basillia.

The Greek word for king is basil. So basillia is kingdom. And he was basically emphasizing that in the Gospel, we entered a kingdom because we have a king, Jesus.

And in the Gospel, we also enter a fatherdom because God becomes our father. So when we see this word family here in Ephesians 3 15, as we think about that word, it's getting us to think especially about the fatherhood of God.

- [5 : 45] In fact, verses 14 and 15 in Greek is kind of a play on the word, patria, patria, because that's the word patria. That's the word patria. And so if you're reading it in Greek, those two words would sound very similar.

In English, it would be a bit like saying, for this reason, I bow my knees before the father from whom every fatherdom in heaven and on earth is named. So it's a very cool word.

And I want to think about it a little bit more under two headings. I want us to think about the fact that we have an amazing father. And I want us to think about the fact that we have the same father.

So first of all, and probably for most of our time, let's look at the first point. The fact that God is our father, that for everybody who is a Christian, for everybody who becomes a Christian, the fact that God is your father, that is absolutely central to the Christian gospel.

And that's summed up brilliantly in a famous quote written in the last century by another theologian called J.I. Packard. I've shared this quote with you a few times before because I think it's very, very helpful. And I'm going to read it to you again.

- [6 : 49] It comes from the book Knowing God, where he says, you sum up the whole of the teaching, the whole of the New Testament teaching in a single phrase. You speak of it as the revelation of the fatherhood of the Holy Creator.

In the same way you sum up the whole of the New Testament religion, if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one's Holy Father. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his father.

If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.

And that's a really striking quotation. And when I first read it, I kind of thought, well, I don't think I understand Christianity very well, even though I had been a Christian for a long time, because I had not really thought or understood just how important this is.

But then when I read that passage and then looked again at the New Testament and realized, actually, this is right, the fact that God is our father is so crucial. If you are a Christian or if you become a Christian, God is your father.

[8 : 02] Now, for some people, this is very easy to relate to because many of us have had wonderful fathers and that is definitely true of me. For others, it's more difficult.

And this topic can be a difficult one because their relationship with their father has not been easy and there are some people who have never had the chance to have a relationship with their father.

And that's an incredibly hard thing for somebody to experience. But I think the reason why that's hard is because I think deep down, every single one of us knows that a father should be good.

And it's wrong if they aren't. A father should be somebody that we can rely on. A father should be someone who takes the best care of us.

A father should be someone who gives us so much joy. And in so many ways, if somebody is a good father, really they are simply being a proper father because good is everything that a father should be.

[9 : 08] Now, like every single part of our lives and our experience as human sin has affected that negatively, has damaged it and spoiled it. Some people have had very difficult fathers and even the best of fathers have faults and failings and make lots of mistakes along the way.

The key point I want us to recognise is that God is an absolutely amazing father. And that must be the way that we think of Him.

There's loads that we could say about this. I just want to highlight three things. Number one, God is an amazing father because his commitment to you is resolute.

His commitment to you is resolute. And that's emphasised so magnificently at the very start of the letter to the Ephesians. Let me read the very opening verses. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints who are in Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus, graced you in peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who's blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him.

[10 : 20] In love, he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

These words are telling you that for every person who becomes a Christian, it's because from all eternity, God has chosen you to be his child.

And that's such a magnificent thing for us to think about. It's telling you that God's commitment to you as Father, his commitment to be your Father, is eternal. That means that there has never, ever been a moment when God has not been utterly set on being Father to you.

Never in a moment, from before the foundation of the world, from before anything else existed, God was utterly and resolutely committed to being your Father.

So you never came on the scene for God. You never had to kind of get his attention. You never had to try and be noticed. Since before the foundation of the world, you have always been his.

[11 : 29] You've always been the recipient of his commitment. In fact, that's the very reason why you exist. His commitment to you is eternal.

And so that's an amazing thing for us to think about. You've got that magnificent language of eternal commitment. But the other thing that we see in these verses that's equally amazing is that God's commitment to be your Father is also voluntary.

That's where we see the language of chose and predestined and purpose of his will. These are all beautiful, beautiful expressions because it's teaching us that being your Father is what God wants.

Being your Father is what God wants. It's not forced on him. He's not obligated. He's not coerced. It's his choice.

It's what he wants. That means that no child is more wanted than the child of God.

[12 : 38] No Father is more committed, more motivated and more delighted than God. His commitment to you is resolute.

Second thing I want to say under this is that God is an amazing Father because his desires for you are righteous. God's desires for you are righteous. Now that might sound all very theological.

It basically means that what God wants for you is always at the highest and best level. Now basically another way of saying that is that nothing, in terms of being your Father, nothing suboptimal, nothing substandard is ever good enough for God.

You see an amazing example of this in Ephesians chapter 2. Let me read verses 10 to 13. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Therefore, remember that at one time you the Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision which is made in the flesh by hands. Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

[13 : 54] But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Now here Paul is speaking about how the Ephesians had been in their natural sinful state separated from God far off from him.

And the great emphasis that's been made is that far off is not good enough for God. Far off is not acceptable to God. It's not what he wants.

And in Christ those who are far off have been brought near. Those who are far off have been brought near.

And the result is that we have amazing access to the Father in the Spirit and all of it was made possible at the greatest cost ever paid, the blood of Jesus.

And all of this is teaching us that when it comes to caring for you, when it comes to fathering you, God will never settle for good enough or they're near enough or well, I'm sure they're safe enough.

[15 : 12] His standards are righteous. That means that they are at the highest, highest level. His desires are uncompromising. His fatherhood only ever operates at the level of perfection.

That is the only level that God operates at. And that's the level that his fatherhood is always, always held at. And that's emphasised in verse 10 where it speaks about being created in Christ Jesus for good works.

We are created to be those who perform the best of works. We're created for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and God's great wishes, your father is that you would just be everything that he made you to be.

His purposes, his desires are always at the best level. And this is where we learn such an important lesson because this explains to us why there are times when God will warn us and he will challenge us and he will even rebuke us and discipline us.

And that's described beautifully in Hebrews 12, 5. I know it's a long chapter section but this is such a beautiful section so I'm going to read it all. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

[16 : 27] My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and justifies every son whom he receives.

It's for discipline that you have to endure. God's treating you as sons for what son is that whom the Father does not discipline. If you are left without discipline in which you all have participated then you're illegitimate children and not sons.

Besides this we have our earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time assumed best to them but he disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness.

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant but later it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

All of that is emphasizing that God's purposes for us, his desires for us are righteous. Never forget that in God the Father you always have a beautiful balance of merciful protectiveness and bold ambition.

[17 : 38] Merciful protectiveness and bold ambition. What do I mean by that? Well God is mercifully protective. So if God is warning you or if he's convicting you of sin or if he's preventing you from doing something harmful he's doing that because he wants to protect you.

He's doing it out of mercy and love and kindness. He's doing it because he only ever wants what is best for you. So he will always be mercifully protective but he's also bold in his ambitions for you.

Your Father wants you to become stronger and wiser and more confident and more courageous and sometimes the only way for that to happen is to allow hard things to come into our lives and when that happens it's because he wants us to grow and that's because his ambitions for you are bold.

His plans for you are big and he's always acting in your best interests. In other words to God the Father you are too precious for him to just stand and watch you make a terrible decision and do things that will harm you.

He will warn you in his mercy but you are also too precious for him to allow to go to waste, he wants you to grow and thrive and fulfill your potential and so this week maybe there will be something this week that you really want it to happen and it won't.

[18 : 51] In that remember that your Father is protecting you and maybe this week something will happen that you really didn't want to happen and it's hard and painful in that in allowing that your Father is helping you to grow and he's making you stronger.

All the time the world around us is going to tie and entice us towards filling our lives with stuff that's rubbish and towards doing things that's going to squander our potential.

The Gospel does the opposite. God wants to steer you away from rubbish and nonsense and he wants to embolden you so that you will thrive as you follow and serve him.

His desires for you are always righteous, they're always at their best level and then thirdly and most importantly God is an amazing Father because he loves you with a deep beautiful unrelenting love.

You see that right through at this letter Ephesians 2 4-5 God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us. Same again in the passage we read in Ephesians 3 that you might have so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

[20 : 23] Now what you have got to remember and what I have got to remember because it's so easy to forget is that this love is what shapes everything about God the Father's relationship with you.

Everything that God does towards you is shaped by this beautiful deep unrelenting love. It was in love that he chose you and predestined you to be his child.

It was in love that he brought you near through the cross and the shedding of the blood of his own son. It is in love that he teaches and guides you and corrects you and encourages you.

It's all because of his love and it's described so amazingly here in Ephesians 3 17 where it says that you are rooted and grounded in his love.

Now I love that language. So if you think of yourself as a flower, the soil that you are planted in, the soil that nourishes you, the soil that you grow in is the rich, deep, warm love of God.

[21 : 33] Or if you think of yourself as a house, the rock solid foundation that you stand on and that holds you up is the love of God.

And these images are so beautiful. The flower rooted in the soil of God's love, the house standing on the rock solid foundation grounded in his love. They're so helpful for us because so often we think of the love of God as like the crown of the gospel.

We think it's maybe like the pinnacle, it's the mountaintop, the icing on the cake, the whatever, the petals of the flower on a summer's day. It's the idea that like God's love is the thing that we maybe experience when things are really good.

And if you're a really good Christian, then that's when we get to enjoy God's love. Things are going well, then we experience the love of God. We make the love of God the kind of top of the tree that I don't know I'm running out of images.

Basically we make the thing up there that we only get occasionally and that's wrong. That's not true. And we think that you know actually the reality is that we're most of the time cold and struggling and God is distant and his love is out of reach.

[22 : 42] That's never true. The love of God, the Father for you is always the starting point that will never move.

And that will never change. And that will never fade. That's where your relationship with him starts.

And we can relate to this imagery, this rooted and grounded in love. We can relate to it as we head into winter just now because the gales are coming, the plants that barely grew in the summer are now just getting battered to death by the wind and maybe even over the coming weeks and months some of our houses might get damaged.

We might lose a few slates. That can easily happen. And that's a picture for us of what our experience as Christians can be like. So if we think of ourselves as a flower, life will batter us and sometimes we feel wilted, sometimes we feel broken, sometimes we feel burnt by the wind.

Or like a house we maybe feel like we are just shaking and that we're being rocked, that we're crumbling. And so you think of the storms as they hit the flowers in our gardens, as they hit our houses.

[24 : 04] We feel like that as Christians, we feel like we are bruised and battered, wobbling, maybe even crumbling. But remember this, when the winds come in winter in Lewis and batter the flowers in your garden, does that wind ever blow the soil away?

Or as the wind pounds against our houses, have you ever seen the wind blow a foundation away? Of course you haven't. Of course you haven't.

And that's where the love of God for you lies at that untouchable, immovable level. It's not the summer stay bonus. It is the foundational, immovable, never shaken reality that you are rooted and grounded in.

So the imagery here is magnificent, equally magnificent is the grammar. Because if you look at those words and you'll maybe see and recognize that these are what we would call passive verbs.

So active verb is something that you do. Passive verb is something that is done to you. And it's so easy to think that being rooted and grounded in God's love is something that I must do.

[25 : 31] I must pray more. I must read more. I must read myself more rooted and more grounded in God's love. That is not what that verse is saying. It is saying that God has rooted you and he has grounded you in his love.

This is not, those words, rooted and grounded, are not describing something that you do. It is something that God has done to you. He has rooted you in the soil of his love.

He has set you in the reinforced concrete of his love. And that soil runs so deep, that foundation is so immensely strong.

And all of this means that if you are a Christian or when you become a Christian, you are going to discover that God's first thought towards you is that he loves you.

Love is his first thought. And it's what shapes everything else. It's what took his son all the way to the cross.

[26 : 34] And please, please recognize that. And please recognize that if you are not yet a Christian or not sure, you do not have to wait for God to start loving you.

You do not have to try and convince him to start loving you. And you do not have to try and find your way into the love of God. He is already pouring it out upon you. He is already holding it out to you.

And all you need to do is just fall into your father's arms. And he will take care of everything else. Your father's commitment to you is resolute.

It stretches back before the foundation of the universe. It reaches beyond whatever the history of the universe is going to be. His desires for you are righteous.

He never wants anything for you other than the absolute best. And his love for you surpasses knowledge.

[27 : 32] You think of all the knowledge, the collective knowledge that humanity has. God's love for you is beyond that. Bigger than that.

We have an amazing father. We also have the same father. Oh my goodness, it's seven o'clock. Right, very quick.

We have the same father. One of the amazing things about the Gospel is that not only does it establish a relationship with us and God as our father, it immediately then establishes a relationship with one another.

And I wanted to say, I'm going to have to do this super fast because I'm out of time. The word patria is important for three things. Looking back, looking forward, looking around.

So patria is important for looking back. And what we mean by that is the fact that actually all our origins can be traced back to God. So that's what's been highlighted here.

[28 : 30] It's a wee bit of a debate as to how to translate this word every. Sometimes people want to translate it the whole rather than every. So what difference does it make? Well, if you say from whom the whole family on heaven and earth is named, that would make that a direct reference to the church.

If we say rather that it's talking about every family in heaven and earth being named, the emphasis is broader. But either way, it doesn't really matter because it's all tracing out origins back to God.

And it's emphasizing the fact that we are united together in him. The great emphasis is on our collective unity, deriving from God as our creator and our father. So patria, fatherdom, same father, same origin.

It's uniting us together. But patria also looks forward and we see that when we talk about the language of inheritance and that gets highlighted in Ephesians 111.

It gets highlighted in Ephesians 118. It gets highlighted in 36. All the language of inheritance. There, there, there, and then there.

[29 : 30] And I want to emphasize especially that phrase that we are fellow heirs together in Christ. And so all of this is just pointing to the fact that in the Gospel, God has promised so much to his children.

And as your perfect father, he is going to hold back nothing good from you. And so he's not going to hold back his mercy.

So every single mistake that you have made, every regret that you have, your father is going to forgive them. He's not going to hold back his compassion.

So every tear is wiped away, every tear. And especially when we think of all the sorrow and agony that death brings, he will wipe away every tear.

He's not going to hold back in his protection. So for all of eternity, nothing can touch you. Nothing can harm you. You are safe as his child forever. He's not going to hold back in his generosity and kindness.

[30 : 35] So every thirst you have is going to be quenched. And he is not going to hold back on his love. So that every moment that you experience in the new creation with your father and with Jesus in heaven, you're going to know his smile, his favor, his delight, his care, his constant never ending loving kindness.

If God is your father, you have so much to look forward to. And we share in that together. And this is one of the amazing things about the Gospel, because normally if we think about inheritance being shared, it means that everything gets made smaller.

If I had a big inheritance, if I had 10 million pounds and I had 10 children, then they're only going to get a million pounds each. Well, not that that's bad. But you know what I mean? That it has to get made small.

It has to be divided. But that is not what happens in the Gospel. Everyone gets everything.

We all get filled with the fullness of God. And so there's so much to look forward to. And then last of all, Patria shapes the way we look around.

[31 : 42] What do I mean by that? Well, it's must shape the way that we look at each other. Because if you're a Christian or if you become a Christian, we share the same father.

We are rooted and grounded in the same love. We're promised the same inheritance. We're united together in one fatherdom. Now, remember in the J.I. Packer quote at the start, he said, if you don't see God as your father, then you really don't understand Christianity very well.

And that I think is true. But we can actually add to that and say that if you don't see your fellow Christian as family and if you don't treat them as family, then you still don't understand Christianity very well.

We've been brought into one Patria, one family, one fatherdom. And the unity of that family is as fundamental as the fatherhood of God himself.

In other words, we cannot say my father without also being ready to say our father. And that's always got to be the thing that shapes the way we treat one another.

[32 : 54] That's why we cannot be judgmental or critical or suspicious or resentful or unkind or any of that. And that's why the way we treat each other is so important. I don't have time to say it, but I was going to read from the start of chapter four.

But you go into chapter four, Paul just then starts talking about how we treat each other because the reality of being in God's Patria must shape the way we behave towards one another.

In other words, when someone walks into that door and they look at us in church, they should be thinking they're like a family because we are a family. God has brought us into his Patria.

So Patria is a very cool word. The gospel opens up the way for us to know God as his as our father and to have a place forever in his fatherdom.

Two final things I want to say. Our entry into that fatherdom came at a massive cost.

[33 : 56] It came through the blood of God the Son. But your entry into this fatherdom is totally free.

Nothing in our hands we bring simply to the cross we cling. What the Father wants you in his Patria.

There's a space for you. He's calling you. Take your place with him. Amen.