

The Doctrine of God the Father
(The Person and Work of the First Person of the Trinity)
Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training
(November, 2004)

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2. The Work of God the Father

- I. The Father's work in salvation compared with the other Persons of the Godhead
- A. Foreknowledge, election, power, love pertain to the Father
 - B. Reconciliation, mediation, redemption pertain to the Son
 - C. Regeneration, sanctification, and communion pertain to the Holy Spirit
 - D. Shedd: "The Father creates, yet by and through the Son. The Son redeems, yet commissioned by the Father. The Spirit inspires and sanctifies, yet as sent by the Father and the Son..." (*Dogmatic Theology*, p. 252)
- II. God the Father is described as being first in order within the Godhead
- A. This in no way implies inequality within the Godhead but describes the unique relationship
 - 1. Both in the Old Testament and New Testament the Father occupies the first position
 - 2. Bavinck- "Whenever the name 'God' is in a special sense applied to the Father, it indicates that in the divine economy he is first; it is as it were and official title, indicative of order and rank, just as among men there were distinctions of social standing and honor though all share the same human nature." (*Doctrine of God*, p. 268)
 - 3. Shedd- "The terms *first*, *second*, and *third* applied to the persons are terms of order and relationship only. They imply no priority of nature, substance, existence, or excellence. The term *father* does not denote a

higher grade of being but exactly the same grade that the term *son* does." (*Dogmatic Theology*, p. 250)

4. Berkhof: "All of the (works) of God are the works of the triune God, but in some of these works the Father is evidently in the foreground, such as: (1) Designing the work of redemption, including election, of which the Son was Himself an object, (2) The works of creation and providence, especially in their initial stages, (3) The work of representing the Trinity in the Counsel of Redemption, as the holy righteous Being, who right was violated." (*Systematic Theology*, p. 91)
5. To describe the priority of the Father is only to describe His relationship within the Godhead. There is a subordination of person but not essence. Hodge: "In the Holy Trinity there is a subordination of the Persons as to the mode of subsistence and operation." (*Systematic Theology*, p. 445)

B. Further explanation and examples of this standing

1. The Father is working His good pleasure
Acts 4:28 - "For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."
Ephesians 1:11 - "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:"
Matthew 11:26 - "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."
2. The Father took the initiative in the work of creation and redemption
Psalms 33:6 - "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."
John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
3. Power originates with the Father
Matthew 6:13 - "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."
Romans 1:20 - "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead (*divine nature*); so that they are without excuse:"
Ephesians 1:19 - "And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,"
 - a. The Father then gives power to the Son
Matthew 28:18 - "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."
 - b. All earthly authority is delegated by the Father, through the Son, by His Spirit
John 19:11 - "Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from

above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."

4. In a special sense He is called God
 - a. He is Elohim, Jehovah, El Elyon, El Shaddai etc.
 - b. Jesus referred to the Father as "the only true God"
John 17:3 - "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."
(This is not the same as saying that only the Father is God for the Son and the Holy Spirit are also God)
 - c. Paul referred to the Father as the "one God"
1 Corinthians 8:6 - "But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him."
5. Sin has separated sinners from the Father. In His death Christ reconciled sinners to the Father.
Romans 5:10 - "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."
John 14:6 - "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

C. Again, it is essential to understand that the Father is not greater in essence. Each person of the Godhead is equal.
Shedd: "Each divine person supposes and suggests the others. Each represents the others. Consequently, to pray to any one of the divine three is by implication and virtually to pray to all three. No man can honor the Son without honoring the Father also." (*Dogmatic Theology*, p. 254)

II. The Sovereignty of God's Fatherhood

- A. All of God's works are according to His sovereign will
 1. The opening words of the Lord's Prayer present God the Father sitting upon His throne in heaven. - "Our Father which art in heaven"
He is high above creation.
 2. God plans and then carries out his plans
Daniel 4:35 - "And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"
 3. God plans according to His infinite wisdom. His wisdom is without equal.
Romans 11:33-36 - "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! ³⁴ For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? ³⁵ Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? ³⁶ For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen."

- B. Election is by God's Sovereign prerogative
1. God was not bound to save any - all were condemned
Romans 3:23 - "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"
 2. God has chosen a multitude according to His sovereign will
Ephesians 1:3-5 - "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: ⁴ According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: ⁵ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,"
 3. God chose to be our Father. He chose to make us His sons. It was His prerogative, His choice. He did it because it pleased Him to do so.

III. God's Fatherhood of man is according to His eternal covenant

- A. God the Father chose a multitude of men and pledged them to His Eternal Son in the eternal Covenant of Grace. They would be the bride of Christ.
John 6:37-39 - "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ³⁸ For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. ³⁹ And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."
1. This was a covenant within the divine Being. He conceived it before the world began and fulfilled it according to His pleasure.
 2. All of God's historical covenants flow from this one eternal covenant
- B. It was by and through this covenant that God the Father brought redemption
1. The Son would be their Redeemer
 2. The Holy Spirit would apply the work of redemption to the Father's elect

IV. Correct Use of the Name Father

- A. It is improper to call God the Father of all mankind
1. To use the name Father as referring to creation must be in the most general sense. Being Creator and Father is not the same thing - God is Creator of all things but one would not call Him the Father of rocks in the same way He is the Father of His children.
 2. To be a son of God demands a spiritual birth
John 1:12-13 - "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: ¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."
 3. Those who are not the sons of God belong to a different father
John 8:42-44 - "Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why do ye not understand my speech? *even* because ye cannot hear my word. ⁴⁴ Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a

murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

B. God was the Father of the Nation of Israel

Deuteronomy 32:6 - "Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? *is* not he thy father *that* hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?"

Isaiah 63:16 - "Doubtless thou *art* our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, *art* our father, our redeemer; thy name *is* from everlasting."

Isaiah 64:8 - "But now, O LORD, thou *art* our father; we *are* the clay, and thou our potter; and we all *are* the work of thy hand."

Jeremiah 31:9 - "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim *is* my firstborn."

Hosea 11:1 - "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

1. The election of Israel as a nation was typical of the church
2. God's promises to Israel have been fulfilled in the church

C. God is the Father of Jesus Christ

Isaiah 9:6 - "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ... "

John 1:18 - "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*."

John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Matthew 3:17 - "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Matthew 10:32 - "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."

Matthew 11:27 - "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*."

1. This is an eternal relationship

John 17:4-5 - "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. ⁵ And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

3. Jesus is eternally begotten of the Father. This does not call into question the eternity of Christ but merely expresses that the Son comes from the Father.

- a. The terms *generation* and *spiration* or *filiation* and *procession* are often used to describe the Son and Holy Spirit in relation to the Godhead.

- The Son is begotten of the Father
- The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son

- o Spiration describes the manner in which He has the essence of Spirit.
 - o Shedd: "He is no more spiritual in substance than the Father or Son. But the essence is communicated to him by spiration or outbreathing (*pneuma* = *spiritus* = breath)." (*Dogmatic Theology*, p.242)
- b. That Christ is "begotten" is not to say that He was brought into being. It only describes His relationship to the Father as Son. Shedd: "These internal acts or activities of generation and spiriation, in divine essence, are not creative acts. They originate nothing external to God and other than God. They do not make a new essence, but only modify an existing one. When the Father generates the Son, he does not call another substance into existence from nonentity, as he does when he makes the universe. These internal activities are not temporal and transient, but eternal and unceasing. They have neither beginning nor ending nor cessation. Neither of them is before the other in time. All are eternal and therefore simultaneous. The first person is not the eternal Father before the second person is eternal Son. An eternal Father cannot exist before and eternal Son... " (*Dogmatic Theology* , 242)
- 2. The incarnation of Christ was a voluntary submission to the Father
Philippians 2:8 - "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
- D. God is the Father of the Redeemed
John 1:11-12 - "He came unto his own, and his own received him not.¹² But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:"
Ephesians 4:4-6 - "*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*⁵ *One Lord, one faith, one baptism,*⁶ *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*"
- 1. Sonship is a great manifestation of God's love for the elect
1 John 3:1 - "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:"
- 2. This has been made possible through Christ who provides access to the Father
John 14:6 - "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
Galatians 4:4-5 - "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,⁵ To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."
Galatians 3:26 - "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."
- 3. The Holy Spirit bears us witness that we are the children of God - God's adopted sons

Romans 8:16-17 - "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: ¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;"

Galatians 4:6-7 - "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. ⁷ Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

V. The Fatherhood of God is an ethical relationship.

A. God makes demands upon His children.

1. Jesus demonstrated perfect obedience

Philippians 2:8 - "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

John 4:34 - "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

2. All of God's children are to live in obedience

Matthew 5:16 - "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Matthew 7:21 - "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Matthew 12:50 - "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Hebrews 12:14 - "Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:"

B. For the disobedient the Father brings correction.

Hebrews 12:6-7- "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ⁷ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"

1. God's motivation **in** chastening is love

Samuel Bolton - "God has thoughts of love in all He does to His people. The ground of His dealings with us is love (though the occasion may be sin), the manner of His dealings is love, and the purpose of His dealings is love. He has regard, in all, to our good here, to make us partakers of His holiness, and to our glory hereafter, to make us partakers of His glory" (Bolton, Samuel. *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, (1645; reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001) p.25)

2. God's discipline upon His children is never in the form of punishment but of fatherly discipline. Our Father is preparing us into glory

VI. The Love of the Father

A. God has a general love (common grace) for all of His creation

1. God shows great kindness to all men - a great act of His mercy
2. God takes no pleasure in punishing the wicked
Ezekiel 33:11 - "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"
3. God's general love in no way diminishes His perfect holiness. Although He demonstrates great kindness to His enemies, His wrath and hatred is kindled against them.
Psalms 5:5-6 - "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man."

B. The Father has a particular love towards His elect

1. God loves us and has set us as His precious possession - we are His people
2 Corinthians 6:17-18 - "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, ¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."
2. God's love is the indescribable demonstration of His mercy -
 - a. It manifests God's compassion upon those deserving of His wrath
 - b. He demonstrates His mercy in providing a solution for sin by covering sinners with His own righteousness.
John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

C. God's love is completely sovereign

1. God's love cannot be influenced -
Deuteronomy 7:7-8 - "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you."
1 John 4:19 - "We love him, because he first loved us"
2. God shows forth His love as He wills
Romans 9:18 - "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth."