

God the Father

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[0 : 00] that you discover that your teachers are actually human. There's a little bit more to them. Your teachers might even be married, they may have kids, they may be friends of some people. And this came as a shock to me because up to that point in my life, all I saw was the person down the front yelling at me and giving me work to do and making my life miserable.

But it turns out there is different aspects to this teacher. And it is important for me to actually relate to them as a person to understand these various different aspects.

Yes, they're a teacher, they have a job, but they are also a friend to some people, potentially a dad or a mom or a husband or a wife. And the same is true of God.

It is great to know that there is a God, to know that there is one God, but we are missing something if we leave out or skip the fact that he is Father.

That's where we're going to spend time tonight. To leave that out is to actually miss out on God as he is. It's to get a deficient or a not complete view of him.

[1 : 03] It's to make God less than he is. And so it matters that if we're going to know God, which is what being a Christian is, if we're going to have a relationship with him, it matters that we understand him as Father so that we see him clearly and we can actually relate to him well.

Now before we get into this passage, I want to give you some context really quickly. And these are some things that I'm going to say over and over through this series, four things that the Bible teaches to be true. First one, there is only one God.

Second one, that God is three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Third one, each member of the Trinity is equally God, eternally God and fully God.

Fourth one, each member of that Trinity is a distinct personal expression of the one divine nature.

Now there is a whole lot wrapped up in those four things, but we need to have that as a context as we begin to wrestle with God as Father because God as Trinity is a difficult thing to think about.

We learned last week it's incomprehensible, but it's still important. It's not easy, but that doesn't change the fact that it's true. And so tonight as we wrestle with it, the question we need to ask is, what is it that makes the Father the Father?

[2 : 21] What is it that makes Him distinct? And what impact does that have on us knowing Him? I want to show you three things from Ephesians 1. This isn't the whole list of what makes the Father the Father, but this is a good starting point for us tonight.

So let's look at Ephesians 1. First thing that we need to grab out of here is that the Father is supreme within the Trinity. Now, even though the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have absolute equality, they're all eternal, they're all all-powerful, they're all all-knowing, yet somehow the Father is supreme over the Son and the Spirit.

He's the *Boutros Boutros* of the Trinity, if you will. The America of the UN, the Steve Jeffrey of our St. Paul's staff team. Maybe not. But the point is, the Father has authority over the Son and over the Spirit.

Let's have a look at this passage in Ephesians again and try and see how it's showing us this. First one, in verse 4. Now, jump down to verse 9.

Verse 11.

[3 : 59] And then right down the bottom, in the end of verse 14, all this stuff being done, we have the Spirit that's a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of His, the Father's, glory.

It's the Father's will. It's the Father's choice from start to finish. Don't get me wrong. The Son gets some serious billing in this particular passage. Jesus gets mentioned over and over and over.

But in those verses, we see that the Father's will is the plan that's happening. It's the Father who executes His desires. It's the Father who planned out creation before it was there.

It's the Father who planned that He would send the Son to save people. And even that final day, when everything gets made right, when Jesus comes back, all of that is restored according to the plan of the Father's will.

It's the mystery of His will that has been revealed. And you can be sure that every detail in all creation is according to His will. In verse 11. In Him we were chosen, predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.

[5 : 31] Everything is worked out according to the Father's will. There's no gap. God doesn't plan the big stuff and then send in the Son and the Spirit to fill the gaps and sort out the details. He doesn't leave the rest to them or even to us.

It is the Father who works out everything in the conformity of His will. It is Him who guides and directs all things. And everything in heaven, everything on earth, even the Son and the Spirit are subject to the authority of God the Father.

But it's not an oppressive authority. We have this negative picture of authority in our existence.

Think about the way that you react for those of you who drive when you see a parking cop.

Whether you're getting a ticket or not, are you excited? Are you reverent towards their authority?

They have an authority. They are delegated by the local council or whoever it is that's empowered them to come around and make sure that the laws are adhered to.

But immediately, you think something along the lines of, jerk. It's okay to admit it because I know I've done it. Whether they're giving me a ticket or someone else a ticket or just walking to get their lunch.

[6 : 42] I see the ticket machine and I don't think, wow, authority that is to be feared and respected. I think, authority, what a shackle. What a limitation. Don't they understand? I'm just running into the shop for a second and it's not that I'm ignoring the no standing sign.

It's just that the no standing sign doesn't understand my situation. We don't like authority. We're happy to submit with authority as long as it fits in with what we want it to do anyway. But we have this negative picture of authority that is over us.

Whether it's parents or teachers or police or parking cops, we have this sense that authority belittles us or reduces the one who is under authority. But here in Ephesians and throughout all of Scripture, we see the Son and the Spirit under the authority of the Father.

Even in the parts of the New Testament that proclaim the greatness and majesty of Jesus, and there are a lot of them, even in the final exaltation of Jesus, the Father is still supreme.

He's still in the box seat. I'm going to put a couple of passages up on the screen. Philippians 2 is the first one. This is the hymn about Jesus who is in very nature God and humbles himself to death, becoming obedient, death on the cross, and then God exalts him.

[7 : 57] And it says here, therefore God exalted him to the highest place, gave him the name that's above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

This is exhaustive. Everybody is going to acknowledge Jesus as king, but Jesus' kingship is to what end? To the glory of God the Father.

He's given this name, he's exalted, he's lifted up, but even in that moment, the Son remains subject to the authority of the Father.

Another passage, 1 Corinthians 15. I'll read a little bit extra that comes just before the stuff that will be on the screen for you. 1 Corinthians 15, and I will begin at verse 20.

This is talking about resurrection, and it says, Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through one man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

[8 : 57] For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all be made alive, but each in his own turn. Christ the firstfruits then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power.

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he has put everything under his feet. Here's the key bit.

Now when it says that everything has been put under him, still talking about Jesus, it's clear that this does not include God the Father himself who put everything under Christ.

When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him so that God may be all in all. Even at that final moment when every authority has been laid low, when everyone has acknowledged the kingship of Jesus, at that point, the Son will not make much of himself.

He will joyfully and willingly subject himself to the authority of God the Father. Even in that moment, Jesus willingly and wholeheartedly submits to authority.

[10:13] And it's important for us to recognize that the Father's authority and his supremacy is eternal. In this passage in Ephesians, we see that before the creation of the world, God the Father had already planned things out.

He was exercising his authority before he spoke the earth into motion. He had already told the Son, this is what you will do before the world had begun. And we see there in 1 Corinthians 15, that at the end and for all eternity, the Son will make himself subject to God the Father because God the Father was, is, and always will be supreme.

Now there's two important implications, well at least two important implications for us in this. Authority is therefore inherently good.

God is good and authority is part of who God is, it's part of him as Father for all eternity, therefore authority is good.

Now, we need to acknowledge authority can be abused, authority can be misused, but it's part of who God is and we need to be careful as Christians how we approach those who are in authority over us.

[11:28] Because if authority is good, we're not justified in our default position of just disliking authority because it limits me. Because authority is going to be there for all eternity.

It's not like when we go to heaven, suddenly all authority will be removed and you will be a Lord unto yourself. Therefore, all eternity, you too will be subject to the authority of God the Father and so we cannot just throw authority out as a bad thing that the world has given us.

Authority is part of who God is. But more importantly, if we fail to submit to earthly authority, parents, teachers, police, even church leadership, we actually handicap ourselves when it comes to our relationship with God.

If we lack the ability to submit to authority, then we will struggle when it comes to submitting to God. If we breed within ourselves a default setting and a culture where authority is bad, it is inevitable that that will begin to flow into the way we relate to our God. We will see authority as a negative thing and instead we will treat him as equal with us, important, but not in charge.

[12:47] God the Father is supreme over Jesus the Son and over the Holy Spirit and you can be sure that he is supreme over us as well. To reject authority, to reject his authority, is to reject him as Father, to reject him as Father is to reject God because that's who he is.

Second implication of the authority of the Father is that in God we have a model for what fatherhood looks like. We all have different experiences of fatherhood, for some of us it's been positive, for some negative, but for those of us who are fathers or who will be one day, we must recognize that authority is an appropriate position for a father over a child.

It is right for fathers to demand respect and to demand obedience from their children, not oppressively, not in a burdensome way, but the respect that is commanded from kids will teach kids that God, their Heavenly Father, also demands respect and obedience.

As fathers, we will be the model for our own kids and for the world around us of what the fatherhood of God looks like and so we need to look to Him and seek to fulfill the pattern that He's given us.

The right response to the authority of the Father is found in the perfect submission of Jesus but we're going to get to that a little bit more next week so you're just going to have to hold that on the shelf a little bit.

[14:12] The Father is supreme. It's the first thing that Ephesians 1 wants to show us but not only supreme, secondly, the Father is abundantly generous. Part of what makes the Father's authority perfect and good is the love that goes hand in hand with the authority that He exercises.

Love for His Son, love for the Spirit and love for us. If you look at Jesus' life on the earth, Jesus is provided for by His Father. The Father sends the Spirit on Jesus at His baptism so that the Spirit will empower Jesus for His earthly life.

The Spirit is the one who's giving Him the power but the Father's the one who gave Him the Spirit and so it is the Father who provides for His Son. Jesus is often referred to as the Son of the Father

but more than that, in Mark chapter 1 where Jesus is being baptized, it says this, at that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

As Jesus was coming up out of the water, He saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove and a voice came from heaven, You are my Son whom I love. With you I am well pleased. Jesus knows the Father's love for Him. He knows the Father's provision. He knows the Father's abundant generosity and so the authority that He is called to submit to is in no way oppressive or negative or difficult.

[15 : 41] But the amazing blessing is that we too know the loving provision of our Heavenly Father. Have a look at verse 7 and 8. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

The love of our Heavenly Father is lavish. It's abundant. It is poured out on us. It is overflowing. God the Father is generous.

James 1.17 tells us that every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows. In Ephesians verse 3 we read, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing.

God's love is lavish. It is abundant. It is overwhelming. Every good gift comes from God. Every good thing you have in your life, everything that you are thankful for is a gift from the Father for which he is worthy of our thanks and praise.

But the greatest gift of the Father to us, his children, is himself. As the creator of anything that is good, there is nothing better than himself.

[17 : 09] It's like when you watch those Disney cartoons and somebody finds a genie lamp, what's the first wish of a smart person? More wishes. They want the source of the goodness and in the same way the Father who gives us good things gives us the greatest gift in that he gives us himself.

He gives us access to the unlimited, abundant, and lavish love of our heavenly Father. Now the Son gets that in a measure that we can only begin to dream about.

That's the marvel of the Trinity is that the Father and the Son are so interconnected and so closely related that they get each other in fullness but for us the Father's love climaxes in Jesus on the cross.

Through that moment of sacrifice that the Father pays we come to know him as Father. Chris was sharing this morning that as you range through the Old Testament you will very rarely find God referred to as Father.

It's not that he's not Father because we've already looked at in all eternity he has been the Supreme Father but it's that it's not until we get to Jesus the Son that we are invited to know him as Father.

[18 : 25] That is the lavish love of the Father that he would sacrifice his Son and John 14 puts it explicitly when Jesus says I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me.

The love of the Father for us is to draw us into a relationship with him where he remains supreme. but where he pours out his abundant love.

It's amazing that we come to know him not just as a Father or even the Father but our Father and so Jesus can teach his disciples and we can read in Matthew 6 we pray our Father in heaven.

Verse 5 puts it this way he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ. The Father who cares for his Son and provided his Holy Spirit for him has adopted us into his family and again here God the Father is the model of what a real father should be.

He models what fatherly love should look like. Fathers are called to so smother their children with love that there will never be a question. Jesus heard it explicitly from his father's lips and Jesus experienced it directly through his father's provision and so for those of us who are fathers and those of us who may become fathers we are called to the same sort of love.

[19 : 54] If you are a father do your children know that you love them? Are they confident? Have you told them? Have they experienced it? God our father is our model.

There's an amazing promise in Romans 8 that says if he did not spare his own son but graciously gave him up for us all how will he not also along with him give us all things?

As children of God we are confident in God's love because he has told us that we are loved and he has shown us that we are loved in Jesus and not loved a little bit we are loved lavishly abundantly even excessively our own personal experiences of authority and love in our relationships with one another might have you feeling a tension how can authority and love fit together in God but we must understand that in God they are perfectly complementary we need to be careful that our own failures to exercise authority and our failures to submit to authority in no way affects or defines God we need to seek to let go of our baggage and let God define himself as he reveals himself in scripture the trinity father son and holy spirit brings authority and love into perfect harmony and even though we will continue to fall short in our own relationships despite our best efforts as fathers as children as those in authority those under authority we must not let our failures become an excuse not to see the pattern that God has given us

God is giving us a vision of what we could be we are created in his image to bear his image to reflect him as a relational God who exercises authority who submits and who loves extravagantly and all of this is to the praise of God the father verse 14 we get to the end having looked at the amazing plan of salvation and redemption that God has purposed in his son and we read that it is to the praise of his glory may his abundant love for us drive us to marvel at him again may his perfectly exercised authority give us a new energy and fervor to obey him to submit to his rule and to recognize that he is the generous loving God who has poured out his love in every minute of every day God as father is supreme authority God as father is generous but let me show you one last thing in this passage look again at how

God as the supreme member of the trinity works verse three praise be to the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing where in Christ for he chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight in love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the one Christ he loves in Christ we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding and he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head even

[23 : 43] Christ in him Christ we were chosen having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will in order that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be for the praise of his glory and you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation having believed you were marked in him Christ with a seal the promised Holy Spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession remember God the father is all knowing God the father is all powerful God the father is everywhere at all times there is nothing that he cannot do he has no need for the help of other people even the son and the spirit but he chooses in his love for them to include them in his work the father doesn't have to do it this way but out of love for the son and the spirit he chooses to work this way he chooses to work through

Jesus he chooses to make Jesus the center piece and the excitement it's through Jesus that we experience God's lavish and abundant and generous love the spirit is even in there as a deposit it's the means that the father chose to use for us to have his presence in our lives each and every day the spirit is how God the father gives us peace and confidence that we are forgiven and saved but again we'll get to in the perfect execution of his will he knows that there is joy for others even though he has no need for them and so he draws the son and the spirit in so they might also have his joy but the amazing thing is as followers of Jesus the father has drawn us into his work as well he didn't need the son or the spirit or you or me or anyone else to fulfill his plans but for our sake he gives us his work he includes us in his eternal before creation and for all eternity plan if you ever had the joy of being used to draw someone to

Christ maybe you shared the gospel with a friend or a neighbor or a work colleague and you finally seen them come to know God as their heavenly father as well you don't need convincing you know that there is no better joy God includes you in that moment for your joy not because he needs you but he includes you that you may find joy and that he may be glorified but his work is more than just ministry this was an amazing thing for me reflecting this week if you go back to the beginning of the Bible how does the Bible begin God creates God starts and there's a need for people in his creation

so what does he do he collects some dirt he molds it together and he breathes life into it that's the only time that people are created like that from then on God wanted us to be a part of the joy of creation and so he made people able to produce people that is a gift of God that we can be a part of his work of creation it's not just about preaching it's not just about the gospel it's the work that God has given us in our time here on the earth it is a gift from God because remember everything is his work he is working out everything with the conformity of his will nothing is outside of his sovereign hand and what an amazing truth we find in this our sovereign supreme and loving heavenly father because when we know his absolute authority when we know that he is going to accomplish his will no matter what then our inclusion in work our inclusion in serving society and other people is not a burden it's a gift it's a joy we need to recognize the significance in whatever it is that God has given us to do because it is his work that he doesn't need us for but he has included us so that we find joy in him it's almost like I remember as a young child I was useless in terms of handy tasks

I'm still useless in terms of handy tasks but I remember one day being invited around with my dad to a friend of his house because they were going to work on a boat it was an old fiberglass boat that needed a fair bit of TLC and so to keep me out of trouble they gave me a piece of sandpaper and a little cork sanding block and said just sand on the edge down there and so I went to work sanding away and eventually I sanded right through it and put a nice hole in the front of that boat but I realized as my father lovingly and as his friend graciously continued to let me work on the boat for the ensuing Saturday after Saturday that there wasn't anything helpful I was bringing but they were including me so that I would get a sense of significance I was doing what the adults were doing I was doing a real job a man's job and it is the same with God and everything that he gives us to do often we're almost working against him we're almost causing trouble but in his grace he continues to invite us back into the workforce he continues to call us back we might have said all the wrong things when we tried to share the gospel at work the other day and yet you will find that tomorrow [29 : 14] God is still going to call you in to do it again you might have struggled to be a Christ like example at your work you might struggle to work hard for a boss that you don't particularly respect and yet God will again call you to do his work of shining his light of working hard of cultivating the earth that we have been given because he wants us to find joy in this his creation in this his sovereign plan where his children who he loves and he wants us to know his joy God the father is supreme he expects and deserves your respect and obedience God the father is generous he loves you extravagantly and he blesses you abundantly God the father is gracious he includes you in his work for your joy what a glorious heavenly father we have let's pray father god we want to thank you for your word tonight we want to thank you that we can come to you and pray and call you our father we want to thank you for the ultimate act of love that you showed us in sacrificing your son father we want to acknowledge that so often we resist authority in our lives even your authority and for that we want to apologize give us eyes to see your majesty and power and glory that we might joyfully submit that we might confident in your love and provision obey you wholeheartedly and eagerly father father father father father father thank you for including us in the work that you are doing help us to look for and find the joy that you have provided for us even in the apparently mundane tasks of life help us to find the significance that you have placed in the jobs that we're doing in the relationships that we have father please place yourself front and center for us help us to stop putting a lesser version of you as the thing that we're going to follow help us to stop trying to cut bits out of you that are uncomfortable that make it harder for us to live instead may we see you in all your glory as supreme may we see your authority and rejoice

God give us a thirst to know more of you keep us from settling and instead lift our eyes to your son where you have shown us your authority your love your generosity God please glorify yourself in us Amen