

## God The Father (Part 2)

### Relationships with the Father

Martin G. Collins

Given 03-Apr-04; Sermon #658

Ten times in his epistles, Paul greets the churches with a statement that succinctly expresses the effect of the efforts of the Father and His Son. I will begin with his greeting:

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

The fact that Paul said this so many times reveals that it was both an important and warm statement that he gave to the churches that he spoke to.

The two God beings work together in perfect loving unison. We know that the pre-existent Word, who later became Jesus Christ, was sent to earth by God the Father in heaven. The Gospel of John bears record of this many times. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him, might be saved. He, whom God the Father sent, speaks the words of God.

Jesus' sustenance was to do the will of the One who sent Him, and to finish His work. No one has ascended to heaven, except Christ who came down from heaven. And so, Christ came down from heaven to do the will of His Father, who sent Him.

Jesus told the Jews that they were beneath the heavens on earth, and He was from above the earth. They were of this world, and He was not. It was the Father who sent the Christ, and it was the Father to whom the Christ returned, where both now sit in glory and majesty. Few in mainstream Christianity understand this basic, but profound, truth!

We look at this truth as very basic and simple, some may even consider it boring. But, the impact on our lives, of the relationship between the Father and the Son, is no less than a tremendous miracle. This truth has life changing meaning for each and every one of us! We cannot slip into feeling

that the basic truth about God the Father and Jesus Christ is anything in the arena of boring. It is the opposite; it is wonderful, exciting and it is life changing.

Key passages in the Psalms contain the true and reliable testimony of the Father concerning His Son, Jesus the Christ. In them, we find that God the Father testified in advance of the Word's awesome future role.

**Psalm 2:7** "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.

Part of this is quoted in Hebrews 1:5 to reaffirm this truth. We also find the Father testifying about the Son in another Psalm:

**Psalm 45:6** Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

This is also quoted in Hebrews 1:8

The Father calls His Son Jesus Christ——God. Christ is not only the Son of God, He is God! He is a member of the family of God. The Scriptures reveal God in terms of a family relationship——God the Father and Jesus the Son comprise the God Family!

In John 1:14 we read that the Word, Jesus Christ, "became flesh and dwelt among us? as of the only begotten of the Father ?" This state of being the "only begotten," confirms this relationship between God the Father and the One who became Jesus Christ.

The highest act of the Son's love for the Father was the laying down of His own life for the sheep, at His Father's command. So also, the Father's love for Jesus, as His physical Son, reaches its achievement in the awe-inspiring act of His resurrection.

**John 10:14-18** I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I

have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.

We see there, that God the Father commanded Jesus Christ of these things, giving Him the authority to do His will. Jesus' death was totally voluntary. His power was such that no human hand could have touched Him had He not permitted it. Jesus emphasizes, over and over again, that His death was entirely voluntary. He was almost captured or executed several times. It was in His God-given power to stop, or avoid the attempts to silence Him, but at that time He decided to hold off.

In the garden, Christ told His would-be defender, Simon Peter, to put away his sword. If He had wanted, He could have called in the hosts of heaven to His defense, but He did not. Christ made it very clear that Pilate was not condemning Him, but that He was accepting death.

He was not a victim of circumstance. He was not like some animal, dragged unwillingly and without understanding to the sacrifice. Jesus laid down His own life because He chose to do so. Only when He declared that "the hour has come" was it possible for his enemies to arrest Him. It was only until Jesus gave the word, that they were able to do anything.

The Father gave Jesus the authority to lay down His life and take it up again. The death of Jesus, though voluntary, was not merely consent to being killed, a sort of indirect suicide, it was part of a plan to submit to death and then emerge from it victoriously alive. It was all planned.

Anyone can lay down his life, if that means simply termination of physical existence; but only the Father could, at will, restore Jesus' existence. Jesus was human, and the only power He had came from the Father.

Both Jesus and the Father were acting in accordance with a divine plan that involved a supreme sacrifice and a manifestation of divine power. They were one in Their purpose, and determination, to carry out Their plan of salvation for humanity.

The entire plan was motivated by love——Jesus' love for the Father, and His readiness to carry out His Father's purpose, and the Father's love for Jesus, and each of us, individually. Jesus' authority from the Father's command, means that He was not the helpless victim of His enemies' violence, but that He had both the right, and the power, to become the instrument of reconciliation between man and God. Jesus had control, because the Father commanded that it was to be so.

Jesus saw His whole life as an act of obedience to the Father. God had given Him a task to do, and He was ready to carry it out to the end, even though it meant agonizing suffering and death. He was in a unique relationship to the Father——He was the Son of God.

But that relationship did not give Him the right to do what He liked; it depended on His always doing what God wanted, no matter what the cost. Sonship for Him, and sonship for us, has to be based on love and obedience.

Jesus expressed His love to the Father by obedience. In I John 5:3, John wrote, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." By example, and command, Jesus told us what we must do to be true sons of God.

The Father testified before hand of the coming of the Son. Then, upon His first coming, Jesus explained that He came to reveal the Father. Yet, mainstream Christianity continually de-emphasizes the role of the Father, and focuses, almost exclusively, on the Lord Jesus Christ. Such human reasoning never originated with Jesus, because every chance Jesus got, He emphasized God the Father and His authority and perfection.

In Matthew 6, Jesus told us to pray in this manner: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus always directed the focus of the people to the Father. Then, He directs us to obey the will of the Father.

In the teaching of Jesus Christ—God is preeminently the Father. It is His usual and respectful term for the Supreme Being, and I believe that it is significant that Jesus' usage has never become common in mainstream Christianity. What I mean by that, is that Jesus Christ is the emphasis, and when God the Father is referred to, He is referred to as God, and very rarely is He called the Father. Although this influence has carried over into God's church, we do direct our prayers to our Father in heaven. I do not know if I have heard a prayer, before or after services, where I have not heard it directed to Our Father in heaven, or some similar variation of that. So it is very important to acknowledge where that authority is, and who we are praying to.

Jesus' intention in using the name "Father" meant that the essential nature of God, and His relationship to human beings, is best expressed by the attitude and relationship of a father to his children. But, God is Father in an infinitely higher, and more perfect, degree than any human father.

The heavenly Father is "perfect" and "good," in contrast with human beings, who, even as caring fathers, are sinful. Nevertheless, fathers in God's church must pursue perfection.

What in human fathers is an ideal, imperfectly and intermittently realized, is in the Father, perfectly and completely fulfilled. Jesus taught His disciples their ultimate responsibility to the Father.

**Matthew 5:48** "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

What a goal to shoot for. It is something that we, as human beings, cannot reach or attain. God must do it through us, as we submit our will in humility to Him. Humility is something that we cannot mention enough, and how important it is to rid ourselves of pride. We must pray, and ask God to help

us to have the attitude of the sinner who prayed next to the publican. The Father is very generous and desires to shower us with blessings. However, in His wisdom, in His self-control—His will keeps Him from spoiling us. The Father's desire to bless Christ, while Jesus was a human being, was controlled by His own perfect will.

Christ not only sees the purpose of God's plan, more importantly He sees the personal relation of love and care that the Father bestows on His children. The Father has a constant flow of loving concern, as He actively works out His plan of salvation, for each individual. All things lie in His power. But, He controls His actions, and He is the pinnacle of the supremely self-governed Father.

**John 5:17** "But Jesus answered them, 'My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.'"

Jesus indicated here, that He and His Father are always working together, coordinating Their efforts for maximum effectiveness, for the good of all. The Father proceeded with His intervention, in Jesus' physical life, knowing that His relationship with Jesus was of one mind. Jesus always does the will of His Father. There are no exceptions to that statement. He always does the will of His Father, and that is how we can pursue perfection, by doing the same.

**Luke 22:42** "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

Here, Jesus under great duress, still realized that as much as He desires to have that cup pass from Him, the responsibility not to have to suffer, and to be beaten, nevertheless He wanted God's will, the goodness of God to reign, and not His own. What a fine example that is to us, because we so often want our own will to be done, and this comes out in our prayers. Our prayers must be offered up "Father, Your will be done not mine" Doing the will of the Father, rather than our own will, is the sign of a true son of the Father.

Jesus had the assurance that by His Father's preserving power, the least, as well as the greatest, of His creation lives. But, it is not the fact of God's creative, preserving and governing power, so much as the manner of it, that

Christ emphasizes. God is good! He is absolutely good in all His actions and relationships. And this is most definitely seen in His care for Jesus. Jesus was so assured of the Father's goodness that He openly corrected those who could not see how abundantly good the Father is. He would not allow negative statements about the Father. The Father is the standard by which goodness is determined. He is not limited by goodness, He determines it.

**Mark 10:18** "So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but one, that is, God."

All human beings and animals owe all they have to the Father, and they must eventually turn to Him for all they need. It is only in the Father that any being will find safety, peace and sustenance.

**Matthew 6:26** "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

He is our heavenly Father, and He always provides good things for us. In Matthew 7, Christ encourages us to ask the Father for things according to His will. No parent gives his child something that would be bad for him. God is perfect and good, far above the ideal earthly parent. Therefore, we can come as His children, and ask what we need, and we are assured of receiving what is good for us, if we ask according to His will.

Jesus says earthly parents are evil, meaning imperfect, sometimes inadequate in their gifts. But God is free from imperfection, and He is ready, and willing, to help us with things for our ultimate good.

**Matthew 7:11** If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

There is just one encouraging statement after another regarding God the Father. Everything is so positive and so encouraging. His goodness goes outward spontaneously and shines on all living things, even on the unjust and His enemies. As Jesus was confident of this, we should be confident also.

The Father's perfection is revealed through Christ's teachings. The Father is the ideal of all perfection, to which we should seek to attain. This is the general character of God as expressed in His Fatherhood, but it is realized in different ways according to different relationships.

Jesus Christ is essential in three different relationships with the Father:

1. Jesus' own relationship,
2. The disciples' relationship (us, our relationship with the Father)
3. Humanity's relationship with the Father.

### **Jesus' own relationship to the Father.**

Jesus Christ knows the Father as no one else does, and is related to Him in a unique way. His intimate relationship with the Father is central, and essential, to everything He teaches. The result of the relationship is truth, purity, holiness and in a word, perfection!

On Jesus' first personal physical appearance in history, He declared to his physical parents that He must be about His Divine Father's business. At the end of His physical life, the last thing He does is commend His spirit into His Father's hands. So, from His first moment of realization, to His last moment, His mind is on the Father and the Father's will, power and glory.

Throughout His life, His awareness of his sonship is perfect and unbroken. In John 10:30 Jesus says, "I and the Father are one." As He knows the Father, so the Father knows and acknowledges Him. At the opening of His ministry, and again at its climax, the Father bears witness to His perfect sonship.

Mark 1:11 records the unforgettable words of the Father, "Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

It is a relationship of mutual love and confidence, pure and infinite. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand." The Father sent the Son into the world, and entrusted Him with His message and power.

**Mark 9:7** "And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"

The Father wanted to make sure that there was no doubt of Jesus Christ's importance in the whole process of our redemption and our salvation, and how pleased the Father is with His Son Jesus Christ. The Father gave Jesus those who believe in Him, to receive His word. Jesus does the works, and speaks the words of the Father who sent Him. His dependence upon the Father, and His trust in Him, are equally complete. This is the example for us to acknowledge and follow, and have confidence in.

Jesus says He is the exclusive agent of true understanding of the Father. Jesus not only has knowledge, but the authority to choose those to whom He will reveal God. There is a self-enclosed, or inaccessible world of the Father and Son that is opened to others, only by revelation provided by the Son.

**Matthew 11:27** All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

The reciprocal knowledge of Son and Father presupposes a special sonship. This unique mutual knowledge guarantees that the revelation the Son gives is true. The Son is a true witness. We see, in Christ, what perfect sonship is. In His awareness of His sonship, the Father Himself is so completely reflected, that we may know the perfect Father also. Jesus does more than merely reflect the Father. It is not simply a matter similar to the moon reflecting the light of the sun, but Christ is of the same brightness as the Father.

**Hebrews 1:2-3** ?has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He

made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

He, "being the brightness of His Father's glory." Christ is exactly like the Father. In this verse, the word "image" is translated from the Greek word *charakter*. According to Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary, this word means 'a tool for engraving' or, 'a stamp' or, 'to impress', as on a coin or seal, in which case the seal or die which makes an impression bears the 'image' produced by it, so it becomes an exact duplicate of the stamp. All of the features of the 'image' correspond respectively with those of the instrument producing it."

Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." The resemblance, between the Father and the Son, must be strong in more ways than we can humanly imagine. Still, they are two distinctly separate Beings, who continually plan and discuss things with each other.

God the Father's relationship with His Son Jesus Christ is a very, very close family relationship. John 14 reveals how close their words, thoughts and actions are. Jesus' own testimony shows He came to reveal the Father. When asked by Philip to show them the Father, John 14 records Jesus own reply.

**John 14:9-11** Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

Their relationship is more than one reflecting the other. So completely is the mind, and the will of Christ, identified with that of the Father, that they are perfectly melded. The words and works of the Father shine out through Christ.

## **Jesus Christ is essential in His disciples' relationship with the Father.**

Through Christ, we also may know God as our Father. Speaking to His disciples, He refers to God the Father as "your Father". To us as individuals, it means a personal intimate relationship with our Father in heaven, who remains unseen but all seeing and benevolent.

**Matthew 6:1-4, 18** Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, "that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

So we see there, that a personal relationship is developed, and He is our Father as well as Jesus Christ's. Jesus was the perfect example of humility, and His example guides us to be more like the Father. Our whole conduct should be determined by our awareness of the Father's intimate presence. To do His will is the ideal of life. More explicitly, it is to humbly act as He does, to love and forgive as He does. Finally, to be perfect as He is perfect.

This is how we become sons of our Father who is in heaven. Our peace and safety lie in the reality of His constant and all-sufficient care. The ultimate goal of our relationship to Christ, is that through Him, we may come to a relationship with the Father like His relationship both to the Father and to us. We are in the Father and the Son, and we form a Family.

This harmonious relationship is described in the Gospel of John.

**John 14:21** He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me [Jesus]. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

The Father says He loves us as much as He loves Jesus Christ His Son. But Christ has a more intimate relationship with His Father. This is the intimate relationship that we seek.

**John 17:23** I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

What a statement that is. What a goal to seek, but we can only do it with the help of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

**Jesus Christ is essential in humanity's relationship with the Father.**

While God's fatherhood is revealed originally and fully in Christ, and copied, partially in His called children, it also has significance for the whole of humanity. Everyone is born a child of God, their Creator, and is a potential heir of His kingdom.

During childhood everyone is an object of His Fatherly love and care, and it is not His desire for any child to die. Even if they become His enemies, He still bestows His beneficence upon the evil and the unjust. As sons of God we must do the same. We must be of benefit to all human beings.

**Matthew 5:44-45** "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Loving our enemies, in the biblical sense, is a requirement to being a son of the Father.

The prodigal son may become unworthy to be called a son, but the father always remains his father. But, many people of the world become so rebellious against the Father, that they manifest characteristics of another father.

Hatred toward Jesus Christ is a sign of the children of this competing father.

**John 8:42-44** Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Even though the children of Satan do not deserve God the Father's benevolence, they receive it in the form of their sustenance on earth. So their obedience, as a created son or daughter to God, may have ended, but His nature and attitude are unchanged. He is the Father absolutely, and as Father, He is perfectly reliable. He makes sure His creation is always provided for, even when human beings give allegiance to another father. However, the Father does not bestow the blessings on them that are deserving of a true son of God in the moral sense.

God's love is not determined by the morality or obedience of another being. God is love, and as such, love flows from Him unimpeded and unrestricted. No man can stop His love.

A person's relationship with the Father is essentially and completely relying on his relationship with the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. Christ said, "If God were your Father, you would love Me."

The relationship of human beings to God is determined by their attitude toward God. Some, by faithlessness, make no effort to develop it. Others, by repentance of sin, acceptance of Christ's sacrifice, and obedience, become, in the moral sense, sons of their heavenly Father.

The Father's perfection is taught by the apostles. In the teaching of the apostles, although the Fatherhood of God is not so prominently or so abundantly exhibited, as it was by Jesus Christ, it lies at the root of the whole system of salvation. John's one idea, that God is love, is a conceptual statement of His Fatherhood.

In complete agreement with Christ's teaching, that only through Himself people know the Father and come to Him, the whole system of grace is mediated through Christ the Son of God, sent because "God so loved the world", that through His death human beings might be reconciled to God.

**Romans 5:10** For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God [the Father] through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

The Father speaks to us through the Son, who is the radiant splendor of His glory, and the exact image of His substance. As in the teaching of Jesus, likewise in that of the apostles, we see three different fatherhood relationships in which the fatherhood is seen in varying degrees:

A. God's Fatherhood as Jesus Christ's Father.

Primarily, the apostles teach us that He is the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The comfort that the Father gave to Jesus in His suffering encourages us, in ours, because the same comfort Jesus received is available to us.

**II Corinthians 1:3-4** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Notice that word "all". There is not a tribulation or trial that we go through where God is not comforting us. So because of the comfort the Father gives to us, we have a responsibility to comfort others in their trials. This is part of what it means to be a son of the Father.

In this way the Father is the source of every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

In Ephesians 1, the Father is shown as generously working out His eternal plan for humanity. He makes sure that we know the mystery of His will.

**Ephesians 1:3-10** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

He was so happy to reveal to us His will, through Christ. The point is that we have access to the Father only through Jesus Christ. Our acceptance by the Father exists only in Him!

#### B. God's Fatherhood as Our Father.

He is God, our Father. Galatians 3:26 says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." Faith in Christ is necessary to be a son of the Father. If we do not trust Christ, we cannot have an intimate relationship with the Father.

When we receive the Spirit of adoption, we are sons of God. This Spirit of adoption produces qualities of affection, love, and confidence that applies to children (not the servile, trembling spirit of slaves), but the attitude and affection of sons. Adoption is the taking and treating of a stranger as one's own child.

**Romans 8:14** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

"Sons of God" is a name of endearment, meaning that we are His friends, His disciples, and that we are imitators of Jesus Christ. We are part of the great family of the redeemed, of whom He is the Father and Protector.

**Romans 8:15** For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

The Spirit of adoption here is applied to members of God's church, because God treats us as His children. He receives us into this intimate relationship, even though we were, by nature, strangers, and even enemies, before our conversion.

The Spirit of adoption implies that we, by nature, previously had no claim of relationship to Him. It implies that for that reason, the act is one of mere kindness. It is an act of pure, sovereign love. It means that we are now under His protection and care. It implies that we are bound to manifest toward Him the spirit of children, and yield to Him in obedience. If we do not obey our human father we feel awful, and we feel less than adequate when we do not please them. Certainly, if we sin, we should have an even greater down feeling of that sinning, because we have disappointed our heavenly Father so much.

**Romans 8:16-17** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Christ is, by eminence, the "Son of God." As such, He is heir to the full honors and glory of heaven. We are united to Him. We are His friends, and as a result, we are destined to share with Him in His glory.

But, first we must suffer with Jesus. We suffer in affliction and we suffer in overcoming sin, Satan, the world, and our own human nature. This is mental anguish and is part of what it means to be a son of God the Father in training.

We are the sons of God in a different sense from what Christ is; *He* by His nature and high relation, *we* by adoption. But still the idea of sonship exists in both. For this reason, both will partake in the glory of the eternal inheritance.

### C. God's Fatherhood as humanity's Father

Obviously, these three parallel the three relationships that Christ taught. The apostles' teaching, like Christ's, is that sinful humanity cannot possess the sonship awareness, or know God as Father. God in His attitude toward man, is always and essentially Father, and I mentioned this earlier when I was speaking of Christ's teaching on that.

In the sense of physical creation and dependence, all human beings, in any moral condition, are sons of God. Paul mentions this to the men of Athens, while standing on Mars Hill.

**Acts 17:28-29** for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring. "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

We see that Paul taught that all humanity is the offspring of God the Father. From the Father's standpoint as Creator, human beings, even in their sin, are potential sons in the personal and moral sense. The whole process and power of our realization of our son ship is made possible from the Fatherly love of God. He sent His Son, and gave His Spirit, so that we could understand God in a different light as sons of God.

He is "the Father" absolutely. God is the common Father of "all" his created children——of the rich and the poor, the slave and the free, the educated and the uneducated. God is not a respecter of persons.

The Father needed Jesus Christ to remove the obstacle of the separation sin causes, and the required penalty for sin. The Holy Father demands that a price be paid for sin, and so, on behalf of all mankind Jesus died on the stake.

Christ's death for the world's sins potentially altered the whole position of the human race in its relationship to God the Father. The Father became propitious because He holds great value in what Christ accomplished in His death on behalf of the world, whether a person enters into the blessings of it or not.

The sacrifice has rendered God propitious (or, appeased) toward the unconverted as well as the erring saint. But a person must repent and be baptized in order to receive any benefit from it.

The fact that Christ has borne all sin, renders God the Father appeased. Christ became a propitiation for the Father on behalf of the sinner. Propitiation is never used of any act whereby man brings God into a favorable attitude or gracious disposition. It is not something man can do. It is God who is propitiated by the justification of His holy and righteous character, whereby through the provision He has made in the vicarious and expiatory sacrifice of Christ, Jesus Christ has so dealt with sin that the Father can show mercy to the erring saint in the removal of his guilt and the remission of his sins.

**I John 2:2** "He Himself is the propitiation [appeasement] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

The place of appeasement is the "Mercy Seat" of the covenant. The Mercy Seat indicates that God has become gracious toward His called children.

The Mercy Seat is a continual throne of grace. What would otherwise be an awful judgment throne from the sinner's perspective becomes an altar of infinite mercy for the faithful. God the Father, Himself, set forth Christ as the Mercy Seat.

In its simplest terms, the propitiation of God the Father is similar to the removal of His wrath by offering Him the sacrifice of a very, very valuable gift. The necessity of the Father's appeasement is a reminder that God is relentlessly opposed to everything that is evil, that His opposition can be described as 'wrath', and that His wrath is put away only by the work of Christ.

The sacrifice of Christ has fulfilled the requirement necessary for God the Father to be appeased and merciful toward the erring saint. The fact that Christ has borne all sin makes our Father justified in His mercy in forgiving our sins. In one sense, this was a legal matter that God the Father had to take care of through the use of Jesus Christ.

With the relationship between the Father and the Son being so close, and all that They do in common will, could the Father really have forsaken Jesus as he hung on the stake?

**Matthew 27:45-46** Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

The phrase "My God, my God" expresses intense suffering and despair. People in mainstream Christianity have a difficult time understanding in what sense Jesus was forsaken by God. But, we know that the Father approved His work.

We know that He was innocent. He had done nothing to lose the favor of the Father. As His own Son—holy, humble, undefiled, and obedient—God still loved Him. So, could God the Father have forsaken Jesus Christ or not? The Father did forsake His Son while He hung on the stake. Why? Except for Jesus Christ, all humans have sinned.

**Romans 3:23** "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Since sin is the breaking of God's law, it requires the penalty of death.

**Romans 6:23** "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So, all humans sin, and deserve the death penalty. Sin also cuts us off, and separates us from God.

**John 9:31** "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him."

God does not hear sinners because of the division, like a curtain or a wall that exists between God and sinning human beings. Just as the 'firmament' divided or separated the waters from the waters as Genesis 1:6 mentions, so also, the sins of sinners act as a partition between humans and God. There could be no contact between humans and Him.

**Isaiah 59:1-2** Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

Nevertheless, when we do repent—changing our ways, living righteously, and overcoming sin—God will hear and answer our request. God hears and answers those who try hard to live His way of life. It is those who sin, as a way of life, that God does not hear.

We know that Jesus was perfect and did not sin. In fact He never sinned. So that cannot be the reason the Father cut Himself off from His only begotten Son who poured out His blood and finally died on the stake!

**I Peter 2:21-25** For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own

body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, willingly took on our sins. By His shed blood and death, He suffered the penalty of sin for us.

While He was on the stake, Jesus bore the sins of all of humanity, paying the penalty for us. Therefore, Jesus was cut off from God while on the stake, because sin separates human beings from God. If God the Father was going to accept Jesus' one supreme sacrifice as payment for the sins of all humanity, He had to turn His back on the sin bearer——Jesus Christ.

He had to forsake Jesus and let Him pay the full penalty of our sins. Many in mainstream Christianity believe it was merely symbolic, but it was much more than that, it was a literal and spiritual bearing of the burden and penalty of sin. Sin separated Jesus from His Father!

God so loved the world that He was willing to cut Himself off from His perfect, loving, and obedient Son so that the Son could bear the sins of the world.

The Father forgives, and applies Christ's sacrifice only to those who have truly repented, those who are willing to turn from their worldly ways, the very ways that made Christ's supreme sacrifice necessary. Christ came to save humanity from its sins——not in its sins!

Then, why did Jesus ask the question He asked? Did He not know that God had to turn His back on Him and forsake Him while He was carrying the sins of the world? Absolutely, He knew that that would happen!

Jesus completely realized that the Father had to forsake Him if the world were going to receive an atonement for its sins. This was the primary reason that Jesus came into the world. The Father is motivated by His wondrous plan for humanity, not by the foolish ideas and the flagrant sins of human beings. The Father began to rescue humanity from itself by sending His Son to earth.

Why, then, did Jesus ask the question? By doing so He fulfilled prophecy, giving an additional proof of God the Father's tight control on the events of His master plan, and as proof of Jesus' messiahship.

David too, in a time of trouble, cried out the prophetic words, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

**Psalm 22:1-2** To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Deer of the Dawn." A Psalm of David. My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent.

These words, spoken by a man after God's own heart hundreds of years before the crucifixion, prophetically applied to Christ. They foreshadowed the sheer anguish Jesus felt when God the Father forsook Him. "To forsake," means to desert, abandon, or separate oneself from.

For the first time in His life, Jesus could not feel the intimate relationship He had with His Father. Sin is just that destructive, and if we sin it separates us from God. We need God's help because we cannot become perfect on our own.

The Father expressed His love for His Son in a miraculous way.

**Acts 13:29-30** Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. "But God raised Him from the dead.

**I Peter 1:21** who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

That was a miraculous and loving act that God the Father had planned ahead of time. Jesus Christ's responsibility to the Father did not end with His death!

After our reconciliation to the Father through the blood of Christ, we are saved by His life. The book of Hebrews shows that He regularly intercedes with the Father on our behalf as our High Priest.

God's love for us is revealed in the relationship He has with Jesus Christ. Our redemption from sin is attributed to God's wondrous love. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 38:17,

**Isaiah 38:17** "You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back."

What a wonderfully inspiring statement and promise that is.

Ephesians 2:4 sets forth how, in a wonderful way, our entire salvation springs forth from the mercy and love of God.

**Ephesians 2:4-8** But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

It is because of the love of the Father that we will be granted a place in God's kingdom. But the supreme manifestation of the love of God is expressed in the gift of His only-begotten Son to die for the sins of the world. It is a shame that the Protestants have so over used this to the point where it has little meaning in their lives, but it is so meaningful, so important and so inspiring.

**John 3:16-17** "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Everything in which God the Father is mentioned is so inspiring and so positive. From this wonderful love of God in Jesus Christ, nothing, in heaven or earth, created or to be created, shall be able to separate us from God.

The love of God underlies all that He has done, and is doing. The greatest disclosure and most complete proof of divine love is seen in the redemption and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul gives us an explanation of this:

**Romans 5:8:** But God (that is the Father) demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Love expresses the essential nature of God. It can be known from the actions it prompts, as seen in God's love in the gift of His Son. It found its perfect expression in Jesus Christ. It is what binds us together as sons of God the Father.

We must never forget that it is an honor and a privilege to be called the children of God. Bearing the name of the family of God is something to keep us on the right track and to motivate us to want to become perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect.

The same apostle who recorded Jesus' words, that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son", also wrote over 60 years later at the end of his life:

**I John 3:1** Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

We are not merely called the children of God; we are the children of God. It is by the gift of God that we become a child of God. By nature we are creatures of God, but it is by grace that we become children of the Father.

There are two English words that are closely related, but whose meanings are distinctly different: paternity and fatherhood. "Paternity" describes a relationship in which a man is responsible for the physical existence of a

child; "fatherhood" describes an intimate and loving relationship. In the sense of paternity all human beings are children of God; but in the sense of fatherhood we are children of God only when He graciously calls us and we respond positively with enthusiasm.

**I John 3:2** Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him (the Father), for we shall see Him as He is.