

Text: One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph.iv.6)

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Looking briefly at the connection of our text, in verses 4 and 5, we may say that it is a great and blessed truth that there is one family of God, and only one, in heaven and on earth; and, scattered as they are here in the world, and differing much - as they do - about different matters, and quarrel as much as they may, it is one redeemed family. There is one God of this one family, by whom they are all spiritually begotten: "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (Jas.i.18). There is one Father of this one family, "one God and Father of all" - not only their God but their Father, their nearest and dearest, most compassionate, forgiving, and loving Father. He will be certain, sooner or later, to bring all the members of this one family to acknowledge no other salvation than that which is through the life, obedience, death, and resurrection of the Father's only-begotten Son.

We shall follow the apostle as much as we can, by the help of the Lord, in the words of our text just as they stand. God help us to feel His truth! O for a sense of relationship to God and the spirit of adoption, being thereby enabled with godly sincerity and with much humility but with much holy boldness, to fall before this one God and say: "My Father, my Father!" What a spot is that!

### "ONE GOD"

#### THE TRINITY

Moses said to the people: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut.vi.4) - one Jehovah, existing in a Trinity of divine Persons in the unity of the Godhead. The doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation truth of all definitely revealed doctrines in the Bible. Take away the doctrine of the Trinity, and you demolish the whole superstructure of the Christian religion; for "if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psa.xi.3). Oh, what a mystery it is! God never intended reason to grapple with it, that the human mind should be able to understand it (Job xi.7). We do not say a plurality of Gods - it would be wicked to make such an assertion - but one God. And not merely three emanations, agencies, influences, or operations of one God, but three distinct Persons existing in the unity of the divine Essence (Matt.xxviii.19; II Cor. xiii.14; I John v.7).

A COVENANT GOD

There is a sense in which God is the one God of all creatures - angels and men, things animate and inanimate, rational and irrational; but it is in a peculiar, special, and pre-eminent sense that God is the one God of His people. He is the one God of His people in a much higher sense than He is the one God of any other creatures as being the work of His power. Most blessedly is this truth declared in the prophecy of Jeremiah, and again repeated as a quotation by Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews: "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall no more teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for they all shall know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer.xxxi.33, 34; Heb.x. 16,17). There we have a most blessed opening up of those words - "one God," the God of His chosen family, their covenant and everlasting God.

This family, then, all of them, have forgiveness, perfect forgiveness; they have regeneration and sanctification. God says: "I will put My law in their inward parts," which implies their sanctification. They are a holy people unto God: "The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold" (Psa.xlv.13). According to what we are as sinners, as in the flesh, as creatures, we are full of pollution; "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" (Isa.i.6). But, according to what we are as believers in Christ, as saints, as the children of God by His grace, we are not polluted, we are not filthy, we are not beasts - we are "holiness unto the Lord" (Jer.ii.3). Christ says to His church: "Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee... My dove, My undefiled" (Song iv.7; vi.9). Therefore, when God says: "I will put My law in their inward parts," their sanctification is intended; it means that they are made to love that God and to revere His name. Whatever, then, this blessedly favoured family may meet with in the world - whether rich or poor, high or low, young or old, or sick or well - God is their God. However bereaved, tried, tempted, harassed, and distressed, yet God is their God. Nothing less than this could lift up the soul of poor Asaph in his deep trial, who says: "My flesh and

my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psa.lxxiii.26); and I trust nothing less than this can lift up your souls and mine in the trials and sorrows of life. Human help, human props, with heart and flesh, fail; so God alone must be the strength of our hearts and our portion for ever.

"ONE GOD AND FATHER"

But God stands in a much nearer relationship to this one family of Christ than just being their God. He is their Father, "one God and Father of all." And unto this they were predestinated before time, and unto this they are called by the grace of God in time, even unto "the adoption of children" to the one God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph.ii.5).

What a blessed portion of the Word we have in the Psalms bearing on this point, where we read: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Psa.ciii. 13,14). Who can understand what a father's pity is? Only a real father can know what a father's pity is; and none but God can know what His inimitable pity is towards His children.

"ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL"

Look at this little word "all". "One God and Father of all." Just as the apostle says: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal.iii.26). Notwithstanding the various grades of spiritual love, understanding, and enjoyment, faith and experience, yet, says the apostle, "one God and Father of all." We see some in this blessed family go on their way, for the greater part of their days, mourning - hardly ever able to make their calling and election sure. It is only an occasional and transient view of God's countenance that they obtain, a glimpse of His love. No doubt there are such in this church, and they are to be met with everywhere.

Then there are those who are brought into a deeper experience of their relationship and are helped to cry, "Abba, Father." Again, there are those who go on pretty well all through their lives in great conflicts, with a painful exercise of mind as to their relationship to God; then, in the very last gasp of life, the blessed God, in His sovereign mercy, sees fit to liberate their spirits and to bring them into the full assurance of hope and understanding. I have known such children of God.

Then, again, the Lord sees fit, for His honour and glory, to pick some out from His servants and people, and give them such a measure of grace as the apostle speaks of in the seventh verse - to give them such an abundant measure of grace that they are enabled to walk, for the most part, all through their pilgrimage in a sweet enjoyment of Christ. What blessed men of God have stood upon the walls of Zion in days gone by! What a favoured man was Rutherford! He had a gift peculiar to himself. His line of truth was the same as I am now feebly touching upon: believers' union to and boldness in Christ. That dear man did not advance this truth in a merely theoretical way. It was not just because his capacious mind was able to grasp the doctrine, but it was because God blessed his soul with such a sense of His everlasting love that he walked, for the most part, in the consciousness that God was his Father. When we look at men like Rutherford, Toplady, Newton, Berridge, it is not for us to say that there are not such in the church of God now - I wish there were more. If the almighty God were, according to His good pleasure, either to bless His living servants in a similar way or to raise up more servants like the blessed men whose names I have just mentioned, I believe that their ministry would, with God's blessing, wonderfully revive the church. It appears to me that that is greatly needed now.

"WHO IS ABOVE ALL, AND THROUGH ALL, AND IN YOU ALL."

I say again, we see a great difference between one and another in the family. But this is a mercy - mercy's stream is continuous, and he who drinks of the stream, the whole stream, as belonging to him, derives more comfort than others who take smaller draughts. But the stream belongs to them all (Isa.xxii. 24). The chain that is let down from heaven is a chain of mercy, and he who by precious faith lays hold of one link of the chain has hold of the whole chain. A weak child of God that is fastened to one link may say: "Oh, I have so many doubts and fears; I am afraid it is not right with my soul and God; I know so little about relationship; I don't know much, if anything at all, of what the minister has been speaking about to us this morning."

If you ask me, "What chain do you mean?" it is this: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate... whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom.viii.29,30). There is enough in that one verse

30, to crush all the Arminianism that the devil ever brought into the world - and it will crush it! If Arminian preachers who stand about your streets, call themselves evangelists, and talk to ignorant people, were to have the truth of those two verses revealed to them by God the Holy Ghost, it would make them look back upon their past ministry with perfect disgust. I am not pleading for a one-sided experience.

#### EXPERIENCE

God's truth is a very powerful thing. "You have touched upon relationship," say you, "now speak to us a little about what the children themselves are in their experience; that is what I want to hear." I will try to do so for a few moments. The poor and needy go to the throne of grace in their destitution. They are full of pollution in themselves, and they go to that fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness. They are naked in themselves, and they go, as led by the Spirit, to the Lord Jesus Christ to be clothed with the fine linen of His justifying righteousness. They travel on, and the longer they travel the lower they stand in their own eyes, and the more do they discover of their own weakness; the more do they want God to say: "My grace is sufficient for thee" (II Cor. xii.9). They fall upon their knees and mourn over sin; and they mourn, in my opinion, most of all over those sins which nobody but God and themselves can see. And the tears never flow more freely than when they are blessed with an inward assurance of an everlasting pardon of their sins. To see sin in the light of the law will make a man quail. When the lightning flashed in the face of the people, and the thunder sounded loudly in their ears, they trembled. They said to Moses: "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exod.xx.19). So, if you see sin in the light of the law of God, it will make you tremble. Many of us here this morning have proved the truth of that in our experience. A man does not think of sin lightly if he sees it in God's law.

Look at the prodigal. When he was far off from his father, brought to his senses, and brought to see his prodigality in the light of the law, what did he feel? He felt sin to be a vile and evil thing. He felt what a delinquent he was in the sight of God, and he felt great destitution. There was a famine in the land. So he said: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke xv.18,19). And the father came out and met him, and said:

"I knew you would come back. It is my truth that has brought you back. I let you go because you were incorrigible. My gentle taps did not have any effect upon you. You turned your back upon me, and I said: 'Let him go; he will find it out by and by when he gets into such a state that he cannot help himself'." So the father fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the father said: "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke xv. 22-24). And, you may depend upon it, there was the dear son weeping, his soul drowned in contrition. He felt there never was a God with such a love as this one - the "God and Father of all" the family.

I am sure nothing will produce all this but a sense of relationship to the one God and Father of all, who is above all - above them in power, in wisdom, in excellency, in justice, in faithfulness, in love, and above them in mercy.

I must just touch upon that verse 7: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." See, here it is one family. It is a blessed family union. There is one God, and there is one Spirit to succour this one family - to teach all, to humble all, to uphold all, to reveal grace to all, to take the things of Christ and to make them known to all. "One body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." No one can make me more than God Himself makes me. God knew before I was born what He would make me as His poor servant. But how for years I have mourned over the poverty of my ministerial course! And - in common with all the servants and people of God - what longings I have had to get at the deeper experiences of the people of God. I do not insist that all must conform to a certain pattern of experience. But what I mean is this, that, notwithstanding that all the people of God and all the servants of God are what they are by God's grace - what they are in faith, in knowledge, in enjoyment, in experience, and so on, they are what the Lord sees fit to make them - yet, at the same time, there is a needs-be that, by the grace of God, we should be watchful and prayerful, that we should mourn over our unrighteousness, take our sins to heart, and confess them to God. Depend upon it, if there were more

of this, it would be a great advantage to us. Still, God casts a certain mantle, so to speak, over every one of His family, and, by His providential and gracious dealings, gradually makes every member to conform to that mould into which He will finally bring him (Rom.vi.17), "according to the measure of the gift of Christ." You see, it is so important, in reading the Word, to be guided by the connection and not to take detached portions and thus in the end to force from them meanings contrary to the analogy of faith (Rom.xii.6). Let me, therefore, in conclusion, just call your attention to what follows in verses 8 to 13, noting the words, "Till we all come." That does not mean, "till you come, and not another" - but "Till we all come", all the members of this family that have been and that are now upon the earth. We may use as an illustration the case of a child from birth to the attainment of full maturity: various stages are passed through in growing up. And so it is throughout all the dispensations, dealings, and ways of God with this one family. He will bring them all "to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And that will be the condition of the church at last, when God has done all that He resolved to do with His people here. And when those upon earth shall be united with those above, Christ shall present this perfect man, His church, spotless unto the Father, and then shall God be all in all (Eph.v.27; I Cor.xv.28).

Amen.