

Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 242

The Person and Work of God the Father

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 7th August, 2005**

Text: “*God, even the Father*” (1 Corinthians 15. 24).

We believe in the Trinity – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, one God – a great mystery, a mystery revealed in Scripture, a mystery made known by revelation, a mystery which is not to be understood but which is to be believed.

Now here we have *God the Father*. In the history of the church of God, there have been many attempts to prove that the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is not true almighty God. You think of the Arians, the Unitarians. And down the ages there have been many attempts to prove that the Holy Ghost is not God, that He is only an influence. But there never has been an attempt, as far as I know, to prove that God the Father is not God. This would be nothing less than atheism. God the Father. The first words in the old creed: “I believe in God the Father almighty.” And He *is* almighty, all-powerful, omnipotent, eternal, ever the same, holy, righteous.

I do not know why, but last Lord's day evening I felt constrained to speak to you on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, and during this week I have felt constrained so much to speak to you on the Person and work of God the Father. And then at the end something else which is not exactly the same, but I think it was this that really led me to it, that special, beautiful, sacred truth that God the eternal Father condescends to be the Father of His poor, lost, ruined, sinful people in Christ – the wonder of it.

But, “God, even the Father,” and there are four special works among others ascribed in Scripture especially to God the Father. I think you will find in the Word of God that so often it is God the Father working through the Son, through Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. You cannot divide the Godhead. You have these special works ascribed to the Father, but they are not without the Son, they are not without the Holy Spirit. “God, even the Father.” The first great work especially ascribed to God the Father is *His eternal decrees*. In Scripture this is especially the work, the prerogative of God the Father, that in eternity past He decreed all that should ever take place without in any way being the author of sin. Nothing can ever take place contrary to His eternal decrees. Nothing can ever take

place apart from His divine permission. He is almighty. He is in control. He not only foresaw before the world had any being, before man was created, what would be and what would not be, but He ordered it; He ordained it.

Our King William III, “the royal Calvinist,” was once asked by one of his Arminian subjects – I rather think it was the famous Bishop Burnet of Salisbury – “Surely, your majesty, you do not believe this!” He said, “Before I go into battle, O how carefully I plan it! What would you think of a king who went into battle without making a wise and careful plan? And can I think that my God, before He created the world, did not plan, did not ordain all the things that should take place?”

“God, even the Father,” in His eternal decrees, ordering everything according to the counsel of His will. We tremble before these things. Our God is very great. Our God is almighty. But especially as we think of the eternal decrees of God the Father, His decrees concerning salvation. God the Father sovereignly electing, choosing a people out of the ruins of the Fall as He saw them ruined in the fall of Adam. O that great work of God the eternal Father in election, in the choice of His people, and God the Father giving those whom He had chosen into the hands of His beloved Son, and God the Father entering into that “covenant, ordered in all things, and sure,” in which every blessing that all the people of God shall ever know was sovereignly decreed, everything fixed, the people of God secure in the Father’s everlasting purposes before they had a being, before the world had any being!

So, “God, even the Father.” The first special work that holy Scripture ascribes to God the Father is those eternal decrees concerning all things, without being in any way the author of sin, and especially those decrees concerning the everlasting salvation of a number that no man can number. But we pause here. It is not just a doctrine, but we see the wonderful love of the Father to poor, lost, ruined sinners. Medley says, “He saw me ruined in the fall” – God the Father – “He saw me ruined in the fall, yet loved me notwithstanding all.” There was nothing to merit the Father’s love, to merit the Father’s favour. He could have passed by the whole human race. He could have left them all to perish in their sin and guilt. O but that wonderful plan of salvation. You see the Father in all the love of His heart. They say that love must have a vent, it must have an outlet, and the Father’s love from everlasting flowed in the covenant of

grace to poor, lost, ruined sinners, loved with an everlasting love, and the Father's determination to bring them all to glory at last. Not one could be lost yet not a single one deserving it. But here you see, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." "Here the vast seas of grace, love, peace, and mercy flow." That sacred stream that John saw in the Book of the Revelation, the river of the water of life. These are God's eternal decrees, the Father's eternal decrees in the salvation of His people, this "river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

Sometimes we get wrong thoughts of this. What do I mean? Almost as if God is an angry God and Jesus is willing to save us, but first of all He must appease His Father. Never forget this, and it is a beautiful truth – Jesus said it to His disciples: "The Father Himself loveth you." O those of you to whom Christ has been made precious, those of you who are the objects of His love, those of you where Christ is your only hope, may it be, "The streams of love I trace up to the fountain, God." I think it is a point on which the people of God today are somewhat lacking, to know the Father's love, the love of the Father, that undeserved love, that matchless love, that love which is the origin of salvation. Let us be clear, the Father's justice must be satisfied; the Father's law must be honoured; His righteousness must not be sullied. But never think of an unwilling Father and a willing Son. "For the Father Himself loveth you." O but think of it! It will melt you to nothing if the Holy Spirit apply it this evening. When you think of yourself as a poor worm of the earth in all your unworthiness and sin, and to think that the great, eternal God the Father, even before creation's work began, had His loving eye upon you and His loving heart towards you and He planned salvation for you, and it was from eternity. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." I realise these are points not often spoken of, but it is for the detriment and poverty of the truth. May we be more confirmed in it, the everlasting love of the Father to His poor, unworthy people, that love which had no beginning, that love which can never end, that love which will land them all safe in heaven.

"God, even the Father." The second work that is ascribed to God the Father in Scripture, especially to Him, is *the work of creation*. Now of course, the Holy Spirit was there. We have it clearly written about the Spirit moving upon the waters. And of course the Son of God was there. "Without Him was not any thing made that was made." But creation is specially spoken of as the work of God the Father. That is how Scripture

begins: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” And it is especially God the Father. We see Him there in His divine, almighty power, God the Father creating everything out of nothing in six days, and all very good. What a sublime word is that: “He spake, and it was done” – the greatness of God, the omnipotence of God! Creation was an easy work for God. “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers” – it was an easy work for God. Redemption was not, but creation was such an easy work with God. “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained” – to think of this great Creator. Let us be clear, it was not evolution; it was creation. It was God’s sovereign, almighty work. It was God’s work alone. It was God’s work performed in six days.

And never forget that God is your Creator and mine, and as our Creator He has a perfect right over us. One day we shall give an answer to our Creator. Our Creator has put us under law, bidden us obey it. We cannot; we do not; we fail; we are guilty. We need a Saviour. O never forget, and in Scripture it is specially put to young people: “Remember *now* thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”

One thing I have noticed, and it has been a comfort and a help to me, and I have mentioned it to you often over the years. The Father, God the eternal Father, is the Creator of all things, and so often it is brought in Scripture, beautifully brought in like this: the One to whom you pray for help, God the Father, is almighty. He can do anything. There is nothing too hard for Him. The One to whom you pray, God the Father, He is the One who created heaven and earth. If He created heaven and earth, then He can deal with this thing that is troubling you this evening. You have that often in Scripture. Let me just mention one instance, the well-known one, the beautiful one hundred and twenty-first Psalm. We love to read it, don’t we? “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” That is God the eternal Father. He made heaven and earth; He is the Creator; He is the One who lovingly helps His people; He is the One to whom we pray; He is the One who has kindly said to you, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee” – this is it – “Yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.” O but think of the great Creator of heaven and earth, God the Father, and then to have that realisation that

“this God” – God the Father – “this God” – the Creator of heaven and earth – “this God is our God for ever and ever.” O what a mercy!

“God, even the Father.” Now the third work specially ascribed to God the Father in Scripture is *the work of providence*. By *providence*, we mean God fulfilling in time everything that He planned in eternity. That is providence. Nothing can take place by chance or by accident. Everything is under God’s control. The mighty events of the nations, the rise and fall of kingdoms, every star, every rolling plant, and the very hairs of your head, not one can fall to the ground without your Father. This is the mystery of divine providence.

“There’s not a particle of dust can fly,
A sparrow fall, or cloud obscure the sky,
A moth be crushed, or leaf fall from a tree,
But in submission to His wise decree.”

Now do you really believe it? Do we believe what we do believe? The eternal Father in providence, in complete control, on the throne, not a precarious throne, the government upon His shoulder, ordering all things by the counsel of His will for the honour and glory of His name and for the good of His people. It is there that this beautiful word fits in: “We know that *all things* work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” All things in God’s hand, things that seem evil, things that seem wrong, all in the Lord’s hand working together *for good* to you that love God, to you that are the called according to His purpose. So it is on this ground you can sing, “Sovereign Ruler of the skies,” and what a comfort it has been made to many, especially when things seem to be going wrong, or in the time of trouble, or in the time of bereavement. “My times are in Thy hand.”

“God, even the Father.” So these works especially ascribed to the Father, His eternal decrees and especially concerning the salvation of His people, the work of creation, the work of providence. And the fourth great work that is especially ascribed in Scripture to God the Father is *the sending of His Son*. O what a work is that, what a precious work, the love of God the eternal Father in sending His Son! “Having yet therefore one Son ... He sent Him.” “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” We think of the love of the Lord Jesus in coming, but never forget the love of God the Father in giving Him, in sending Him, and

never forget He was His true, real, proper, eternal Son. What man to help another would give his own son, send him not just into danger, but send him to certain death? This is the eternal Father, God the Father: “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Never forget the love of God in the giving of His dear Son. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.”

And He did not send Him to rule over a kingdom. So great was His love to lost, ruined, guilty sinners that He sent His only beloved Son to suffer, bleed and die. Now this is the love of the eternal Father. And how the apostle takes it up: “He that spared not His own Son” – this is God the Father – “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” That is gracious reasoning from the greater to the smaller: if God so loves you as one of His people that He was willing to give His only beloved Son to die for you, well, is there any real good that He will ever withhold from you, any real good that He will ever really deny?

“His only Son He deigned to give;
What love this gift declares!
And all that in the Son believe,
Eternal life is theirs.”

“God, even the Father.” So I have tried to speak to you briefly on the four great works in Scripture ascribed especially to God the Father, not without the Son, not without the Holy Spirit, but especially ascribed to God the Father. And, of course, there are others. What I want to come to now, to me is very precious and very wonderful: that this great God, God the Father, becomes His people’s Father in Christ, and all the people of God are His sons and daughters, His children, by adoption and grace. To me that is a very beautiful, very wonderful truth.

I want to make one thing very clear at the beginning. When God in Scripture is spoken of as God the Father, it is not because He is the Father of His people here on earth; it is because He is the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, because He is the Father of His only-begotten Son. If the world had never been created, if there had never been sinners on earth who were God’s children, He would still have been God the Father. Let us be clear on that. Sometimes people (and we do not want to make people an offender for a word) say, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love

of God our heavenly Father.” Well, that is very beautiful, but in the benediction when God is spoken of as the Father, it is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So I want to make that point abundantly clear: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost – the fatherhood of God is referring to His relationship to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, His own beloved Son.

O but to come to this: that God, God the Father, God the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is the Father of all His people. They are not children in the sense that the Lord Jesus is by eternal generation. They are the children of God by adoption and by grace. Yet there is a vital difference from an earthly adoption. As the new birth takes place, as they know the work of regeneration, as they know the Holy Spirit’s work, they are blessed with something of the image of their Father and their relationship to Him.

So, “God, even the Father.” What a word that was which the Lord Jesus spoke to dear, poor, sorrowing Mary Magdalene on the resurrection morning: “I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.” It is a beautiful word: “My God, my Father, blissful name! O may I call Thee mine?” This wonderful truth that God the eternal Father becomes His people’s Father in Christ, and He has this relationship to them, a Father and His dear children. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” – we, poor, wretched, guilty, unworthy sinners. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon *us*, that *we* should be called the sons of God.” And in another place we have it like this: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” It means that an eternal inheritance is reserved for all the Father’s children in heaven and there will not be one vacant place. “An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” It is theirs because they are children; it is theirs because they are heirs. They have not merited it; they have not deserved it. It comes to them through this relationship.

“God, even the Father,” but the Father of all His dear children in Christ. In the Book of the prophet Jeremiah, the Father puts it like this, speaking to poor, wretched, guilty sinners: “How shall I put thee among the children?” Do not misunderstand me, but almost as if there was a problem there. We know there is no problem with almighty God, but almost as if there is a problem, a difficulty. “How” – such a vile sinner –

“how shall I put thee among the children?” But He does! “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

Of course, this was one of William Gadsby’s favourite points, the double blessing of the people of God. In love and mercy the Father forgives them. They are pardoned rebels. But He does not leave it at that. He puts them among His dear children. Often he used to say that no earthly monarch would do that. You read perhaps of a royal pardon, a murderer about to be hanged in the days when there was capital punishment, a royal pardon, but the king, the queen, never brought them to the royal palace and made them a prince, put them among the children. “Behold, what manner of love.” “A foe received a favourite, a rebel made a child.”

We think of David and Mephibosheth: the condescension of David, poor Mephibosheth, of the house of Saul, lame on both feet, but belonging to those who were aliens. David said, “Send and fetch him.” He shows him the kindness of God for Jonathan’s sake. He sat at David’s table with princes – as a child – and “thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.” O the condescension, the love! Poor Mephibosheth could not get low enough. All he could speak about: “What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?” And if you and I have some sense that the eternal Father has put us amongst His dear children, we will sink to nothing at His feet.

“God, even the Father” – the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of poor, lost sinners through His dear Son. O you say, “Am I one of them?” Well, it is a vast subject. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power” – which means the privilege – “to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Which very simply means this: that every true believer, every sinner by precious faith enabled to rest on the atonement, who receives Christ in his heart and his affections, bears the mark of sonship. O but, “Can your heart aspire so high to say, ‘My Father, God’?” You want the witness; you want the sweet assurance; you want to say, “Abba, Father.” But never forget the Lord Jesus so often when speaking to His immediate disciples and to all His followers to the end of time, He said, “Your Father”; “your heavenly Father.” And He said, “When ye pray, say, Our

Father.” That is a beautiful word. What about those of you here this evening with your troubles and trials and sorrows and fears and tomorrow and this week and next week and the unknown way? “*Your heavenly Father knoweth.*” He knows, He loves, He cares, He understands. Who can estimate the love of God to His children in Christ?

The Lord Jesus spoke an amazing word once. It is too big for us. He said to His Father, “Thou ... hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.” That group of wretched sinners that make up My people! “Thou ... hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.” And the tender sympathy and the understanding. Mind you, there is the chastening and the correction. Chastening is a mark of sonship. If you do things wrong and get in a wrong spirit, and God does not correct you and bring you into sorrow for it, there is no real mark of sonship. “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” So the Lord will correct you. O but His watchful care! “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” And His tenderness and His love and His compassion!

“Your heavenly Father ever lives,
And all His choicest treasure gives
To you, the favourites of His heart,
Nor will He ever with you part.”

“God, even the Father” – His people’s Father in Christ. And one last thing: the relationship of a son to a father and a father to a son cannot be broken. We have it so beautifully in the prodigal. He went to a far country. He forsook his father’s house. He came back when he had wasted all in riotous living and no man gave to him. He said, “Father, I ... am no more worthy to be called thy son.” Worthiness has nothing whatsoever to do with sonship. “I ... am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.” But he could not be a hired servant because he was still a son. O there is a relationship here which can never, never be broken: that of a father to a son and that of a son to a father.

“God, even the Father,” and His people’s Father in Christ, and your Father, despite all your misery and sin, if you are born again of the Spirit of God, if you are amongst that “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” O may the Lord in love and mercy bear that witness to our spirit that He is *our Father* in Christ.

“God, even the Father.”