

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

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Contents

GOD KNOWN AS FATHER

THE FATHER AND THE SON

THE CHILDREN'S THIRST

GOD KNOWN AS FATHER

Matthew 28: 16-20; 1 Corinthians 8: 5,6; 1 John 2: 22,23

J.N.G. I think the Lord would engage us today with the place that the Father has in the economy in which God has been made known. The passage in Matthew gives us the name, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. What dominates in Christianity is that God is known as Father. I have the impression that at the close of the dispensation we should penetrate a little bit more into the divine thoughts as to the Father. We have two divine Persons operating in a subservient way in the economy to the Father, as it says in Corinthians: "to us there is one God, the Father", and the Son and the Spirit are operating in view of the Father being known. We are in a time when there has been a dislocation of family relationships as has never been known before, and the word in John's epistle shows us that antichrist denies the Father and the Son. What that implies, I think, is the break up of every divine institution that has been established through the revelation of God. Particularly it is seen in the western world, in Christendom, and if it is seen in the eastern world it is where the influence of Christendom and its apostasy that is rising has spread. But over against that, and in the face of it, the Spirit of God is working to produce family affections amongst the saints, and that lies in the knowledge of the Father and the Son. So I think we should work to ether to see that develop in our relation with on another. What has impressed me is the scripture in Corinthians that says "Then cometh the end", 1 Cor 15: 24 (A.V.). Well, what comes at the end? What comes at the end is that, when everything is subjected to the Lord, to the Son, "he gives up the kingdom to him who is God and Father". So that family relationships and family affections will go on into eternity. We are touching something in these scriptures which is profound in such depth as having to do with divine Persons in the relation in which They have been made known, but I think it is of prime importance in the time we are in that this is developed amongst us m the face of the scattering and in the face of the dislocation of family relationships

that the devil has endeavoured to bring about in Christendom, because God will have the victory in someone, somewhere in someone. I think we would all like to be amongst the overcomers that maintain the truth not just doctrinally but in the practical expression of it by the Spirit. We will need one another to develop this.

L.McF. The Lord's word in John 20 to Mary is: "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (v 17). Maybe we could develop that a little.

J.N.G. That is certainly very *apropos* to what is in mind; whether we can touch that today I am not sure. But God as Father covers all the activities of the present dispensation, whether it be in the glad tidings or in the heavenly side of things as you refer to in John 20 which would be the highest point of Christian privilege. But in all the gospels the Lord speaks of the Father, whether in His care and authority, which comes out particularly in Matthew or in His compassions which come out in Luke, or in the glad tidings in Mark, or finally as in that scripture you referred to in John. But I think the passage in Matthew would particularly refer to the authority of the Father.

J.A.P. Earlier in Matthew we have a little family, Joseph and Mary and the little Child, and then Herod comes in to destroy that, and it affected many families.

J.N.G. That is what he is endeavouring to destroy now, the family spirit amongst us and amongst Christians generally; but wider than that in the whole creational scene in this world; where Christianity has been known there is a determined effort of the devil to destroy family relationships and we only properly know those as we contemplate the affections between the Father and the Son.

G.H. Do you have something further to say about what you quoted in your prayer: "No one can come to me except the Father ... draw him", John 6: 44?

J.N.G. I think we should see that the idea of authority lies in the Father, but then also that the Father is the source of everything. So if there is any activity at all in divine grace that touches us the Father is behind it.

B.T. So John, who is the family man we might say, says "I write to you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning", 1 John 2: 13,14.

J.N.G. Yes, I was thinking of that. It is really normal Christianity that we come quickly to know God as Father. Now what lies behind this name of 'Father' we might inquire into.

C.S.E. When the Lord was in the garden He said "My Father, if this cannot pass from me unless I drink it, thy will be done" (Matt 26: 42), but when He was on the cross it was "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Matt 27: 46. What do you say about the relationship; it was there but in one setting the Lord addresses the Father and in the other it is "My God, my God"?

J.N.G. You get the two things, of course, in John 20 that has been referred to: "my Father and your Father, and ... my God and your God". But "my Father and your Father" is a matter of relationship, "my God and you God" is a question of God and man, as understand it. We have also the, fact that the Lord speaks of "the Father", your Father and "our Father" but when the Lord speaks of "my Father" we are penetrating into something which is profound and I am not sure whether we will get that far today.

C.F.D. Do you think the Lord in Matthew's gospel begins with the desire that we might come to know the Father as our heavenly Father as His children in the sphere of testimony? We are left here in the place where Christ has been rejected but in that very adverse scene of things the Lord would say, I want you to come to know the heavenly Father.

J.N.G. I think that is very good. The way the Father is represented in Matthews gospel is in connection with the kingdom: the Father's care and the Father's protection and the Father's pleasure too.

Involved in the name of Father is something exceedingly attractive. We may have departed a little from it. I think what the Spirit of God is striving for and this will be the victory of God - is that in the face of the rising tide of apostasy the very best is going to be enjoyed now by someone somewhere because of the presence of the Spirit. I think we would all like to be among them.

T.E.D. Is there something in the way that David early in his kingdom expresses these feelings towards Mephibosheth following the breakdown of the Saul line? He says "Mephibosheth ... shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons", 2 Sam 9: 11. Is that feeling as expressed to be understood by us, the feature of grace extended to us who are unworthy?

J.N.G. I think so. You cannot connect the title 'Father' with anything but grace, at least you cannot connect judgment with it. When you think of God you have a wider term involving creation, judgment too and maybe other things, but the title 'Father' is connected purely with grace and the affection that lies behind the operation of grace in ourselves.

T.E.D. The impress of it just bears in as you think of David, when the time of test came that relationship stood with Mephibosheth. That is what we need at the present time, do we not, what will stand in the presence of this tide of apostasy?

J.N.G. We do. Therefore the need of our enjoyment - not only our understanding of the truth but our enjoyment of the truth. This is a prime thing in relation to the truth as to the Father and the Son and that is why the antichrist will deny the Father and the Son. That is not just the denial of certain doctrine but the working out of that practically, as I understand it, in the Christian circle.

B.T. So what the Lord says: "Your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things" (Matt 6: 32) is a word to us; maybe we like the disciples have got away a little bit in our thoughts from the providential care that the Father has.

J.N.G. That is a beautiful reference. It is most attractive that in the midst of all the difficulties and stresses - we are in difficult times, the

young people are in difficult times and the older ones are in difficult times - there has been no change with the Father. He is the same Father as the Lord spoke of as you refer to in Matthew's gospel, and we need not be overburdened with care; if we seek first the kingdom of God these things will be added to us, and that is because of the heavenly Father that we have.

O.L.L. The Lord in John's gospel tells us that "the Father himself has affection for you", John 16: 27. Do you think He is telling us about the love that the Father has for us so that we concentrate on the Father. He also said in John "my Father is greater than I", John 14: 28.

J.N.G. He does; John's ministry would draw us into this family circle of things. I suppose the thought of children comes out in the kingdom in Matthew's gospel, but then we are drawn into the relationship of sons. John would finally bring us to that in the twentieth chapter, although he does not speak of us as sons until then; it is "my Father", sonship in Christ. But the whole setting of things should be very attractive to us because behind the name of Father is affection, a father's heart.

S.E.H. In Matthew the Lord says "thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret", chap 6: 6. What would you say about our secret relations with the Father?

J.N.G. That is what needs to be cultivated. That brings us down to what is intensely individual. Nobody else may know, but is it not a comfort that the Father knows? That is what the Lord says; your Father knows and cares - your Father. Can we each say that? The Lord was saying it of course to the remnant but it comes into Christianity in a full way.

C.F.D. So would the development of this relationship which you have been referring to bring about a sense of restfulness in the hearts of the saints? It is fully depicted in the relationship between Christ and the Father. Difficult as things were, the pressure was constantly being exerted on Christ, but He was always restful and constantly finding recourse to His own link with the Father - at the

mount of Olives, in the night season, and so on. Do you think as we come to know the Father better, there would be this restfulness promoted in our hearts?

J.N.G. I think so. It really comes back to the acceptance of the Father's will. That is what keeps us restful. It is the little things that irritate us and cause our wills to rise up that disturb us but Matthew would indicate to us that the Father is supreme in His authority. Think of two divine Persons taking a place of subservience to another divine Person, the Father so that God should be supreme. That ought to have an effect on us in the acceptance of the will of the Father, do you think?

C.F.D. Yes I do; and we can trace back to Christ the One who perfectly not only accepted but filled out the will of God. A Lord's day hardly goes by, in the giving of thanks for the loaf for instance, without some reference being made to the fact that Christ in that body was the way in which He filled out the will of God, and He was restful and happy in it all the way, was He not?

J.N.G. Happy; so that even when His ministry is rejected in the very place where He had done the greatest of His works what does the Lord say? "I praise thee, Father, ... that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes", Matt 11: 25. It is not only acceptance of the Father's will but He knew what was in the Father's heart.

L.MacF. So on the side of revelation which you just touched, it says in Matthew 16: "for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens" (v 17). Does the matter of intelligence, our intelligence in the mystery and in the truth, really relate to the activities of the Father?

J.N.G. That will come as we are subject. A prime thing with us all the time is the acceptance of the divine will. The Lord did that not in any arbitrary way but because He loved the will of God.

C.G. In Luke 23: 46 it says: "And Jesus, having cried with a loud voice, said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. And having said this, he expired". There was no mention made there of being

forsaken. Is that not a specific relationship between the two, He knew where He was going, "I commit my spirit"?

J.N.G. That is a wonderful statement. Communion was there; the abandonment is not in mind at that point but it was the communion between the Lord and His Father. But then He had also said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", Luke 23: 24. He was not asking the Father to change His mind; what He was asking the Father was to forgive that specific sin, the worst sin that had ever been committed against the Person of Jesus, and Jesus knew what was in the Father's heart.

C.G. Love to the end.

J.N.G. Yes. "Father, forgive them", because He knew the Father would forgive them, He knew His Father's heart. I wonder if we do.

J.A.P. The scriptures the brethren have brought up open up to me in very great freshness the Father's place in Matthew. I think you might say another word on Matthew 16; that is the centre of what we are at, the assembly, is it not?

J.N.G. Let us read it (v 17): "And Jesus answering said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens. And I also ... ". It would seem that the Lord waited for this point, for the Father to operate in Peter's soul by way of revelation, and then He would add to it. It just shows the working of the economy, the Father supreme in it and the Son and the Spirit working to that end.

J.A.P. Peter says "*Thou* art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; that is what the Father revealed to him and it is very wonderful, is it not? How does that work out?

J.N.G. I suppose that is the basis of the assembly coming to light. In Peter's soul that revelation was laid and we come into it because of the presence of the Spirit. Then the more you ponder the relation between the Father and the Son made known in Jesus, the more what is fatherly will come out in us and what is proper to sonship will come out in us. That is the way I understand it.

B.T. Paul preached straightway that Jesus was the Son of God (see Acts 9: 20), but the woman with a spirit of Python said "These men are bondmen of the Most High God", Acts 16: 17. While true in itself, do you think that was a clever attempt to divert, the devil having in mind offsetting the family thought?

J.N.G. To divert the truth for the moment; and the truth for the moment is the way God is revealed in the Father and the Son. The Most High God, you are thinking, relates to the millennial day yet to come. Is that not what Satan is doing now, seeking to divert believers from the full truth of Christianity?

G.D.P. Would the thought of the assembly in Matthew, as has been mentioned follow through into chapter 18, the little children beholding the face of My Father, going on to, if two of you agree concerning any matter you shall receive it of My Father?

J.N.G. The more you look into Scripture and the Lord's words as to the Father the more you are impressed with how little we know Him. What a wealth of meaning there is in the Lord's teaching as to the Father, whether in Matthew or Mark or Luke or John! What a depth of meaning lies in the Lord's own words! the authority of the Father underlying the truth of the assembly as it comes out in Matthew's gospel, and the kingdom too, the kind of kingdom that the Father's kingdom. Then the compassions of God in the heart of the Father as Jesus knew it that would treat what any one of us would say was the greatest sin of wilfulness that has ever been committed, to put that on the ground of a sin of ignorance, because He knew what was in the Father's heart. Do we know God, our God as Father in the way that the Lord intends we should? I think it would alter us in our outlook upon men and make us much more evangelistic, as well as maintain the truth of the assembly in its entirety.

K.P. He was occupied in His Father's business at a very early age. That would link with what you are saying, because He was in the temple.

J.N.G. Very good.

C.F.D What is the secret of coming to know the Father better? You say we know Him so little.

J.N.G. We contemplate the way that Christ is held in the affections of the Father and to contemplate the way the Father is held in the affections of Jesus. I think of the way God has come within our range in Jesus. "We have contemplated his glory" said John, "a glory as of an only-begotten with a father", John 1: 14. Do you think a little more contemplation on our side would deeply affect us and form us?

C.F.D. I do. It seems to me that this is where the weakness lies in the fact that coming to know the Father we have to come through Christ. He is the secret to the knowledge of the Father. He said to Philip (I realise it is John's gospel which is a little different setting): "He that has seen me has seen the Father", John 14: 9. Everything was in that Person, everything to be known was all expressed. The secret is coming to know Christ better, is it not?

J.N.G. Attachment to Christ is the secret of everything. I think our attention has been called to that by the Spirit in a good many places over this past twelve months, the need for attachment to Christ. And that maybe takes us out of our gatherings together simply and brings us back to our personal links with the Lord Jesus.

L.D.P. In John 11 Martha told Jesus that whatever He should ask of God, God will give Him (v 22), but Jesus lifted up His eyes on high and said: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me" (v 41). This was in regard to Lazarus.

J.N.G. Let us look at the passage. There had been an invasion of the family in John 11 by way of death, and that is what the Lord felt. The result of the Lord's action is that the family is restored in their relations together in a way that they had never enjoyed before. In fact what comes out in that section, where they express their love for their departed brother Lazarus, is that the Jews said: "Behold how he loved him!" (v 36). So they came to know Jesus in a way they had never known Him before. I think that is why the Lord allows certain things to happen amongst us, to bring us back into an

enjoyment, or to bring on to view shall I say, Christ in a way that we have never seen Him before. I am sure as to this, in the difficulties and sorrows that arise amongst us, the end of our exercises is not reached until we have had a fresh view of Christ.

L.D.P. That is helpful. I have been wondering recently - it may be a little different - as to some of the exercises amongst us, for instance our two brothers in South Africa, the extremity of the conditions. We all know about it so that we all can join in our affections and prayer to God for them. I wondered if God would use such things to unify us and bring about right feelings.

J.N.G. I think that is right, and that we value the assembly. Why is it that as yet there have been no sisters added to our brethren in Cape Town? Is that what you are thinking of? Is it whether we value the assembly enough, whether our prayers are urgent enough that there should be a fuller expression of the assembly in that place. And as well our sisters in Oslo and in Panama. I am sure what the Lord is looking for is an extension of the number of places where there is some expression of the assembly; not numbers in a place - I do not think we will ever get that again - but the number of the expressions of the assembly I think is what the Lord is after.

C.G. In Matthew 23: 9: "And call not any one your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, he who is in the heavens"; then in Ephesians 4: 4; "There is one body and one Spirit, as ye have been also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all". That is quite a scope, is it not?

J.N.G. A tremendous scope! That passage in Ephesians is the widest scope of all - over all.

A.R.S. Is the Father's drawing to Christ a continuous thing or just once for all?

J.N.G. I think John gives a general presentation of the truth and it is a current thing all the time, not just once for all. "No one can come to me except the Father ... draw him" (John 6 : 44), I think, is a current thing as you suggest. We need to be under the influence of

the Father's love; the Father is drawing all the time and it centres in Jesus. Sometimes we get a bit doctrinal about things and put things in compartments but it is the same Jesus, the same blessed Saviour, the same One in whom God is known, the Father and the Son are known in Jesus. It makes Christianity very simple.

L.MacF. I wondered whether the type of Abraham and Isaac would amplify, maybe for the younger people particularly, the oneness of affection, oneness of outlook, oneness of activity; whether that would not in some little way help us as to appreciate the intimacy of divine affection which we are privileged to know something of.

J.N.G. I think it does. Abraham and Isaac represent the prime thought; it is a perfect chapter in Genesis in which there is no failure because it represents what you say. But Genesis is the seed plot of the Bible and what you get in Genesis is the presentation of a father and a son; but also the breakdown of the whole family is prefigured there. Not only the breakdown though, but the recovery of the whole family is prefigured in Genesis. And who is that through? It is through Joseph, a type of Christ.

A.S.H. "And they began to make merry" (Luke 15: 24) means that the merriment is continuing; it does not say in any place that it stopped.

J.N.G. Let us enjoy it. Let us be with God in the enjoyment of what He has provided. Now where we read in Corinthians it says "to us there is one God, the Father". A wonderful thing that! That is the way God is known in this present dispensation. Of course Ephesians tells us that He is the Father of every family (see chap 3: 15), which shows how wonderful this thought is of God revealed as Father. The family side of things and the affection that belong to it are going into eternity, we in the nearest family, but we have such a wonderful God as Father that He is going to have many families in heaven and on earth. Why? Because of the heart that our Father has. So let us touch it, a bit more.

G.D.P. That is very good. The Jews claimed they had one Father, God; they put it in the reverse order (see John 8: 41).

J.N.G. It required the coming in of Jesus, the incarnation, for us to understand how a father can be held in the affections of a son and how a son can enjoy fully the affections of a father; It was seen in Jesus.

J.A.P. In this scripture it is over against idolatry: what do you say about that?

J.N.G. This is in a Gentile setting. He says: whether in heaven or on earth, (as there are gods many ...) yet to us" - that is Christians there is one God, the Father, of whom all things" (that would be that the Father is the source of everything) and then "and we for him" there is something for the Father now. Where is it? It is in the assembly, those who form the assembly. He says: "and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him"; everything has been effected by Christ, He is the divine Operator.

B.T. In some natural families things are put on a competitive basis and the child that does the best is shown partiality; but God is not like that, He is fair to all of us.

J.N.G. That is a very good word. How can we represent God as Father? We have humbly to say, How much we have misrepresented Him; in every avenue of responsibility we have misrepresented God. We do not want to do that any more. The more we come into the knowledge of the Father and the Son, the Father as revealed in Christ and what that Son is in the Father's affections, the more we will be impartial, as you say. Our Father is no respecter of persons.

J.A.P. The father in Luke 15 even entreated the elder son to come in, he was kindly to him.

J.N.G. In the recovery of Joseph, Judah finally says, He asked us, Have ye a father and have ye a brother? I think they are two searching questions and it comes into what you refer to in Luke 15; "Thy brother" and "thy father" (v 27). I think what the Lord is saying today is, How can we promote family affections amongst us? It will absorb a tremendous lot if we do. We will not be looking at one another or having little difficulties with one another; I think family

affections will absorb a tremendous amount and there will be less friction.

A.S.H. I was wondering if that was the missing link. Do you have a father and a brother?

J.N.G. Yes, that is what they had to come to. What Judah came to was, Well, if all the rest of the brethren did not take the responsibility he will and that is the final end that the Lord is looking for amongst us. If there is any breakdown anywhere you take the blame; do not look to anybody else but see that brotherly affections are going to be maintained by you and an answer to the Father.

G.D.P: Judah prevailed and he gets the birthright.

J.N.G. Yes that is just so, he did prevail.

C.G. It says in this eighth chapter: "For and if indeed there are those called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, (as there are gods many, and lords many) yet to us there is one God". Now in Isaiah 45 He says this of Himself: Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow every tongue shall swear" (vv 22,23). One God, He says that of Himself.

J.N.G. Another thought connected with the Father is the idea of supply. If there is something wanting in the family who do you look to? Is the father equal to it? Can he supply what is needed in the family? I think that is one thought connected with God as Father. And that is known in the gospel, that whatever need there is, the Father is equal to it. Can we trust Him?

C.G. We must.

J.N.G. We must, but do we?

T.E.D. Paul says in this epistle: "not many fathers", chap 4: 15. Would that be so that there should be exercise with us to learn the Father and then to fill out what we can in that relationship in the local assembly?

J.N.G. That would be the exercise. You are very glad he did not say there are not any fathers; there were some, so that gives us the opportunity to be amongst them.

O.L.L. As to the family side the Scripture particularly tells us that the Father sent the Son and the Son gave Himself a sacrifice so that the Father should have sons with the Son. So we have to consider what the Father did and what the Lord did too.

J.N.G. I did not quite get the point of what you said.

O.L.L. Scripture tells us how the Son is in the Father and that we are in Him: how do we arrive at that?

J.N.G. Christ lived in the affections of His Father and His Father was in the affection of His Son and that is why He said "I and the Father re one", John 10: 30. That is the divine standard; that is the wonder of Christ coming within our range and unfolding the truth in the revelation of God as to Father and Son. The divine thought is that we should come into that current of affection and express it. I would like to think of our coming into the enjoyment of those affections, but the divine thought is that we should express them, because if we express them, that expression of love is for the heart of the Father. I think the passage in John's epistle is a very sobering one and ought to make us urgent as to this matter: "He is the antichrist who denies the Father and the Son". Maybe we have thought that is just doctrinal, but it is more than that. The idea of the Father and the Son, God come within our range in Jesus, is what is to give character to the expression of the assembly, and the terrible thing is that it is in Christendom where the relationship of father and son has broken down so badly and it is because the anti-Christian spirit is given so much place. Finally it will come out in the antichrist; there will be no compassions, there will be no affections in the antichrist. We are in the time of the fourth beast and it is the same thing, there is no compassion or affections in a beast. That is the time we are in and the expression of that finally when the Spirit has gone will be in the antichrist because he denies the Father and the Son.

C.G. Proverbs 3: 11: "My son, despise not the instruction of Jehovah, neither be weary of his chastisement; for whom Jehovah loveth he chasteneth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth". That is a remarkable statement, is it not?

J.N.G : It is a remarkable statement, and all this comes down in our own experiences to parental authority and the enjoyment of that, whether as parents we exercise authority in an arbitrary way or whether there can be such affection and grace connected with it that to be in that family is an enjoyment. I think God wants us to enjoy one another but we can only do that as we enjoy how Christ is held in the affections of the Father.

C.F.D. Is this section in John's epistle something that we ought to carry in our minds in the preaching of the word of God, the gospel?

J.N.G. I believe it is. Can we give an expression of the kind of God that we have as Father. He is thinking of men all the time. He is not thinking in terms of judgment. Now, the world is provisionally held in reconciliation and God's heart is going out towards every man; He is no respecter of persons. We have no prior claims on the truth of the assembly or any other truth as to God. He will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (see 1 Tim 2: 4), and I understand that that word involves the whole of the truth. Is that the way you regard it?

C.F.D. I think that is good. Paul brings that in in speaking to Timothy, showing that the gospel is for all men but that the truth is for all men too. That is what we have to carry in our thoughts; the intent an? the desire of the heart of God is expressed in that, is it not so?

J.N.G. And to demonstrate it. Paul demonstrated that in his word to Timothy: my true child" 1 Tim 1: 2. What a father Paul as!

J.A.P. "He is the propitiation for our sins; but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world", 1 John 2: 2. Mr Taylor gave a word in the morning meeting on that to widen the affections of the brethren; it is for the whole world.

J.N.G. That is fine. I hope we can get our hearts expanded a bit.

NEW YORK

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Key to initials

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THE FATHER AND THE SON

J.N.Grace

**Genesis 22: 7-9 (1st sentence); 1 Kings 2: 1-3; 2 Kings 2: 11,12 (1st sentence);
2 Timothy 1: 1,2**

We are in a time, dear brethren, when there is about to be a change of the dispensation and it is a very interesting thing, if we go through Scripture and see one generation passing and another coming on, to see that it is marked by certain affections between the father and the son, all pointing to just where we are now. God has not given up His thoughts; it does not matter what the dislocation maybe in the world, the terrible things that are happening to mankind, God has not given up His thoughts; and not only has He not given up His thoughts but He has secured an answer to His thoughts somewhere in someone. That is because God Himself is here in the Spirit, and as sure as the work of Christ is perfect and nothing can be added to it or taken from it, so surely the work of the Spirit will be perfect and nothing will have to be added to it or taken from it. I would like to be with the Spirit in what He is doing. Somewhere in the overcomer there is an answer to every divine thought, not on the level of man's thoughts but on the level of God's own thoughts because God Himself is working here. It is an encouraging thing therefore to see from these scriptures what God is securing.

God was about to work in a family in the first passage we read in Genesis and it is so stimulating to see that He presents early in the history of the human race the choicest of His thoughts in the expression of affection between the father and the son. So I just dwell on these expressions for a moment as to Abraham and Isaac: "Isaac spoke to Abraham his father, and said, My father!" What that must have meant to Abraham and what that must have meant to God as He looked forward to the incoming of Christ, His own beloved Son. Dear brethren, do we realise what the incarnation meant to the Father? For four thousand years God had looked for

an expression from a Son; all that a son could be to a father God looked for for four thousand years and He did not find it until Christ came in. But then He found it just as He wanted to find it, He found in Jesus all that He could look for in a son's affections, in His own beloved Son; that is why the voice came from heaven. And there was one Man on earth who enjoyed the affections of a father as no other man had ever enjoyed it, and that was Jesus. Now that is the standard, the divine standard between the Father and the Son as seen in Jesus. So the more we focus our attention on Jesus the more we will understand divine thoughts and the more we will be formed by them because we will want to be formed in accordance with the divine standard. It is so attractive. All the types in the Old Testament are only a shadow of the real thing, and yet they are so interesting because they are indited by the Spirit of God. What comes out in these expressions between Abraham and Isaac is so choice, choice expressions of a father and choice expressions of a son, and they meant so much to God that God says I am going to extend that. He swears by Himself: "I will richly bless thee, and greatly multiply thy seed" (v 17). Of course that is only a shadow of what God found in Christ. What the Father saw in Christ in the enjoyment of those relationships of father and son meant that God was going to have every family in heaven and earth named of the Father; that is what God thought of what He found in Christ. We come into the first family, dear brethren, and it is our privilege to be in the enjoyment of divine affections as no other family ever will enjoy them. So we are told in Romans that we have received a spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father (see chap 8: 15). We think of it so often from our side what a wonderful thing it is that we can enjoy the affections of the Father and we can say, Abba, Father, but do we realise what that means to the Father's heart that through the gospel there is produced in the hearts of men the same cry that found expression from the lips of Jesus - Abba, Father. That is what God is getting through the gospel; that is the divine standard in the gospel. How soon it is that God introduces that into our hearts - not a mind matter but into our hearts - "God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father", Gal 4: 6. It is the

affections responding to the heart of the Father. And it is not only you and me but it is our joining together, it is the first collective touch, I think, in Romans; "Whereby we cry, Abba, Father", chap 8: 15. These are fine touches, dear brethren, and they are intended to come in early in our history, the enjoyment of divine affections with one another and response to the heart of the Father who gave His own Son. How precious these words are that the Spirit of God employs time and time again: He spared not His own Son! Romans gives us His own Son: "sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh", chap 8: 3. O, what it must have meant to God that Jesus went to the cross and solved every moral question there! For you? Yes, but in order that God might be free, free in the enlargement of His own affections in the hearts of men to secure from them what He secured from the heart of Christ, ever keeping in mind of course that Christ is unique-always unique. We begin with that; whatever we think of in terms of our blessing let us ever remember that what God found in Christ was unique because of who He is; but that is the divine standard. So we get this expression in Genesis between Abraham and Isaac and it is carried right through Scripture. Abraham is the great idea of the progenitor of faith but the progenitor of the fatherly idea in every family. So the idea is carried forward in Genesis. Failure comes into that family history with Jacob, but also recovery. While you get what is perfect in Abraham's history and Isaac in chapter 22, when you come to Jacob you find that there is failure like it is with us all. But God has the victory. When Christ is established in the position on high as represented in Joseph, then there is recovery for all the family and recovery to the Father's heart. So Jacob shines at the end of his history, he shines as a father. There is not time to go into that but it is a fact as you look into it, the fact that the fatherly side of things is represented in Jacob even when Joseph himself failed. Jacob shines as a father even in the presence of Pharaoh because he is representative of God. How God will secure at the end the victory! Make no mistake about it, riot one divine thought will fail because of the wonder of Christ; His death, His resurrection, His

ascension ensures that every divine thought will go through on the divine level.

Now when we come to first Kings we see David failing, the days of David when he is going to die. Another regime is about to be established. Another side of things is presented elsewhere, but in this section the affections of David in relation to Solomon shine. It is the father and the son again, perhaps more from the side of sonship in Solomon, loved as he was by his father; the very name means that ... 'beloved'. "I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (2 Sam 7: 14); that was what Solomon was in type the Son. What David says is, You be a man. Why I am saying this, beloved brethren, is because some of us are getting advanced in years and we have not much time left here, but while we are left here we want to ensure that the affections proper to fatherly relationships and the relationship of sons are maintained and expressed, not just for our enjoyment but that there should be at the end of the dispensation God's thoughts enshrined in every heart as in the light of the assembly and find expression in our relations with one another. So what a father it is that says to his son, Be a man! We have had the truth, and what truth has been recovered and developed in this very locality by a father! Let us be sons therefore and let us be men to carry out the relationships that have already been demonstrated in a fatherly way in relation to the sons who are to carry on. So David says: "as it is written in the law of Moses ...", in other words he carries through the whole truth that we get in Romans and Corinthians and carries it through to Ephesians where sonship is developed according to the divine counsels, by way of doctrine but also by way of enjoyment. That is what God is after in these days, dear brethren, He is after the enjoyment of the truth in family relations in our local assemblies. And that is what the devil is after to disrupt; if he is trying to do anything it is to bring in a lack of confidence between the brethren, a lack of trust and a certain distance. In the Spirit of God we have all the resources of the Father to meet it so that we can enjoy it in the face of what is the rising tide of apostasy in Christendom - and it is rising very fast.

I want to speak now of Elijah and Elisha because it is the same thing, it is the transfer of one regime to another, of one dispensation to another. I want to call your attention to the impression on Elisha of what he had found in Elijah. When Elijah goes up he says "My father, my father!" That is how he had come to love Elijah. And the affections that he had seen in Elijah dominated the ministry of Elisha. The ministry of Elisha is the ministry that applies particularly to the present time, the double portion of Elijah's spirit. Seen how? Seen in the way of supply. There is the authority of the Father, there is the affection of the Father, but then those things come out in Elisha's ministry, a ministry of supply. So if there is a want in a locality, if there is a want in our families, can the father bring in what is needed, supply what is needed? Now you will find, I think, that in every situation in which Elisha finds himself wherever there is a want and a need, Elisha can meet it. Why? Because he carried forward the double portion of Elijah's spirit. Elijah refers, of course to the ministry of Christ on earth; but now He has gone on high and the Spirit is here, abundant resources to bring in things in a fatherly way to supply what is lacking in each one of our localities. Now that is a challenge: can we do it? Can a fatherly spirit prevail amongst the old and the young to carry forward the recovery of the truth in the relations between one and another in family affection?

Now we go over to Paul and Timothy. The same thing you see in Paul's affection for Timothy. Paul not only brought out the truth in its fulness on a level of things as he finally gives it in Ephesians but he demonstrates the thing in his own life. That is what the Spirit of God wants, not only that we can go to the bookshelves and refresh ourselves there (if we read a little of the ministry what refreshment it brings!) but it is not enough to do that; the truth is not on the bookshelves the truth is livingly in the hearts of the brethren. The way the testimony has been carried right down the ages is not only by way of printed ministry - thank God for the light which that gives us - but the light that that gives us is intended to be formed in our souls so that the testimony is carried on livingly in the affections of the saints. In the rising face of unbelief and apostasy today God is

looking for a demonstration of the finest features of the truth on a heavenly level in the relations between the brethren, between father and son, husband and wife, between parents and children, between brothers and sisters. God is looking for a demonstration of this right here in New York and every other place that is represented. You say, That is a hard thing. Elijah said it is a hard thing you are asking for but nevertheless the double portion is here, dear brethren, all the resources of Christ in heaven are available here in the presence of the Spirit. So let no one's faith fail. Whatever may be the difficulties (and difficulties there are, I think there are sorrows in every heart that are known only to that heart, the bitterness of everyone's heart is known to themselves) there are resources in the Spirit to meet them, not only to meet our difficulties and get us through in relation to them but get us through, dear brethren, in an enjoyment of one another and in the enjoyment of divine affections seen between the Father and the Son. That is the divine standard and that still exists, and all that is going on in heaven between the Father and the Son is brought within our range down here now because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. May God help us, for His Name's sake.

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THE CHILDREN'S THIRST

In the picture-language of Scripture God has likened Himself to a fountain of living waters. Who, in a thirsty land, would be so foolish as to forsake such a source of eternal joy and satisfaction? But some of God's people did so and, worse still, they tried to quench their thirst from broken cisterns! It was an Eastern custom to spend perhaps many months hewing out a cistern in the rock, hoping to get it filled with precious water in the rainy season. At last the rains descend - but suppose the water level does not rise and the water runs out as fast as it runs in, then it is a broken cistern. What a disappointment - wasted labour and still thirst! That is God's picture of a heart which has turned away from Christ.

The fountain of water for the Hebrew children in the desert was the rock which followed them. They could turn to it at any time and at all times for satisfaction. That rock was a sign or type of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ who meets the needs and the longings of the soul of every believer on Him. God once proved His people by leaving them for a time without water for their thirst. Moses was then told to smite the rock with his rod when the waters gushed forth. This is another illustration, teaching us that Jesus must be smitten and die so that we might be given the Holy Spirit. In yet a further symbol the Spirit is "a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life" within the believer.

All the blessings of the thousand-year kingdom of Christ on earth, yet to come, can be enjoyed now in spirit by the believer on Him. What attractive words are these: "And with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation"! Scripture does not tell us how many wells there will be, but evidently salvation will be needed then also. Every child will be able to think with joy of some ways in which we need a Saviour. Names are often given to wells. We could suppose one being called 'Salvation from self'. If any older persons should happen to read this they will agree with me that we often need to be humble and stoop down to drink from it. Perhaps we go with sorrow but drink with joy because the springing waters lead us upward to the Giver and occupy us with Jesus where He is. Do you agree with me?

J.C.Evershed