

## What We Believe, Part 3: God the Father

**1 Peter 1:1-5 ESV (Pg. 588)** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **2** according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. **3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, **5** who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

We believe in God the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth; that by his word and for his glory, he freely and supernaturally created the world out of nothing; that through the same word he daily sustains all his creatures; that he rules over all and, together with the Son and the Spirit, is the only Sovereign; that his plans and purposes cannot be thwarted; that he is faithful to every promise, works all things together for good to those who love him and in his unfathomable grace gave his Son, Jesus Christ, for mankind's redemption; that he made all things for the praise of his glory and intends for man, in particular, to live in fellowship with himself.

- I. Last week in our series on our fundamental beliefs at NRLC we looked at the concept of the Trinity; the belief that all true Christians hold that God's nature is best understood by the three following statements: **1. God is three distinct persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). 2. Each Person is fully God. 3. There is one God.** Let's examine our specific belief about God the Father, the first person of the Trinity.
  - A. I said last week that for many Christians, the terms "God" and "the Father" are interchangeable. People will refer to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit instead of to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
    1. This is not in any way theologically wrong, but it **can** unintentionally lead to some erroneous theological conclusions if we're not careful.
    2. This is because (as we learned last week) that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are just as much "God" as the Father is. While their roles are different (yet harmonious), they are completely equal in their substance and authority.
  - B. Therefore, our challenge this week is not to understand how the three persons are different from one another in their roles (we did that last week), but to distinguish the person of the Father within the Triune God when we see the terms "God" or "The Lord" in the Bible.
    1. But let me warn you that is extremely difficult, and almost impossible to do because of the **unity** in the Trinity, and the fact that things that we commonly associate with the Father (such as creation) are attributed to the Son and Spirit as well throughout the scriptures. What is distinct about the Father?
      - a) One of the first things about God the Father is that He is the One in whom we best see both the "oneness" or unity of the triune God, and He also shows us clearly a God that is transcendent; meaning that He exists apart from, and is not subject to, the limitations of the material universe.



- E. Lastly, God is “Eternal”. We touched on this very briefly last week. God’s eternal nature means that he has no beginning, but he always has been. It means that he will have no end; he always will be, even after everything else ceases to be.
    - 1. But it means more than that, it also means that because he has no beginning and no ending, that he is self-existent. “I AM THAT I AM”.
      - a) You and I exist because at some point in history we were conceived by our biological mothers and fathers. There was a time when we did not exist, then a sexual union occurred and we began our existence.
      - b) Conversely, this existence will end at some point in the future, There is absolutely no avoiding it. Our bodies will wear out, an accident will take place, a disease will be contracted and we will die. It’s our inevitable end.
    - 2. But not so with God! He has no parents, no one can claim to have conceived God, because then he would be part of them and not utterly unique. Moreover, he will never die. His reign will never end. None will take his place.
  - F. Sovereignty, Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence, Eternity; these are just a sampling of what we call attributes - characteristics of God. They are helpful, but limited, in showing us what God is like. We could describe him in other ways as well: His attributes of being, His mental attributes, His moral attributes, His perfection, blessedness and glory; but our picture would still be incomplete, because of his transcendence. Paul said we see him through “a glass darkly”.
  - G. But what we must also never forget is that all these attributes are seen in equal measure in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with no rank or lesser degree. So how do we know and see that the Father is distinct in both his person and role?
- III. We can see the distinctness of the Father in the Old Testament especially when One known as the Angel of the Lord shows up (which He does several times throughout the OT). This is not to be confused with “an” angel from the Lord.
- A. In the OT, the Angel of the Lord speaks as God in the first person; using the pronouns “I” and “my” when relating to God’s identity and authority. (see Gen. 16 and Judges 2 for a couple of examples.)
    - 1. Additionally, when people meet him in scripture, they exclaim that they have “seen the Lord” (ex. Judges 6:11-24),
    - 2. But since the Angel of the Lord is presented as distinct from God, many Christians have wondered (with rational reason to do so) if He is actually Jesus before his incarnation; thus showing the distinction of Father and Son.
  - B. Additionally, in the NT, we see Christ being verbally affirmed by the audible voice of the Father in the New Testament, as well as Jesus praying to the Father.
  - C. But (asking the same question as we did last week) what difference does it make? Does the fact that God the Father is distinct from the Son and Spirit make any difference to our eternal salvation? I would say, “Yes! Very much so!”
- IV. In the greeting of every one of Paul’s letters, he signifies God the Father (not just the Son) as the author of our salvation. In 8 of his 13 letters, Paul uses an identical greeting. “Grace to you and peace **from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**” In the remaining 5 he uses some slight variation of this greeting.
- A. But don’t just read that as though Paul is saying, “Dear Romans” or “My Dearest Galatians”. Paul opens his letter with a comprehensive theological atom bomb that, frankly, many of us usually just skip past to get to what comes next!

1. Paul is blessing the churches with grace and peace; affirming them by confirming what God has provided for their blessing and benefit.
    - a) “Grace”: the unearned, unearnable gift the Father has bestowed so that we might know him. This was impossible when we were dead in sin. The Grand Canyon gaped it’s wide open mouth between where God was and where you and I were, with no bridges, helicopters; no way whatsoever for us to cross the span. God was too holy, and You and I were too vile in our wickedness and rebellion.
    - b) But then came grace. What we couldn’t do was accomplished by Jesus. Jesus became vile, so we could be clean; He became poor, so that we could be rich; He was broken and battered, so that we could be mended and well. He was put to death, bearing our sin on his shoulders, so that he could raise us to life again!
  2. And because he gave us grace, we now have peace. There was once hostility between you and God, but now peace orchestrated by the compassionate heart of God the Father.
- B. We have thought that Jesus died just so our sins could be forgiven, but our thinking is too small! Jesus didn’t die only to forgive your sins, he died and rose so that you could be reconciled to God, something not possible since Adam and Eve ate of the fruit in the Garden. Your sins were in the way of that reconciliation, so they were forgiven at the great of Christ’s life and blood, but the Father’s plan involved so much more! He wanted a people! A family! A kingdom! Peace!
1. **1 Peter 2:10 ESV** Once you were not a people, but now ***you are God’s people***; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
  2. 10 times in the Bible you will find some version of the words, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God” in describing the new covenant.
- C. But who is the architect of all of this reconciliation? Whose plan made it possible for God to call out a chosen people for himself? It is God the Father! Remember what we read at the beginning in 1 Peter? He says he was writing “***to those... elect...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father***”. Although we know that no Person the Triune Godhead never acts independent of the others, it is God the Father who is credited with determining to save us throughout the NT.
1. **Acts 4:27 ESV** for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ***28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place***. In another place, Peter says that Jesus was “delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God”. The Father was the author of the plan of Salvation.
    - a) God didn’t just make the best of a bad situation; rather he was the one who wrote the script, determining how every step of Jesus substitutionary death, glorious resurrection and triumphant ascension would take place!
    - b) This is why Isaiah wrote 600 years before Christ’s birth, after describing how the Lamb would be “wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities” **Isaiah 53:10 ESV** Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he

shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

- (1) We are told Christ suffered because God planned it (“the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief”).
  - (2) But he also planned to accept his sacrifice on our behalf (“when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring” -that’s you and I if we are believers!).
  - (3) The Father planned to resurrect him after his suffering (“he shall prolong his days”).
  - (4) The Father decreed that the once humiliated, crushed Son would be the master and mediator of a new covenant of grace! (“the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand”).
- D. And all of this eternal plan was formulated in the heart of One determined not just to be the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (as the New Testament calls him), but also to be the One whom we could address by grace as “Our father who is in heaven” as Christ taught; adopted into his family as co-heirs with his only Son.
1. This is why Peter said in our text **1 Peter 1:3b ESV** *According to his great mercy, he has **caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*
  2. He did not only plan the means of our salvation (Christ’s death and resurrection), but he planned your specific election to grace if you are a believer! He chose you. This whole plan was geared to your salvation to the praise of his glorious grace!
- E. And He is not done. Philippians tells us that the good work that God has begun in you he will be faithful to complete. Don’t be to discouraged as you battle those persistent sins that seem to often derail you. Don’t be dismayed if the circumstances of your life (your relationships, health, finances, etc.) are “less than ideal.
1. You are still in the palm of the Father’s hand and never out of his sight. He has good plans to work out all things together for your good, even the things that cause temporary discomfort.
  2. This is what Peter meant when he described you as those **1 Peter 1:5 ESV** *who **by God's power are being guarded** through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* He will get you where you’re going...just don’t give up!
- V. But I would have only preached half the gospel if I did not say that if you are not a believer, you have no such hope. The tenderness of God as Father you will never know in your sin. The wealth of the inheritance of the saints in Christ is but a pipe dream to you who have spurned the call to repent and submit to his Lordship.
- A. All that awaits you is a fearful realization of the terrible eternal judgements that are the destiny of all those who neglect the salvation offered by a God who sacrificed so much to provide it.
  - B. Won’t you repent today and believe the gospel? You have done nothing that is beyond his forgiveness but do not think that you will have tomorrow. That is a fool’s assumption. You may not even have tonight. Come to Jesus.