OUR WALK WITH THE FATHER

Knowing the Father Through the Son and Walking as His Children

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INTRODUCTION

The Walk the Father Desired

To understand our walk with the Father, we must first understand the Father with whom we walk. We cannot give the relationship its meaning by gathering our own ideas about God and calling those ideas fellowship. The Father has made Himself known. Through His Son we learn who He is, what He desired, and what He has brought us into.

John writes:

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

Our fellowship is with the Father. Give those words their full place in your understanding of Christianity. The Father sent His Son, and through the Son He has brought us into a relationship with Himself. We know Him as those who have been born of Him. We have received His life, belong to His family, and have access to Him by His Spirit.

The work of Christ must be understood with that purpose before us. The cross was necessary. Through the blood of Christ we have redemption, and through Him we have been reconciled to God. His resurrection opens the life into which we have been brought. The Father's purpose reaches into the relationship we now possess and the walk that proceeds from it. We have been brought to Him.

Yet this purpose did not begin when we first believed. Scripture carries us back before the foundation of the world and opens what the Father purposed in Christ. Before we examine our response, we must hear what He desired. Before we ask how to walk with Him, we must know the One who has called us into fellowship.

We shall then follow the witness of Scripture through creation and the Old Testament. God dealt with the people He made. He spoke, called, instructed and made Himself known. Enoch walked with God. Noah walked with God. Abraham received the call to walk before Him (Genesis

5:22–24; 6:9; 17:1). Israel knew His fatherly care and heard His correction (Deuteronomy 8:1–6).

Then we come to the Son. Here the Father is revealed with a fullness that governs our understanding of all that came before. The Lord Jesus makes Him known in His words and works, in His love, and in the obedient life He lives before Him (John 1:18; 14:9–10, 31). He also shows us the walk. We see the Son speaking what He received from the Father, doing the Father's will and giving Himself to the purpose for which He was sent.

Through that same Son, we have been brought into the Father's family. Our study therefore moves from revelation into participation. We shall learn what it means to know Him, to have fellowship with Him and to walk as His children. The privilege has a definite ground in Christ, and the walk has a definite expression in faith, love and obedience, and in living for what is in the Father's heart.

This is why knowing that you are a child of God matters. A child grows within the family to which he already belongs. His growth does not produce his birth. In the same way, your increasing knowledge of the Father gives understanding and direction to the relationship you received in Christ. You learn His will, recognise His ways and give His Word its place in the decisions you make.

Keep your Bible open beside these pages. Follow the passages in their setting. Let the Father reveal Himself to you through the witness He has given concerning His Son. Our desire is to know Him and to live consciously in the fellowship into which He has brought us.

CHAPTER

1

Before the Foundation of the World

Most of us learned the story of God and man from the middle. We began at the fall. We heard of sin, then of the Saviour who dealt with sin, and we concluded that the whole account of God is the account of a problem and its solution. If that is where your knowledge of Him begins, you will know Him as the One who deals with sin. You will love Him as a rescuer and fear Him as a judge, and you will not know Him as a Father.

Scripture does not begin there. Before there was a sin to remove, there was a Father. Before there was a man to fall, there was a purpose. Before there was a world, there was love. We must begin where God begins.

In the Beginning, God

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Hear what the verse does not say. It does not say, "In the beginning God began." The heavens began. The earth began. God did not. He stands in the first verse of the Bible already present, already acting. The creation owes Him its existence. He owes it nothing.

Follow Him through the chapter. God speaks, and light appears. God divides, and the waters stand apart. God names, appoints and blesses. When He comes to man in verse 26, man does not call upon God. Man does not yet exist to call. God takes counsel, God makes, God blesses, and God speaks to the man He has made (Genesis 1:26–28). From the first page, the initiative is His.

Genesis shows us God creating. It takes the Son to show us what stood behind the creating. John returns to the same opening words and lifts the curtain: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1–3).

John chooses his verbs with care. Of the Word he says *ēn*, "was": continuous being, with no point at which it started. Of all created things he says *egeneto*, "were made", came to be: a beginning, an event. The Word was. Everything else came to be through Him. And the Word was "with God", *pros ton theon*, towards God: not merely beside Him, but turned towards Him in fellowship. Before a single star was hung, there was communion in the Godhead.

Who is this Word? John does not leave us guessing. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). And again: "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18). The Word through whom all things were made is the Son who lives in the bosom of the Father. The God who created in Genesis 1 made all things by His Word, and that Word is His Son. The Father is not a later idea added to the story of God. He was there before the story began.

The Father Loved the Son Before the World

Now listen to the Son Himself. On the night before the cross, He lifts His eyes to heaven and speaks to the Father: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5).

"Which I had with thee." His earthly ministry did not begin His life with the Father. He came out of that life into the world. And before He finishes the prayer, He tells us what that life was: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

Here is the wonder. Before there was a world to govern, before there was a sinner to redeem, before there was a nation to instruct, there was the

Father loving the Son. Creation did not give God His love. The love was there before the world. The God who said "Let there be light" was a Father with a Son in His bosom.

And He did not mean to keep that love within the Godhead. Hear how the prayer closes: "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26). The love the Father had for the Son before the world is the love the Son came to place in us. We will follow this to its fullness in later chapters. Here we fix its source. Before the foundation of the world, the Father loved.

What the Father Purposed in Christ

With the Son's testimony before us, Paul opens the purpose the Father formed in that love: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:3–5).

Paul is writing to saints, "the faithful in Christ Jesus" (verse 1). He has already greeted them with grace "from God our Father" (verse 2). He is opening the relationship they have.

Press the words. Who has blessed us? "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." With what? "All spiritual blessings." Where? "In heavenly places in Christ." When did He choose us? "Before the foundation of the world." The phrase is *pro katabolēs kosmou*. A *katabolē* is a laying down, the throwing down of a foundation. Before the first stone of creation was laid, the Father had already chosen. And Paul tells us where the choosing leads. Verse 5 says "to himself". He chose us in Him, for Himself.