

"The Father"

". . *Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us*". John 14: 8

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Questions from the perhaps not so prominent apostles have been, in the hands of the Holy Spirit of God, the means by which some of the most precious truths have been revealed. In verse 5 of this chapter Thomas says — "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" How often the hearts of believers have been encouraged by the Lord's gracious reply, focusing our attention upon none other but Himself — "I am the Way, the truth, and the life; No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." A pathway illumined with the glory of Christ and exclusive of all else! The further words of Jesus provoke Philip's question quoted at the head of this paper, a question which whilst demonstrating Philip's lack of understanding, yet furnishes the Lord with the opportunity of revealing some preciously important truths concerning the One of whom Philip enquired. "*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;*" "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me;" the Lord was going to His Father and among other results of this movement "greater works" would be done by the disciples (the result of the Spirit's presence as sent from the Father) and whatsoever they asked in Christ's Name would be granted by the Son "that the Father may be glorified." This paper has no claim for inclusion in the "greater works," but it carries the earnest desire that the name and glory of the Father may have a larger and deeper place in our affections.

In its fullest sense the name Father is the peculiar possession of believers in this dispensation — "to us there is one God, the Father" (1 Corinthians 8: 6 New Trans.). In the dignity of sonship, having the Spirit of God's Son in our hearts, we are privileged to cry "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4: 6). Enjoying this place of intimacy and privilege we are conscious that the One we know as Father is none other than the "Lord Almighty" — Jehovah Shaddai of the Old Testament (cf. 2 Corinthians 6: 18), the One too, "of whom every family in (the) heavens and on earth is named" (Ephesians 3: 15).

It is the unique privilege of Christ as Son to reveal the Father, and included in those so favoured are the "little children" — the "babes" of Matthew 11. "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 John 2: 13). Immeasurable privilege indeed! The newly converted saints at Thessalonica are spoken of as "in God the Father." How precious is the circle of affection and favour into which the youngest believers are introduced, a sphere in which the Father's Name is known; His words the sustenance of the soul; His will determining the pathway for our feet; His hand enfolding us with protection and safety, and His house with its many abodes our eternal home. Our hearts are thrilled as we listen to the words of our precious Lord, the Sent One of the Father, who in John's Gospel delights to tell of the intimacy enjoyed by His own in their relation with the Father — "For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me" (John 14: 27); "that the love wherewith Thou hast love Me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17: 26). In this we surely find that which "sufficeth."

In the synoptic Gospels our relationship with the Father is seen in His tender care and consideration for His children in their present circumstances; He knows (and supplies) our needs; He sees our secret motives and rewards accordingly; He has compassion, He forgives. In 2 Corinthians 1 we read that He is "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation." James tells us that "every good gift and every perfect gift; . . . cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (2 Cor. 1: 17).

John in his writing delights to occupy our thoughts and affections with the preciousness of the love existing between the Father and the Son and the blessedness of our privilege and portion in that holy sphere. How precious to our souls is the atmosphere of John 13-17, commencing as they do with that most wonderful expression of love by our Lord as He contemplates His departure "out of this world unto the Father;" knowing, too, that "the Father had given all things into His hands," and revealing the desires of His own affections for His own that we should have part with Him. Is not the full blessedness of these holy desires seen at the end of this precious section when He says "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou has 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." The intimacy of the Father's realm was opened up to our wondering hearts on that glorious resurrection day of triumph. Calvary's work with all that it entailed to His holy soul was finished, the glory of the Father had visited the tomb (cf. Romans 6: 4). A glorious Man ascends from this earth to the Father, and in the infinitude of eternal love He associates His own with Himself, the fruit of His victory — "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20: 17). His words in John 16 had indicated to them the immensity of their *present* portion — "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God" (v. 27). Their *future* portion of infinite and eternal blessedness had been opened up to them in John 14; the eternity of the Father's love made ours — the blessedness of it is beyond human thought! Precious Lord — how much we owe to His "going to the Father." His presence *there* has resulted in the coming *here* of the Comforter, the blessed Spirit of God, He would guide us "into all truth;" He who glorifies Christ before our adoring hearts, receiving the things of the glorified Christ and shewing them to us. "All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16: 13-15). How glorious is the content of these verses — the riches of love and glory unique to Father and Son revealed to us in the Spirit's service as He glorifies Christ. Truly, the eternal wealth of the Godhead is indicated here! Our Lord's presence with the Father assures us of His constant interest in His people both as High Priest and as an Advocate — precious services indeed!

The Father's Name is referred to well over 100 times in John's Gospel, each occasion having its own peculiar atmosphere of glory. It is most interesting to see the varying ways in which the Lord Jesus speaks of the Father in John 17. When speaking of *Himself* He says in the most precious intimacy — "Father" (vv. 1, 5, 21, 24); when referring to the *world* in its ignorance of God, He says — "Righteous Father" (v. 25); and when specifically referring to His desires for His *own*, He says — "Holy Father" (v. 11). How full of meaning these holy utterances of Christ are!

Whilst the Name of Father is so definitely associated with the activities of divine love and grace there is, nevertheless, a real note of challenge as we take that Name upon our lips. 2 Peter 1 reads as follows — "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (manner of life) . . . and if ye call on the Father . . . pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (vv. 15-17). Recognition of the cost of our redemption; our souls purified by obedience to the truth; love towards one another from a pure heart, are some of the features which are to mark those who have the immense privilege of "calling on the Father." In 1 John 2 the world, and the love of the world, is shown to be opposed to the Father, and in Galatians 1 we are told that our deliverance from the world through the sacrifice of Christ is "according to the will of God and our Father." Blessed indeed when, in the appreciation of divine grace, the world loses its attraction for the believer. It can offer no real element of satisfaction — all is marred by sin; it is a sphere where the Father is unknown. Its glory is sullied by its god — Satan — every true and pure ray of glory is from He who is the Father of glory (Ephesians 1: 17) — the Source of all that is pure and abiding.

It is the Father who "sent the Son . . . the Saviour of the world." Who can measure the blessings which have reached us through that wondrous Gift! The true "Zaphnath-paaneah" (Genesis 41: 45). His Name involves fullness of salvation; the sustainment of life; the revelation of Divine secrets — and all found its source in the heart of the Father! How much more there is for our affections in this glorious matter!

As we allow something of the blessedness of the Father's Name and the Father's love to fill our hearts shall we not gladly respond to the desire of our precious Lord in His words to the woman of Sychar — "The hour cometh, and *now is*, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4: 23).

"Rise our hearts, and bless the Father,
Ceaseless song e'en here begun,
Endless praise and adoration,
To the Father and the Son."