

## Week 2: Reference Material

### *“The Father is God” chapter from Big Truths for Young Hearts by Bruce Ware*

There is one and only one God. But that one God lives and is expressed always as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So there is one God but three Persons, each of whom is fully God. And each of the Persons of God is responsible for certain parts of the work that God does in the world.

For example, it is true (and glorious) to say, “God saves us from our sin.” This is a wonderful truth we’ll think more about in later chapters, and yes, it is God who does this. But if we think more carefully, we realize that “God saves us” only as the Father does his own particular work along with the Son who does his own particular work along with the Holy Spirit who does his own particular work in saving us. That Father is the One who planned our salvation and chose to send his Son into the world to save us from our sin (John 3:16-17). But the Son (not the Father and not the Holy Spirit) is the One who came to become a man and to live a perfect life and then die on the cross (Philippians 2:5-8). The Holy Spirit worked to help Jesus during his life (Luke 4:14-21) and works in our lives so that we are able to put our faith in Christ and be saved (John 3:4-8). So the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each play different roles, and together they accomplish the one work of salvation that the one God brings to us.

Let’s think more about the work that the Father does as God. The Bible presents the Father as the One who has planned everything that takes place in all of creation. The Father not only planned to create the world, he also planned all that would happen in the world. For example, the Father planned what the world would be like, and he planned to send his Son to die for sin, and he planned that certain people would truly be saved through faith in Christ, and he planned that one day all of creation would be under the rule of his own Son. Yes, the Father stands behind everything as the careful planner, the wise designer, of all that takes place in our world. Paul makes this point in Ephesians 1:11, where he writes that “In him [Christ] we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him [the Father] who works all things according to the counsel of his [the Father’s] will”. Yes, the Father is the One who has planned all that takes place, and the Father works to make sure that his purposes and plans happen just as he desires.

This is why we see in the Bible that the final praise and thanks will be given to the Father. He is the One who stands behind everything that the Son and the Holy Spirit do in saving sinners and making all things new. For example, in Ephesians 1 Paul explains a number of reasons why we should give praise to God for the many wonderful gifts he brings to us. But rather than saying “Praise be to God,” speaking of the oneness of God in his gifts to us, he says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (v.3). Notice that Paul very carefully and specifically gives this praise to God the Father rather than expressing it to “God” more generally. It wouldn’t have been wrong for Paul to say, “Blessed be God for all the blessings he has brought to us,” but it is more exact and precise to say what he does say. Notice that he indicates that final praise is given to “the God and Father,” showing that this praise goes to the Father specifically. But notice also that he says that all of the blessings that the Father brings to us come in “Christ.”

So, the Father bring us every blessing we receive, but every blessing we receive comes always and only through what his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, has accomplished by his work for us. And notice finally that these blessings are “spiritual” blessings, showing that the way we receive these blessings is as the Holy Spirit brings them to our lives. So we learn here that the Father is the wise and gracious Giver of all of the blessings that God gives to us. And these blessings from the Father are blessings that the Son has won for us by his life, death and resurrection. And these blessings, from the Father, through the Son, are

brought to our own lives through the work of the Spirit. Praise be to the Father, and through him for the Son, and through him for the Spirit.

Another passage that helps us see that the Father is the One who rightly receives the final praise and honor for all the work of our salvation is Philippians 2:8-11: “[Christ] humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God [the Father] has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” The Father planned not only to send his Son into the world (John 3:16-17; 6:38), but also that after his Son had died on the cross, the Father would raise him, exalt him, and give him the greatest name of all. The day will come when every single person who has ever lived will bow his or her knee before Christ and say with his or her own lips, “Jesus Christ is Lord.” But when all human beings do this, they then will also give final praise beyond the Son “to the glory of God the Father” (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:25-28).

Seeing the Father as the One highest in charge and having authority over all is important for many reasons. One way it helps is in how we think of prayer. If you notice as you read the prayers in the New Testament, most of them follow the very pattern that Jesus taught his disciples. Jesus said, “Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name’” (Matthew 6:9). Why would Jesus instruct us to pray to the Father? Simply because the Father is the One who has the highest authority of all. Even the Son right now, who is over everything created, sits at the “right hand” of the Father (Ephesians 1:20), indicating that the Father is the highest of all. So, prayers in the New Testament most often are made to the Father. Consider Paul’s prayer at the end of Ephesians 3. He begins this way: “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches and glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (vv. 14-16; see also Ephesians 1:16ff.; 5:20; Philippians 4:19-20).

Prayer, then, should normally be directed to the Father. But we can only come to the Father because of what Christ has done for us through his death and resurrection. When we trust in Christ, then we can come “in Christ” to the Father. So our prayers are to the Father, in the “name” or authority of the Son. But we also need the Spirit to direct us to pray as we should. So we should normally pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 6:18). Ephesians 2:18 gives us this pattern. It speaks of how both Jews and Gentiles who have trusted in Christ are brought into relationship with the Father. Paul says, “For through him [Christ] we both [believing Jews and believing Gentiles] have access in one Spirit to the Father.” So, praise be to the Father, who through his Son’s death and resurrection and by the work of the Spirit makes the way for us to be brought into right relationship with him. What a privilege to pray to and to praise the One who has highest authority over all.

(Bruce Ware, 44-47)