



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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Fourteenth Sermon on 2 Thessalonians Chapter Two

By Thomas Manton

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope, through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.—2 Thes. 2:16,17.

THE apostle—1. Giveth thanks for their election and vocation, vers. 13, 14.

2. Exhorteth them to stick fast to the truths delivered by epistles, or word of mouth, ver. 15.

3. Prayeth for them, in the words now read. So that is the third means of confirming their faith in the truth of the gospel; prayer to God for them. Now in a prayer all things are plain; we must put off our shoes when we draw nigh to God, appear before the Lord with naked and bare feet. Therefore here nothing of difficulty will occur; our prayers, the more simply and plainly they are expressed, the more sincere they are.

In this prayer observe:—

1. The persons to whom this prayer is addressed: *now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father.*

II. The grounds of audience and success are intimated, which are two:—(1.) God's love: *which hath loved us.* (2.) The pledges of his love; which are also two:—First, Without us; Secondly, Within us.

1. He hath given us *everlasting consolation.*

2. *Good hope through grace.*

III. The blessings prayed for.

1. Increase of comfort: *comfort your hearts.*

2. Perseverance or establishment: *and stablish you in every good word and work;* where, by ‘every good word’ is meant the sound doctrine of the gospel; by ‘every good work,’ holiness of life.

So that here is a great harvest of matter, but we must gather it in by degrees, for all cannot be spoken of at once.

First, We begin with the persons to whom the prayer is addressed; ‘Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father;’ that is, I beseech the Lord our Saviour, and God our Father, to comfort and stablish you. The observations for this branch shall be brief and short, because the proper seat of them lieth elsewhere.

I. That exhortations prevail little without prayer. He had exhorted them to hold fast the traditions, and presently addeth, ‘Our Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father stablish you in every good word and work.’ It is good to observe how all the parts of the apostle’s discourse cohere and agree together. He first blesseth God for their election, and then showeth how it is accomplished by vocation or effectual calling. Yet the effectually called need quickening and exhortation, that we may concur to our salvation in that way which is proper to us. But lest the business should seem wholly to rest upon our will, he carrieth up the matter to God again by prayer. Election doth not exclude God’s means, which is vocation, nor man’s means, which is exhortation; but that availeth little unless the matter be brought before God again by prayer.

Now this method is necessary:—1. Because all from first to last come from God; he is *Alpha* and *Omega*, first and last; all things are from him, through him, and to him. The business began with God in his election, and is still carried on through God, not only by effectual calling, but actual assistance, which giveth success and blessing; and then the glory of all redoundeth to him.

2. Because what cometh from God must be sought of God Ezek. 36:37, ‘I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;’ compared with the 26th verse, ‘A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.’ We must express our desires to God for things agreeable to his will, for God will not force spiritual blessings upon us, nor give them to us, unless we desire them. Some things he gave us unasked, and without our desire, consent, or knowledge, as a Mediator, a new covenant, or offers of grace, yea, the first gift of the Spirit; but in other things we are obliged to ask.

3. A great part of man's duty dependeth on prayer seriously performed. There is nothing so conducive to the maintaining of communion between us and God as a daily sense of our emptiness, and God's both fulness and readiness to supply all our wants.

[1.] That it is so, that we are empty, and God is all-sufficient, otherwise there would not be a foundation for practical godliness. That we are empty: John 15:5, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' Not only *nihil magnum* (nothing great), but *nihil* (nothing). So 2 Cor. 3:5, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves, for our sufficiency is of God;' that is, we are not able to think anything in order to the conversion of other men or ourselves; we cannot imagine to enter upon this design with any hope of success without God. That there is a fulness in God to supply all our wants: Eph. 3:20, 'Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or think;' that is, above what we can imagine and pray for. If any man seriously address himself to any serious business, he is full of imaginations—may it be effected, yea, or no? Alas! God outworketh their thoughts and prayers, and doth things which never entered into our hearts to conceive. That there is a readiness in God to supply all our wants, otherwise our prayers would be little encouraged, and be dead in the mouth. Now James 1:5, 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.' You need not make scruple, or be ashamed to consult with God upon every occasion, for he is ready, and hath not a confined bounty like ours, who waste by giving, and give from ourselves what we impart to others.

[2.] That without this, communion with God would be interrupted, and all religion would die and languish; for if we had the stock in our hands, we would forget and forsake our Father. But when still we must be enabled by God to every good work, and we cannot have it unless we acknowledge him, and seek it of him by prayer, this keepeth up a sensible dependence of the creature upon God; this dependence begets observance, Phil. 2:12; and they that continually receive their dole and portion from him are obliged to please him in all things.

Use of direction. When you come to wait on the word, or receive here any quickening exhortation, call God into the business, that the thing may not die away in your hearts. Make conscience of praying as well as hearing. You bear from man in God's name, but carry it again to God, that he may bless it. All religion is carried on between the pulpit and the throne of grace. You will thrive if you conscientiously make

use of both ordinances—if you hear of Christ in the word, and make use of him in prayer.

II. Observation. That prayer must be made to God alone: Ps. 65:2, ‘O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.’ The apostle here addresseth himself to God, and so must all flesh.

1. He alone is capable of hearing prayers. We conceive of God as an infinite being, wise, powerful, and good; as knowing all things, as able to do all things, as willing to give all things that we can in reason and righteousness ask of him.

[1] He knoweth all things, our persons, wants, necessities, prayers. Our persons: God knoweth that there is such a creature in the world as thou art; for surely God knoweth whom he hath made, and whom he supporteth and governeth. A notable instance we have: Acts 9:11, ‘And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street that is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for behold he prayeth.’ What a description is here of God’s particular providence!—the city of Damascus; the street called Straight; the house of one Judas; the person (a lodger there), one Saul of Tarsus; the action he was employed in, behold, he prayeth! He knoweth our wants and necessities: Mat. 6:8, ‘Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before you ask him.’ He observed every weary step of David in the wilderness, and all his tears and sorrows: Ps. 56:8, ‘Thou tellest my wanderings; put thou my tears in thy bottle: are they not in thy book?’ He particularly took notice of all the troubles and sorrows of his exile arid wandering condition, as if his tears had been preserved in a bottle, and his troubles registered or recorded in a book. The doctrine of the Gentiles was, *Dii magna curant, parva negligunt*—that great and weighty matters the Lord took into his care, but left other things to their own event and chance; but the doctrine of the scripture is otherwise; God taketh notice of every particular person. For our prayers: Ps. 34:6, ‘This poor man cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.’ How obscure soever the worshipper be in the account of the world, if he depend on God, the Lord will regard him.

[2] For his power. He is able to do all things: Mark 14:36, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee.’

[3] For his goodness. He relieveth all his creatures; heareth the moans of the beasts, much more the prayers of the saints: Ps. 145:15, 16, ‘The eyes of all things wait upon the Lord, and thou givest them their meat in due season,’ &c. Now this he makes a ground of ‘fulfilling the desires of them that fear him, and being

near to all that call upon him,' vers. 18, 19. He that feedeth a kite, will he not provide for a child? Surely we have more reason to trust in God than they, if you think this belongeth to his common bounty. But in spiritual things it is otherwise; he is most pleased when we ask spiritual blessings: 1 Kings 3:10, 'It pleased the Lord that Solomon asked this thing.' Well, then, since none other is capable, and God is, to him must we come.

2. The scriptures, which are the proper rule of worship, direct us to no other. When Christ taught his disciples to pray, he directed them to God: Luke 11:2, 'When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven.' Invocation is divine worship, and so done to God alone.

3. When the Spirit moveth us to pray, he inclineth us to come to God: Rom. 8:15, 'Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, where-by we cry, Abba, Father;' Gal. 4:5,6, 'Because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' He doth not move us to go to the saints, but to God.

The use. Well, then, if any trouble befall us, let us call on God, unbosom ourselves to him: Ps. 50:15, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' If we want any grace, let us go to the God of all grace, in the name of Christ: Heb. 4:16, 'Seeing, therefore, we have a great high priest that is entered into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in a time of need.' We can pray to none but to him in whom we trust: Ps. 62:8, 'Trust in the Lord at all times; pour out your hearts before him.' Trust is the foundation of prayer. They that look to God for all will frequently apply themselves to him. Our necessities and wants are continual, both as to the temporal and spiritual things. We need not only daily bread, but daily pardon, daily strength against temptations; therefore let us often come to God.

III. Observation. That Jesus Christ is invoked together with the Father as an author of grace, and thereby his Godhead is proved; for he that is an object both of internal and external worship is God. Now such is Christ. Of internal worship: 'John 14:1, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' Though Christ died as man, yet he is God equal with the Father, and an object of faith and trust. For external worship, or prayer, the text is clear: 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, and God, even our Father.' That is much for the comfort of the faithful, that we have God to trust in, and Christ to trust in; that we that have sinned with both hands earnestly, have a double ground of our comfort and hope—the infinite mercy and power of God, and the infinite merit of a mediator. There is a great latitude in the object of faith, and so of invocation: 'The Lord

Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father.’ There is no pain so great that God in Christ cannot remove; no danger so dreadful but he can prevent; no misery so deep but he can deliver from it; no enemy so strong, but he can vanquish them; now that he cannot supply. When we have a want that he cannot supply, or a sickness that he cannot cure, or a danger that he cannot prevent, or a misery that he cannot remove, or enemies that are too hard for him, then we may sit down and despair, and die. I speak of both as one, for God and Christ are here joined as to the same effect ‘Comforting their hearts, and stablishing them in every good word and work.’

IV. Observation. We can obtain nothing from God unless we seek it in Jesus Christ. Therefore the apostle beginneth his prayer, ‘Now our Lord Christ, and God,’ &c. God alone is abundantly enough for our happiness, for there is in him more than abundantly enough to satisfy all the capacities of the creature; but without a mediator how shall we come to receive of his fulness? If man had kept innocent, God had been enough to us, for in innocency there was no mediator; but to man fallen a mediator is necessary

1. I shall state the necessity of it. Because of distance and difference; we are unworthy to approach his holy presence; and God hath a quarrel and controversy with us, which till it be taken up, we can expect no good thing from him.

[1] Distance. We are estranged from God by the fall, and have lost his image, lost his favour and fellowship, and all communion with him, so that God now is looked upon by us as out of the reach of our commerce, which hindereth our love and confidence in him; for we can hardly depend upon one so far above us that he will take notice of us, or take care for us, so as to relieve us in our necessities, or help us in our miseries, and give us the blessings we ask of him; or that we shall be welcome to him, when we come with our prayers and supplications. God taught the Israelites their distance; and the apostle telleth us that all that dispensation ‘the Holy Ghost did signify, that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was standing,’ Heb. 9:8. They could not come near God without danger of death; he would not have them so familiar with him.

[2.] Difference, or controversy. A mediator is used only between disagreeing parties. When man was guilty, God was angry. Conscience of sin presents God terrible, and taketh away all confidence from us, so that we are obnoxious to his wrath and righteous vengeance: 1 Sam. 6:20, ‘Who is able to stand before this Holy God?’ Isa. 33:14, ‘And who can dwell with everlasting burnings?’ ‘We cannot approach God in any friendly manner.

2. I shall show what provision God hath made for us. The Lord Jesus took this office at God's appointment, of reconciling God to us, and appeasing his wrath, and us to God, by bringing us back again, our alienated and estranged affections to God. How so? what hath he done?

[1.] The distance is in truth taken away by his very person. He is God-man; God and man meet together in the person of Christ. God doth condescend and come down to man, and man is encouraged to ascend to God. God in Christ is nearer to man than he was before, that we may have more familiar thoughts of him. The pure Deity is at so vast a distance from us, that we are amazed and confounded when we think of it, and cannot conceive an hope that he should concern himself in our affairs. But the Son of God is come in our nature: John 1:14, 'The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;' 1 Tim. 3:16, 'Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh;' so that he is more accessible to us, and nearer at hand, and more readily inclined to help us, for he will not be strange to his own flesh.

[2] The difference and controversy is taken up by the work of his redemption; for 'God hath set him forth to be a propitiation,' or a means of appeasing his wrath, Rom. 3:25, and to be the foundation of that new covenant wherein pardon and life is offered to us. It is not enough to our recovery that God be reconciled, but man must be renewed, otherwise we remain for ever under the displeasure of God. Now he hath purchased the grace of the Spirit, to be dispensed by the covenant, to bring us home to God: Titus 3:5,6, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 'and Rom. 8:2, 'For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.'

Use. Let us be sensible of this unspeakable mercy, that God hath provided a Mediator for us, that we may come to God by him: Heb. 7:25, 'Wherefore he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us;' that the legal exclusion is removed, and a way opened to the Father: John 14:6, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me;' otherwise we could not immediately converse with God, nor trust in him.

1. We see God in our nature as near at hand, and ready to help us; he came down amongst us, and became one of us; was 'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.' And though he hath removed his dwelling into heaven again, it is for our

sakes; he hath carried our nature thither, to take possession of that blessed place in our name, if we have a mind to follow him: John 14:2, 'I go to prepare a place for you.'

2. Here we see the means of appeasing God's wrath: 2 Cor. 5:19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.' There is a full ransom paid; all that enter into God's peace shall have the benefit of it.

3. By him we are encouraged to come to pray for every blessing we stand in need of: Eph. 2:18, 'Through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.' Liberty to approach unto God is a privilege which we cannot enough value; the wall of partition between God and us is broken down by Christ; he hath completely satisfied God's justice, Heb. 10:19. He is now at the right hand of God interceding for us: 1 Tim. 2:5, 'There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;' and remaineth with God as the great agent of the saints: Heb. 8:1,2, 'We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary,' &c. Perfuming their prayers with the smoke of his incense: Rev. 8:3,4, 'And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.'

V. Observation. Mark the distinct titles given to God and the Mediator: Christ is called *our Lord*, and God *our Father*. Let us see what these titles import, of *Lord* and *Father*.

1. Christ is represented to us as the Lord; so he was set forth by the apostles at the first preaching of the gospel: Acts 10:36, 'We preach peace by Christ Jesus, he is Lord of all;' 2 Cor. 4:5, 'We preach Christ Jesus the Lord;' Col. 2:6, 'If ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.' Christ is Lord two ways:—

[1.] By that right which belongeth to him as Creator, and is common and equal to him with the Father and the Spirit. Surely the Creator of the world is the sovereign of it. This right continueth still, and shall continue while man receiveth his being from God by creation, and the continuance of his being by daily preservation and providence.

[2] There is *novum jus dominii et imperii*—a new right of empire and government which belongeth to him as Redeemer, and this accrueth to him:—

(1.) Partly by the donation of God: Acts 2:36, 'Let all the house of Israel know that this Jesus, whom ye have crucified, is made Lord and Christ.' This office of Lord is derivative, and cannot be supreme, but subordinate; it is derived from God: 'All power is given to me, both in heaven and earth,' Mat. 28:18; and it is referred to him: Phil. 2:11, 'That every tongue should confess that Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' The supreme right of governing is still in God, and subjection to him is not vacated, but established and reserved.

(2.) It is acquired by his own purchase: Rom. 14:9, 'For this end Christ both died and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord both of dead and living;' 1 Cor. 6:19,20, 'Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.' He had a full right in us before, but this lordship and dominion which the Redeemer is possessed of is comfortable and beneficial to us, and the end of it is to effect man's cure and recovery. We could not by our sin make void God's right and title to govern us; but yet it was not comfortable to us, it was but such a right as a prince hath to chastise his rebellious subjects. We forfeited our interest in his gracious protection, therefore was this new interest set afoot to save and recover fallen man; therefore this lordship is spoken of as medicinal and restorative, to reduce man to the obedience of God that made him: Acts 10:38, 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil.' It is a lordship that conduceth to make peace between God and man, that we may again enjoy his favour, and live in his obedience: Acts 5:31, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins.' This new Lord hath made a new law of grace, which is *lex remedians*, a remedy propounded for the recovering the lapsed world of mankind. The great benefit is remission of sins; the great duty, repentance.

Use 1. To persuade us to submit ourselves to this blessed Lord by our voluntary consent: Ps. 45:11, 'He is thy Lord; worship thou him.' There is a passive subjection and a voluntary submission. By a passive subjection all creatures are under the power of the Son of God and our Redeemer; and amongst the rest, the devils themselves, though grievous revoltors and rebels, are not exempted; every knee is forced to bow to Christ. By voluntary submission: Those are Christ's subjects, and admitted into his kingdom, who willingly give up themselves to the Redeemer to be saved upon his own terms: 2 Cor. 8:5, 'They first gave their own selves to the

Lord.’ The devils and wicked men are his against their wills; but all Christ’s people are his by their own consent.

Use 2. Let us perform the duties which this title calleth for; our obedience is the best testimony of our subjection to him. Many seem to like Christ as a Saviour, but refuse him as a Lord; whereas Christ is not only a Saviour to bless, but a Lord to rule and command. Therefore if we catch at comforts and neglect duty, we do not own Christ’s authority. The libertine, yokeless spirit is very natural to all: Luke 19:14, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us;’ Ps. 12:4, ‘With our tongues we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?’ Ps. 2:3, ‘Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.’ Some are so in opinion, but most in practice. We would not be under command; we love privileges, but decline duties. But he is the ‘head of the church’ who is ‘the Saviour of the body,’ Eph. 5:23. If we would have privileges by him, we must set ourselves to obey his laws. If thou hast no care to obey him as a lord, thy esteem of Christ is but imaginary, thy knowledge but partial, thy application of him unsound. But we will own him as lord. How is that understood? Will you give him an empty title, or some superficial compliments and observances? Luke 6:46, ‘And why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?’ It is a mockery. Or will you please yourselves with strict opinions Mat. 6:21,22, ‘For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; if therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!’ No; nothing less than a thorough subjection to his holy laws, forsaking all other lords: Isa. 26:13, ‘O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.’ And then a strict observance: Col. 1:11, ‘Strengthened with all-might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness.’

Use 3. Depend upon Christ for the effects of his love to you, which are the privileges of his kingdom, which are pardon of sins: Col. 1:14, ‘In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins.’ The sanctification of the Spirit; Heb. 8:10, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts.’ Assistance in carrying on the spiritual life; that here surely our Lord will not desert us, but help us in our obedience to him. Finally, everlasting life: Heb. 5:9, ‘And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him: When the devil and his instruments are cast into hell, Christ’s faithful subjects and servants are advanced into eternal glory and blessedness.’

Secondly, God is represented under the title of a father: ‘And God, even our Father.’ *God* is a word of power; *Father* expresseth his good-will and love. God standeth in both relations to us, as he did also to Christ: John 20:17, ‘I go to my God and your God, my Father and your Father.’ Both joined together signify his power and readiness to do good. He that is our Father is true God also, and he that is true God is also our Father; and therefore we may depend on him. That which we are to open is the term Father, which speaketh both comfort and duty to us.

1. Comfort. For God’s dealing with us will be very fatherly; as a father loveth his children, so will God love his people: 2 Cor. 6:18, ‘I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord.’

[1.] He will pardon our sins and frailties, and spare us and pity us, notwithstanding our ill-deservings: Ps. 103:13, ‘Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;’ Mal. 3:17, ‘They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.’ Surely this is a grace we stand in need of, because of our manifold infirmities and daily failings.

[2.] He will give grace, that we may serve him better: Luke 11:13, ‘If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?’ Do but cry to him, as an hungry child to his father for bread, and God will not deny this great gift to you.

[3.] God will provide for us, and give such an allowance of temporal mercies as are convenient: Mat. 6:25, ‘Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on;’ and ver. 32, ‘For after all these things

do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.’ The belief of adoption and particular providence kills all distrustful fears and cares at the very root.

[4.] He will protect you and preserve you against temptations

I Peter 1:3, 5, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, &c., who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.’

[5.] He will give you the kingdom: Luke 12:32, 'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

2. On the other side, this relation bespeaketh duty. For if God be a father, we must carry ourselves as children by our subjection, to him; that is, by submission to his disposing will, and obedience to his governing will.

[1.] By an absolute submission to his disposing will. For if you would enjoy' the privileges of God's family, you must submit to the discipline of his family: Heb. 12:6-9, 'For whom God loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If you endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and riot sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which chastened us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?' In heaven, where there is no danger of sin, there is no use of the rod; but while we are in the flesh, we need correction, and if God should not give it us, we are *noJoi*, not legitimate, but degenerate sons. But in the 10th verse, the apostle argueth from God's paternal authority: 'For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' Children, though they take it ill to be beaten by others, yet not by their parents, who (under God) are the cause of their being, and love them, and in correction of them seek their good; much more do we owe this respect to our heavenly Father, who hath a more absolute right over us. Parents may err through want of wisdom—their chastisements may be arbitrary and irregular; do much in passion rather than compassion; but all God's chastisements come from purest love, and are regulated by perfect wisdom, and tend to and end in holiness and happiness.

[2.] Obedience to his governing will. The great duty of children is to love, please, obey, and honour their father: Mal. 1:6, 'A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If I be a father, where is mine honour? If I be a master, where is my fear?' 1 Peter 1:14, 15, 'As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;' John 15:8, 'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.' There should be a great tenderness upon us not to do anything that may be a breach of God's law, or tend to God's dishonour. What diligent observers were the Rechabites of the institutions of their family: Jer. 35:6, 'But they said, We will drink no wine for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever.'

VI. Observation. They to whom Christ is a lord, to them God is a father. His special fatherly love floweth in the channel of redemption, and is brought about by the gospel. The Lord, from all eternity, pre-determined some to the adoption of sons: Eph. 1:5, 'Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.' But how doth he bring to pass this decree? By the redemption of Christ. It is no mean privilege, Christians, that needeth so much ado to establish it: Gal. 4:4, 5, 'But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' Christ came to be the foundation of a new covenant, before we could have this privilege. Well, but whence ariseth our actual interest? I answer—By accepting the offer of the gospel, or receiving and owning Christ to the ends for which he came into the world, or God sent him into the world: John 1:12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;' that is, by depending on his merits for our reconciliation with God, and submitting to his laws, that he might reduce us to our primitive obedience and love to them.

Use. Therefore, if you would have a share in this blessed privilege:—

1. You must be regenerated by his Spirit; for the relative change dependeth on the real: our state is not changed till our natures be changed: John 1:12, 13, 'Being born again of the will of God.' If you would enter into God's family, and enjoy the privileges thereof, you must be changed by the Spirit.

2. There is required on our part an entrance into the kingdom of the Mediator by faith and repentance: Mat. 18:3, 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God.' As little children are newly entered into the world and beginning their life, all things are become new to them; so those that have the privileges of God's children must become as little children, enter into a new state, carry on a new life and trade, with which they were not acquainted before. Our first admission is by a consent to the new covenant: Gal. 3:26, 'Ye are all made children of God by faith in Christ;' depending on the merit of Christ's sacrifice, and binding ourselves by a solemn word to perform the duties required of us, which we renew again in the Lord's Supper.

VII. That we most comfortably come to God by Christ for grace, when we consider our interest in him and relation to him. Our relation is here intimated, for Jesus Christ is our Lord, and God is our Father; and surely our Lord will not refuse his own subjects, nor our Father be strange to his own children.

1. It is certain that among men relation to any person or thing endeareth them to us. *To ta autwn pasin hdea j il oteknoiV*, men love their own children; though not so fair and good as others, yet they are their own. And is it not so as to God? See John 13:1, ‘Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end;’ and John 17:6, ‘I have manifested thy name to the men which thou gayest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gayest them me, and they have kept thy word.’

2. Interest giveth us more encouragement: Isa. 63:19, ‘We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were never called by thy name;’ that is, we are thy people, thy subjects, so called, so accounted. That interest giveth some hope and confidence is evident, because sometimes the saints plead the common relation that they are the workmanship of his hands: Ps. 119:73, ‘Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.’ They will not quit their interest in God; if they cannot come as his special servants, yet as his creatures, one way or another, they will entitle themselves to him.

Use. To direct the servants of God, when they ask any grace of him, to bring it to this still, ‘Our Lord and our Father.’ But how shall they do so, if they have no assurance? I answer:—

1. There are some titles which imply a claim to benefits and privileges; others that infer an obligation to duty: these latter may be used without any usurpation: John 20:28, ‘My Lord, and my God.’

2. Resignation of yourselves to him showeth you are his, and in time you will come to know that he is yours, if you make it good Ps. 119:94, ‘I am thine; save me, for I have sought thy precepts.’ Resolve to obey him, and serve him, however he deal with you. Choice of God for our portion, and Christ for our Lord, showeth you are resolved to be his.

3. Speak as the covenant speaketh that you are under, till your sincerity be more unquestionable. God *offers* himself to be our God, and Redeemer, and Father; Christ to be our Lord and Saviour: Isa. 63:16, ‘Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.’ God offered himself to be so, and God is angry for not owning it: Jer. 3:4, ‘Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My rather, thou art the guide of my youth?’

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