



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Issue 132

God and Father of All

by – Hosea Ballou (1771-1852)

“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:6).

If there is any point of doctrine that was absolutely new in the preaching of Jesus Christ, it is the truth which He was the first to bring out into the light, that God is our Father. How prominent a topic this is in His gospel.

First, it means a great deal more than that God is merely our friend. He is related to us as a parent to a child. There is something more than mere good will; there is a kindred tie that binds the two together. God feels for us a paternal affection that is as much stronger than any which we find in the family relation upon earth, and as much purer, too, as God is greater and more holy than man.

He sympathizes with us as the father of the prodigal, in the parable of old, sympathized with his erring son. In the New Testament, God is represented as calling upon us, although sinners still. He is represented as calling upon us to recognize Him in that peculiar and endearing relation, and to be assured of His paternal love – in all prayers to address Him as our Father in heaven and in all our service of Him to be His followers *“as dear children.”*

I believe you will bear me witness, when I say that this is the distinguishing idea of the gospel, the one which Jesus Christ and His apostles always place first and foremost – I mean when speaking of the relation between our Creator and ourselves.

Second, you will also see that it is only carrying out this idea to its full extent to say, as Paul does in

the words of our text, that God is the Father of all. He holds the same relation, in this respect, to the whole human race. His divine paternity is not of a partial nature, is not confined to a certain class of men, but universal, as all His other essential relations are.

Everybody would feel at once the absurdity of supposing that God was the “Sovereign” only of a certain class of men, or the “Judge” only of a few, or the “Creator” only of a part; and it would be equally absurd to restrict His paternal relation in this way. *“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* If He is the Father of mankind, as the gospel asserts, the very nature of the case shows that He must be the Father of all. This is the doctrine of our text.

Third, we may contemplate this truth in its direct bearing upon the relation which God holds to all mankind, as their father – *“one God and Father of all.”*

It is a very significant fact, recorded in the first chapter of Genesis, that when man was brought

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Letters to the Editor

The percentage of Christians that could be content with food and raiment is exceedingly low I would guess. Even in the "grace movement" you will see those that aggressively pursue worldly gain almost as if it is their due. – **OH**

I am enjoying the articles on the Church of Jesus Christ ... I have not been back to a "church building" since I have left in 1999. – **FL**

We really enjoyed the history of the *King James Version*. – **MD**

The *Plowboy's Bible* and *One Doctrine* series were truly amazing! – **PA**

Your own writings helped me to discover the truth about the church. I want to thank you for that. My institutional brothers "roasted" me once my family and I left the "building" (was pressured to leave/ had to leave/ left with tears ...) and someone gave me the tape of that meeting. After all that time, months of discussion about buildings vs God's living temple, hierarchies vs the Lordship of Christ and programs vs life as ministry, most of them really had no idea what I was talking about. Am I that inarticulate? Or were they that religious? Oh well, the Lord's body is one, no matter the differences. – **IL**

Man's participation in God's divinity. "Partakers of the divine nature," "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," "them He also glorified." Positional truths taken to the revealed ultimate conclusion. Actual sons of God ... "There is more" than evangelical Christianity lets on. – **KS**

I believe in eventual universal reconciliation (EUR) because to send someone to eternal torments is to completely set aside all the attributes of God and that just can't be.

As stated there are three possibilities from Scripture: EUR, annihilation or eternal torment. To believe in eternal torment is to believe that God sets aside His attributes of love, mercy, grace, peace, longsuffering, justice etc., and that wrath wins out. And clearly most of the "hell" verses in the 4 gospels are misapplied. Annihilation does not fit in God's stated plans for His creation. EUR fits since we were created by God, for

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization" or "mission."

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Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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into being, “*God created him in His Own image,*” that is, as His child, imparted to him His Own nature, as a parent does to his offspring; fixed that relationship in his very being at creation. Let us observe what this important truth amounts to.

Every person that lives, or that ever did live, in this world, every individual whom God has created, has a Father in heaven. He may be a sinner; he may be as guilty as the prodigal in the parable; he may be alienated from his Father, dead in trespasses and sins, but there still is this indestructible relation “of Father and child” existing between him and his Creator. This is what Paul means. On another occasion, he told the idolatrous Athenians that they, even they, were “*the offspring of God,*” although they were utterly estranged from Him.

Fourth, we do not forget that there is one sense in which God is not the Father of all. There are many who have not been regenerated, and who are not, in this spiritual sense, His children; that is, they do not resemble God in their character. Christ said to the Jews, for instance, “*If God were your Father, ye would love me.*” “*Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do.*” And so in several other passages of Scripture, God is spoken of as the Father only of those who believe; but in all these cases the meaning is too obvious to need illustration. We know they relate only to spiritual character, not to the persons themselves.

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God, and we know that God is going to have His way ...

I’m sure that some would say that if that is the case then God is letting them off easy. But to believe in grace is to believe that we’re getting off easy. There are none righteous, so we’re all getting off easy. The wrath and cost was on Jesus, not us. People that believe in eternal hell try to apply human desire for revenge to a holy & loving God. And there could be no justice to us having a temporal life on earth and receiving an eternal torment for our failures and unbelief in it. I also tend to believe that the judgment verses are designed to show just how great God’s mercy is and to show what we have all escaped. Most surely all of our love and adoration is due to Christ. – **OH**

One of the best ways I have found to be encouraged is to read Scriptures. Even better is to have Bible verses gathered

What we wish to say is that, underneath this spiritual relationship, there must be a natural relationship that binds all mankind to God. If God created them all in His own image, He is of course their Father in the natural sense. “*One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*”

Finally, we have already observed that there is another bearing in which the same general truth may be considered. As all mankind have one and the same Father in heaven, they have a common relationship with one another, as well as with Him. They are all brethren; they form but one family in the constitution fixed by their Creator.

It is a most important truth, that all the different classes of people, from the lowest to the highest, from the best to the worst, of all nations, colors, characters, and conditions, are bound together by an eternal blood-relationship, which they cannot sever, though they may sin against it. This is the doctrine of Paul, when he says, “*God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth.*” Whether civilized or savage, black, or white, or red, freemen or bondmen, saints or sinners, all were created brethren, just as much as the children in your family were born in that affinity; and, in the sight of God and duty, they never can become other than brethren, let them disregard the fraternal obligation as much as they may. ■

for me around certain themes. I can then select the theme that suits my present need and enjoy the pause that refreshes – my soul and spirit!

Recently I found both of these ingredients within an attractive, uplifting cover, with an eye-appealing presentation inside. I delight in bringing this jewel to your attention. Clyde Pilkington, Jr. compiled the book, adding his insightful commentaries.

This would make a great gift book for anyone and a thoughtful gift for a hospital patient or a grief-stricken person. The title is ***I Choose***. The message is that we can *choose* to change our attitude or belief. This is a conscious choice. We act on life instead of feeling that we are victims of whatever life throws at us!

Mary Shelton
The Mighty Eagles

Freedom

Selected Readings on True Liberty

(Part I)

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free ... If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:32, 36).

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Corinthians 3:17).

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

AT LIBERTY TO BE OURSELVES

There should be no fear of my dominating you, or of my interfering with your work. God's solution which sets us free is absolute liberty for each of us to be ourselves in the Holy Ghost, say what we want, to whom we want, go where we want; and we leave it to God ...

Norman P. Grubb (1895-1993)
Notes From Norman

FREEDOM TO BE YOURSELF

When we don't know our true identity, we are always on the lookout for something to change us and make us become a better person.

I'm glad I finally became comfortable with myself. It's tiring to try to remake yourself when you feel like you don't have much to work with anyway. Trying to act like somebody we aren't defines the meaning of hypocrisy. It was a real release to me to find out that my Father adores me just like I am.

There are things I don't like about myself, but I can't change them. Maybe, in time, God will do it. Maybe He won't. Either way, I'm encouraged to know I can just be myself without worrying about how to improve myself. I am learning to become comfortable living with my weakness.

I am God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. I think I'll just hold on to that truth and relax.

Steve McVey
GraceVine, June 2006

ARE YOU A COOKIE-CUTTER CHRISTIAN?

Are you aware that you are under group pressure? Do you realize that we evangelical Christians would like to make you think, talk, dress, and act just like the rest of us? Are you aware that we are trying to make all Christians "cookie-cutter Christians" – all stamped out in the same design? ...

We need not fear the lading of the Holy Spirit. We need not be nervous about allowing our brethren to follow God instead of us. He has made no two snowflakes alike – and yet they are legitimate snowflakes, perfect and beautiful. And so He has made you individually, given you unique talents, ideas, characteristics. Contribute them to the whole body of Christ! He did not stamp you out mechanically. Spiritually it is important for you to be yourself. The Holy Spirit can accomplish peculiarly through you a part of His work and plan. Don't let someone else spoil His word!

When we try to push you around, don't let us! If we eye you suspiciously because you aren't quite

like us, forgive us – but resist us! Use your Spirit-controlled mind to seek His will for you alone. Don't be a "cookie-cutter Christian!"

Raymond Ortlund
Eternity Magazine, December 1959

FREEDOM FROM WORRY AND ANXIETY

Worry is what happens when we imagine a future without God. It is the ugly stepchild of faithlessness. It is the dull, nagging sense that God will abandon us in our time of need ...

Don't become distracted by the scenery along the way in your journey. Trust Him. Look to Him and He will give you miraculous peace so that you can enjoy the journey. What He has said, He will do. It is already established in heaven. So, relax.

Worry and anxiety are exercises in futility. *I Am* is our Abba. Is there anything more we need to know?

Steve McVey
GraceVine (May 2006)

FREE TO BE YOU

Under the law we become hypocrites. The word comes from the Greek theatre. A hypocrite is not an imperfect person; a hypocrite is an actor, a pretender. What made the Pharisees hypocrites was not their faults: It was their pretense that they were righteous. It was teaching one thing and doing another. But that is what law will always produce: people who are always hiding their real selves, always acting, always pretending, and never being real.

But what happens when we are set free by grace? One of the most common testimonies I hear is, "For the first time in my life, I am free to just be myself! I'm free to be me."

The ultimate consequence of living under law is outright rebellion – when you give up because of the hopelessness of ever making it.

Time and time again, I have seen these people who have been branded as "rebels against God" or "back-slidden Christians" come out of their chairs in excitement and joy as they learn for the first time about the incredible grace, love and acceptance of God in Jesus Christ.

In all my years as a Christian, I have never heard anyone say, "I've had it! I am sick to death of the love and grace of God. I'm sick of other Christians loving and accepting me. I'm giving up this Christian life." No I've never heard that. But I couldn't count the number of Christians I've known who have given up because of being under law, who have been broken by the crushing burden of trying to be good enough to earn God's acceptance, who have been mangled by the competition, the judging, and the demands to conform to some group's standards. "We'll accept you if you look like, walk like, talk like, and act like us." And the implication is always, "And God will, too." So what are we to do?

Jesus Christ came to free us from the burden of the law by calling us to a life united with His. We are beloved, accepted children of God, who have been called to His "banquet table" to experience Jesus Christ living in and through us every day. Abundant life is not "pie-in-the-sky" or nebulous theory. It is real, and it is ours for the taking if we will only believe. Let's not settle for anything less.

Bob George
Classic Christianity (1989)

GOD COULD NOT POSSIBLY LOVE US MORE

The powers of darkness want people ignorant of God, and they accomplish this by engaging men and women in the needless exercise of working to win God's affection. Religion demands that people "walk the line" to win the affection of a God Who already could not possibly love them more.

Martin Zender
How to Be Free From Sin While Smoking a Cigarette (2007), page 25 ■

The Content of the Book of Romans

A LOOK AT THE "ROMANS' ROAD"

Sometimes we hear the phrase in Christian circles, "The Romans' Road of Salvation." Even though users of this phrase may not be fully aware of the distinctiveness and fullness of Paul's gospel (good news), nonetheless it reflects an underlying awareness that there is something very unique about the book of Romans.

In fact Paul's letter to the Romans embodies many "roads" of understanding regarding the purpose and work of God.

"Romans' Road" Of Salvation

Romans lays forth God's all-encompassing plan of salvation. This is crucial to our understanding. It is Paul's "my gospel" from this letter (Romans 2:16; 16:25) that is the issue of our day.

It is interesting how many, unknowingly perhaps, go to Romans to follow the verse-path of the "Romans' Road of Salvation," even though they usually then try to incorporate non-Pauline passages into this pure grace gospel. They do this by reading Paul's gospel into these other passages.

Is it not interesting that we have never heard of anyone using another "Road" of salvation? Like the "James' Road of Salvation"? Or, the "Matthew's Road of Salvation"? It is the book of Romans that has that very unique distinction!

It is ironic that such a phrase is even used. The Scriptures themselves do not use this phrase, "The Romans' Road of Salvation;" but it does represent a very clear truth – that God did in fact reveal to Paul the fullness of divine truth regarding the complete accomplishments of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross for all mankind. In the order of Scripture, Romans is Paul's

first letter presented to us, and his foundational book regarding this *very good news!*

"Romans' Road" Of Bible Study

The "Romans' Road" is not just an unveiling of God's grand plan and purpose in salvation – it is also the believer's guide to Bible Study. The book of Romans lays out the essential keys to understanding how to "rightly divide the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). It would appear only proper that the one whom God chose to write II Timothy 2:15 would teach us *how to "rightly divide."*

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

Let's briefly consider two very important keys that Paul lays out concerning "right division." The first is the distinction between God's past dealings with His chosen people Israel under the Old Testament (the "Jews") and His present dealings with the Nations (all people) under grace (the "Gentiles").

"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 9:4-5).

We see that Israel had all these things from God: sonship, glory, covenants, the law, service, and the promises. Even Christ came to them; but Romans reveals to us that a great change of position has taken place with Israel and their favored nation status with God.

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be

ignorant of this mystery [secret], lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles [the nations; i.e. all people] be come in ...” (Romans 11:25-26).

Another key to be found is a distinction of the Books of the Bible themselves.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

Although *all* Scripture is profitable for us (II Timothy 3:16), not *all* Scripture was written to us. Even though God speaks internationally today (Romans 11:13), this has not always been the case. The Scriptures written prior to Paul were all *someone else’s mail* – they were written to the nation Israel, and they belonged to them (Romans 3:1-2; Psalm 147:19, 20).

Romans tells us that the Law (Romans 9:4) and the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – Romans 15:8) belonged to Israel. It even reveals to us that the time period covered by the book of Acts was a record of Israel’s fall (Romans 11:11-12).

Thus Paul wrote that the things written earlier, were not written to us, but “*were written **for** our learning*” It is his writings alone that have been written to us:

*“For I speak **to** you Gentiles [the nations; i.e., all people], inasmuch as I am the apostle [messenger] of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office [service, ministry]” (Romans 11:13).*

“Romans’ Road” Of Establishment

Paul’s letter to the Romans also contains the divine plan of the believer’s establishment. One’s spiritual life cannot be established apart from this.

“Now to Him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets ...” (Romans 16:25-26).

Note in this passage that there is a clear order and progression found. The “Romans Road” of establishment is: “My Gospel,” “Revelation of the Mystery,” and then “Scriptures of the Prophets.” To miss this divine development is to miss the stabilization that God has provided for the believer. This theme of divine establishment will be developed as our study of the book of Roman unfolds.¹

“Romans’ Road” Of Identification

The book of Romans also introduces and lays forth the great doctrine of the believer’s identification in Christ – in union with His death, burial and resurrection. This is sometimes known as the *Exchanged Life*, and understanding it is absolutely essential to the believer’s spiritual growth and maturity.

- The Believer is One with Christ in His Crucifixion and Death

“... Our old man is crucified with Him ...” (Romans 6:6).

- The Believer is One with Christ in His Burial and Resurrection

“Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

Understanding these first principles of divine union with the Son of God is absolutely essential to spiritual life.

“Romans’ Road” Of Grace Living

The book of Romans not only presents grace as the only means to God’s salvation of all mankind, but also as the key to the believer’s life.

- Grace Excludes Works as a Means of Acceptance

“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Romans 11:6). ▶

1. See the comparisons in *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*, by William Graham Scroggie, volume 3, page 107.

- Our Standing with God Is in Grace

“By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2).

- Grace Reigns in This Age

“That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:21).

- Therefore, We Live Under the Dominion of Grace

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14).

For the believer, everything in life must come back to the issue of the free grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We live in His grace – it is the ruling principle of our lives, and it lives out through us.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Paul wrote to the Romans from the city of Corinth to tell of his plans to come to them (Romans 1:11; 15:24-28; Acts 19:21).

It was dictated to Tertius (Romans 16:22) from the city of Corinth where Paul spent three months on his *third journey* (Romans 15:25, 26; I Corinthians 16:3-5; ; II Timothy 4:20; Acts 19:21; 20:1-3).

Gaius was his host while at Corinth (Romans 16:23; I Corinthians 1:14).

Paul was about to depart for Jerusalem when he wrote the letter (Romans 15:25-28).

The letter was sent by Phebe who was on her way to the city of Rome (Romans 16:1, 2).

It appears that Galatians was also written from Corinth about the same time, making it a companion book.²

THE LETTER'S INTRODUCTION (1:1-17)

Paul's Greetings (1:1-7)

His Testimony:

Concerning Himself (:1)

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Called Apostle – proper credentials
Separated – to the Gospel of God

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Concerning the Savior (:3-4)

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His Sincere and Unceasing Prayers (:9-10)
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Paul's Theme: Gospel of Christ (:16-17)

Its Nature – Gospel – “Good News”
Its Subject – Christ
Its Efficiency – Power
Its Design – Salvation
Its Scope – Everyone that Believeth
Its Revelation – Righteousness of God ■

2. See the comparisons in *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*, by William Graham Scroggie, volume 3, page 107.