

# The Beauty and Glory of the Father



# The Beauty and Glory of the Father

Edited by  
Joel R. Beeke



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*The Beauty and Glory of the Father*

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With heartfelt appreciation for

**Rev. Maarten Kuivenhoven**

former student, loyal friend, and faithful colleague.

You are a joy to know and co-labor with;

I pray God that we may work together  
for many more years on behalf of our Savior's bride.

—JRB



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## Preface

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Christ came to give sinners access to the Father (Eph. 2:18). God sent His Son to redeem them for adoption as God's children, and He sent His Spirit to make that adoption a heartfelt reality (Gal. 4:4–6). Therefore, when the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray, His first words were, "Our Father" (Matt. 6:9). The fatherhood of God is a consolation of infinite sweetness to the believer.

Knowing God as our Father by adoption highlights the vast privileges of every Christian. William Perkins (1558–1602) said that a believer should esteem his adoption as God's child to be greater than being the child or heir of any earthly king, since the son of the greatest emperor may be under God's wrath, but the child of God has Christ as his older brother, the Holy Spirit as his comforter, and the kingdom of heaven as his inheritance. Yet few people realize this experientially. Perkins said: "At earthly preferments men will stand amazed; but seldom shall you find a man that is ravished with joy in this, that he is the child of God. But...we must learn to have more joy in being the sons of God, than to be heirs of any worldly kingdom."<sup>1</sup>

We had the privilege of rejoicing in the Father at the August 2012 conference of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. Nearly five hundred people sat at the feet of Jesus Christ and listened as He revealed His Father. We thank God for working through the preaching of the Scriptures by the faculty, visiting professors, and friends

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1. William Perkins, *A Clovvd of Faithfull VVitneses, Leading to the Heauenly Canaan: Or, A Commentarie upon the 11. Chapter to the Hebrewes*, in *The Workes of that Famous and VVorthy Minister of Christ in the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins*, 3 vols. (London: Iohn Legatt and Cantrell Ligge, 1612–13), 3:138 (2nd set of pagination).

of the seminary. Each of the chapters in this book represents a message presented at that conference.<sup>2</sup>

We saw the beauty of the Father shining in His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Rev. Bartel Elshout led us to exult over many biblical testimonies that all things, from creation to redemption to final glorification, revolve around the Father's love for His Son. Dr. Jerry Bilkes traced the vivid image of God calling "my son out of Egypt" (Hos. 11:1) from the life of ancient Israel to the life of Christ and to our lives today.

We adored the Father for His glory. Dr. Derek Thomas pressed upon our hearts the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of the Holy One as revealed in Isaiah's vision (Isa. 6). Dr. William Van Doodewaard preached an exposition of the Father's merciful gift of regeneration unto an indestructible inheritance (1 Peter 1:3–5). Rev. Paul Smalley refreshed our souls from the wells of Richard Sibbes's teaching on the mercy and faithfulness of the Father.

We grew in our knowledge of the Father as our Savior God. Dr. Thomas led us in a rich theological meditation on seeing the Father in the face of Jesus. I presented our adoption by God and opened up several practical applications from it with the assistance of the Puritans.

We found rest in the guiding and providing hands of our Father in heaven. Dr. VanDoodewaard taught on our heavenly Father in the Sermon on the Mount. Dr. David Murray drew out some implications of God's fatherhood for biblical counseling. Rev. Burk Parsons showed us the beauty of tough love in the Father's discipline of His children.

We also wrapped up the Trinitarian theme of the last three conferences on the beauty and glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Rev. Ryan McGraw challenged us to shape all our piety—the old and precious word for godliness of heart and life—with the tri-personal character of our God. He also challenged us to examine ourselves so as to discern whether we as individuals are saved by this God through the only Mediator.

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2. Many of the audio recordings of these talks may be found at [www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com) by searching under "PRTS conference 2012."

3. See *The Beauty and Glory of Christ*, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011); and *The Beauty and Glory of the Holy Spirit*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Joseph A. Pipa Jr. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).

The fatherhood of God is inextricably intertwined with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Perkins said that the purpose of the gospel is to reveal God “not only as a Creator, but as a Father,” and to draw us to know Him as “our Father in Christ; and consequently to carry ourselves as dutiful children to him in all subjection and obedience. They which do not this, know not the intent of the gospel.”<sup>4</sup>

We are delighted now to offer you the substance of these messages in printed form. Many thanks go to Greg Bailey for his assistance in editing, Gary den Hollander for proofing, Lois Haley for transcribing several addresses, Linda den Hollander and Kim DeMeester for typesetting, and Amy Zevenbergen for the cover design.

If you can, consider joining us at future PRTS conferences.<sup>5</sup> Please also pray for the work of the seminary, that God’s Spirit would fill the faculty, staff, and students with love, faithfulness to the Scriptures, holiness of life, and power for ministry.

May God use these addresses to draw you in the Spirit through Christ to the Father, that you may delight in His sovereign love and respond with childlike love and obedience.

—Joel R. Beeke

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4. Perkins, *A Commentarie or Exposition vpon the Five First Chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians*, in *Workes*, 2:164.

5. See [www.puritanseminary.org](http://www.puritanseminary.org) for more information.





**SEEING THE  
FATHER'S GLORY  
IN HIS ONLY  
BEGOTTEN SON**



# The Father's Love for His Son

*Bartel Elshout*

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*The Father loveth the Son.*

—John 3:35

The third chapter of John's gospel records Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus about the necessity of the new birth (vv. 1–13), His articulation of the biblical gospel (vv. 14–21), and John the Baptist's profound testimony about Christ (vv. 22–36)—words that marked the conclusion of John the Baptist's public ministry. In this final segment of the chapter, amid John the Baptist's moving confession that Christ must increase and he decrease (v. 30) and the solemn declaration that God's wrath abides on all who do not believe the Son (v. 36), we find these profound words: "The Father loveth the Son" (v. 35). This statement stands out for its beautiful simplicity, but the truth it contains is so extraordinary that it excels everything else in this chapter—even the fact that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. These words tell us why God the Father was moved to give His Son to be the Savior of a fallen world: because He loves His Son!

## **The Father's Love for His Son: The Fountain of All Theology**

The Holy Spirit gives us a glimpse into the infinite depth of the Father's heart—a heart that is eternally moved in love for His eternally begotten and beloved Son. This is the fountain from which all theology flows. Nothing so precisely defines who the Father is as the fact that He loves His Son with the totality and fullness of His divine person.

No book in the New Testament highlights this love relationship between the Father and the Son so much as the gospel of John. There are at least 126 direct and indirect references to the Father/

Son relationship, and this gospel states eight times explicitly that the Father loves His Son (John 3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 15:9, 10; 17:23, 24, 26).

The remainder of the New Testament repeatedly focuses on this essential and foundational truth regarding the identity and character of the Father, as, for instance in Romans 15:6: "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; Eph. 1:3; 3:14; Col. 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3; 2 John 3). Given that we observe throughout Scripture that God does what He does because He is who He is (e.g., Pss. 25:8; 86:5; 119:68), and in light of the above testimony, it follows that this is supremely and profoundly applicable to the fact that the Father loves the Son. In other words, the Father's eternal decrees are directly related to the fact that He loves His Son. From eternity, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ delighted Himself in the Son of His good pleasure, who is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb. 1:3). In Proverbs 8:30, Christ says, "I was daily his [the Father's] delight, rejoicing always before him."

Paul tells us in Colossians 1:18–19 that it has been the Father's eternal delight that His Son should have the preeminence, and that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." This preeminence of the Son should not be construed to mean that the glory of the Father and the Holy Spirit are less than the glory of the Son; rather, in the Son we behold the supreme and most magnificent display of His Father's glory. That is why the Father so delights in His Son and has "given him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). Jesus expressed this in His High Priestly Prayer: "I have glorified thee on the earth.... And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:4–5).

In other words, the Father is eternally engaged in glorifying His Son so that His Son will ever be the fullest and most superlative expression of who He is as the Father. The Father is well pleased with His Son because the Son is a perfect reflection of Himself. As He beholds His Son, the Father knows Himself perfectly.

### **The Son: The Eternal, Infinite Object of the Father's Love**

In light of this special relationship between the Father and the Son, we conclude that the Trinity is a love relationship. The Father, in the



person of the Holy Spirit, communicates the full essence of His love and person to the Son, and the Son, also in the person of the Holy Spirit, reciprocates and communicates the full essence of His love and person to the Father.

The Spirit, therefore, is the bond of love that unites the Father and the Son in this everlasting relationship. This explains why the Scriptures testify that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, for there is unbroken fellowship between the two. As the Spirit proceeds from the Father, the Father communicates His love to the Son; and as the Spirit proceeds from the Son, the Son communicates His love to the Father. The Father and the Son know and love each other in a full, comprehensive sense through the Spirit.

On several occasions, Christ explicitly referred to this love relationship between Himself and His Father: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son" (Matt. 11:27); "No man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son" (Luke 10:22); "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father" (John 10:15). In this eternal relationship, the Father and the Son, in the Spirit, experience eternal and complete satisfaction in each other.

We need to understand, however, that the Scriptures highlight the Father's love for His Son in that relationship. Twice during Christ's sojourn on earth, the Father testified from heaven with an audible voice: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). The focus is especially on the Father loving and glorifying the Son, beholding in Him the brilliant and comprehensive display of the glory and magnificence of His own person.

How appropriate it is that the Son should be the object of His Father's love. The Father, whose personality and attributes are of infinite dimension, must have a suitable object for His eternal and infinite love. He finds it in His Son, who is fully coequal with Him in the infinity and magnificence of all His attributes, and whom He, in the Spirit, therefore loves with all the infinite love of His divine person.

### **The Father's Love for His Son: The Preeminent Motive for All His Divine Activity**

Since God does what He does because He is who He is, it follows that the Father's infinite love for the Son of His bosom (John 1:18) is the

motive for all that He does. This love governs all His activity from eternity past until eternity future; it motivates Him to glorify His Son in all that He undertakes.

We need to apply this first of all to the work of creation, for it was love for His Son that moved the Father to create the universe for His Son. Paul writes in Colossians 1:16 that all things were created not only by the Son, but also that all things were created *for* Him. The entire universe, with all of its visible and invisible realities, was created for the Son—it all was an expression of the Father’s infinite love for His Son. It was His gift of love. Therefore, upon finishing the work of creation, the Father saw that it was “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

### **Creation: A Reflection of the Glory of God’s Son**

What made the work of creation so “very good” in the eyes of the Father? The answer is that He saw the glory of His beloved Son reflected in all He had made. That all of creation reflected the glory of His Son is confirmed by the fact that the Father spoke the universe into existence. This means that all creation is an expression of His Word. In each star and each insect, the wisdom of God is on display.

The Son is also the eternal Word of the Father, and was in the beginning; therefore, the words by which God spoke everything into existence were ultimately a reflection of the Living Word, the Father’s well-beloved Son. How beautifully this truth is expressed in Psalm 19:1–3: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.” This means that all of creation is the Father’s speech to us—a speech that communicates His Word to us every day and night.

Thus, the Father’s only begotten Son is the focal point of all God’s eternal purposes. All things must work together to the accomplishment of the singular and overarching goal of all that the Father has sovereignly purposed. There is therefore nothing arbitrary about the exercise of His sovereignty, for in exercising it He is always aiming for the glory of the Son whom He loves. To accomplish that is the purpose of the Father’s sovereign good pleasure.

### **Adam: The Created Son of God, Bearing the Image of the Eternal Son of God**

This is also evident when we consider the creation of man, the masterpiece of God's creative work. The Father's love for His Son, the love that moved Him to create the entire universe *for* His Son, also moved Him to create Adam in the image of His Son.

We arrive at this conclusion by comparing Scripture with Scripture. In Romans 8:29, Paul tells us that the reason why all things must work together for good (v. 28) is to be found in the fact that those whom the Father had foreknown, "he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." In other words, the ultimate goal of redemption is the conformity of fallen human beings to the image of the Father's well-beloved Son. This is confirmed in 1 John 3:2, where John writes, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Consequently, those who have been predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son will one day be like Him.

If the goal of the Father's redemptive work is to conform men and women to the image of His Son, this must have been His original goal in creating man. In Revelation 4:11, it is stated explicitly that "thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." We know that it is the Father's pleasure to glorify the Son of His love. This text tells us, however, that all that God does now and has done in the past has one common goal; the goals of creation and redemption are the same. When we listen to the divine dialogue in Genesis 1:26, we are listening to a conversation between the Father and the Son (in the Spirit): "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Romans 8:29 specifically instructs us, however, that this must mean that Adam was made in the image of God's Son. This does not at all contradict the language of Genesis 1:26, for in bearing the image of God's Son, Adam also reflected the image of the Father. We can conclude this from the words of Christ, when He stated that whoever has seen Him has seen the Father (John 14:9).

This explains why Scripture also refers to Adam as the son of God (Luke 3:38), for in him the Father beheld a perfect reflection of the glory of His Son; Adam, as the created son of God, bore the image of the natural Son of God. This is what made him the masterpiece of

God's creation. Though all of creation reflected the Son's glory, Adam did so in a way far superior to everything else God had made. That is why man was the crowning piece of the Father's creative activity.

If the entire universe was created *for* the Father's Son, then this was true for Adam in a far more profound way! Adam was expressly created by the Father not only to reflect Christ's glory, but also to delight in Him, the Living Word (John 1:1). The Father created him with the intellectual and spiritual faculties to know, love, and serve the Son, and this made Adam uniquely different from the rest of creation.

This is what constituted the bliss of Adam and Eve, for it was in the person of His Son that the Father revealed Himself to them and communicated with them. John 1:18 tells us that "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." If no man has ever seen God in His spiritual essence, then this includes Adam and Eve. Therefore, the only begotten Son of God, being eternally in the heart of His Father, declared the Father to Adam and Eve. It was in the person of His Son that the Father entered into a father-child relationship with Adam and Eve, and daily communed with them.

We may therefore conclude that, before the fall, Adam and Eve delighted themselves in the very same Son of God in whom the Father eternally delights Himself. Being the bearers of the image of His Son, loving and worshiping Him, Adam and Eve were the recipients of the love the Father has for His Son. The Father beheld the reflection of His eternal Son and loved them with the same love with which He loved His Son, for in John 14:21, Jesus tells us that "he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father." If this is true for redeemed sinners who love the Son with an imperfect love, how much more this must have been true for Adam and Eve, who loved God's Son perfectly.

In summary, the Father created man for His Son and in His image in order that man might know and love His Son and live for His glory. That truly pleases the Father, who loves His Son, which explains why His delights are in the children of men (Prov. 8:31).

### **The Wretchedness of Man's Fall: The Loss of the Image of God's Son**

How well Satan understood that God the Father was supremely glorified by man as the bearer of the image of His Son! If John Bunyan

is correct in his spiritual allegory in *The Holy War*, then Satan was the chief angel who aspired after the glory of God's Son. That rebellion prompted the Father to expel Satan, as well as the angels that supported his rebellion, permanently from His presence. The Father could not tolerate in His presence a creature that challenged the glory and preeminence of His beloved Son.

From that moment forward, Satan became the sworn enemy of God's Son, and all of history has become the battleground on which Satan has waged war against Him (Gen. 3:15). It should therefore come as no surprise that he immediately took aim at the one creature who bore the image of God's Son. He sought to take vengeance for having been expelled from God's presence by taking direct aim at the heart of God. He knew that in causing man to fall, he would rob the Father of the joy of having man resemble His Son and live for His glory.

This is what makes the fall of man so wretched. How supremely offensive man became to the Father once he lost the image of His Son and no longer lived for His glory! How man's unbelief and rebellion, both now and then, provokes the Father to wrath—a Father who loves His Son! How righteous the Father would therefore have been if He had irreversibly rejected and damned a fallen humanity that rejects His Son in unbelief. And yet, it pleased Him not to do so. This is all the more remarkable when we consider that this is precisely what the Father has done with Satan and his fallen angels. For them, there is no redemption; their eternal perdition is forever sealed.

Why does the Father deal so kindly with the children of men? Why did He purpose to redeem fallen mankind rather than fallen angels? The answer is to be found in the fact that the Father loves His Son. The striking difference between angels and men is that the angels were not created in the image of God's beloved Son. Man, however, was—and so God redeems fallen human beings who have lost that image to transform them once again to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Because He loves His Son, He eternally purposed to vindicate the honor of the Son by redeeming fallen human beings to become again what He created them to be: bearers of the image of His Son who know, love, serve, and glorify Him. This confirms there is nothing arbitrary about God's eternal decrees and purposes, for

the great objective of His sovereign purpose in redeeming the children of men is the glory of the Son He loves.

### **The Father Giving the Son of His Eternal Love for the Redemption of Fallen Sinners**

If the profundity of all this overwhelms us, how can we begin to comprehend the work of redemption? How can it be that the Father, who loves His Son with a love that transcends our comprehension, would send this Son into the world to redeem fallen sons and daughters of Adam? How can we comprehend that the Father chose *fallen* men (Eph. 1:4) to become the recipients of the love He has for His Son (John 17:26) and to be conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29), knowing that the very object of His love would have to become the object of His infinite wrath in order to redeem them? Yet the eternal Son of God became the Son of Man for that very purpose.

What a wonder it was when the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, overshadowed Mary and caused the miraculous conception of the Christ! The angel Gabriel testified of this to an astonished Mary, saying, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). The moment this came to pass, the second Adam was fashioned within her and the eternal Son of God became the created Son of God (as was Adam) in the one person of Immanuel—God with us.

At that blessed moment, a moment on which the entire history of mankind pivots, God and man were united in the person of Christ with a bond that cannot and will not be severed for all eternity. What an extraordinary reality it is that the eternal Word of the Father was made flesh—that the beloved Son of the Father took upon Himself our humanity. The eternal Son of God became the Son of man in order that sons and daughters of men might become sons and daughters of the living God, bearing the image of the Son of God. In short, the Son of God became like us, in order that we might become like Him. Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).

To accomplish all this, and to see to it that His Father’s good pleasure would prosper, the Son had to be nailed to the cross and there descend into the depths of hell, crying out from this awful abyss,

"My God, my God, why hast *thou* [My Father] forsaken *me* [Thy Son]?" (Matt. 27:46). How unspeakable must that suffering have been for Him who had eternally been in His Father's bosom, but what must it have been for the Father when He had to hide His face from His beloved Son? Yet for the sake of all who have been chosen by the Father in Him, it had to be so. Only by the Father's beloved Son experiencing the essence of hell could the groundwork be laid for the adoption of fallen sinners.

What joy there was in the Father's heart when He perceived that His Son had finished the work He had given Him to do! When Christ uttered these precious words, "It is finished," and then commended His spirit into His Father's hands, the Father could not restrain Himself any longer, and with His mighty hands He rent the veil of separation in the temple (Matt. 27:51), declaring His full approval of the sacrifice of the Son of His love. On the basis of that finished work, the Father could forever remove the wall of separation between Himself and the children of men.

These are matters that cause our minds to reel. How can we begin to grasp that the Father eternally gave redeemed rebels to the Son in order that through them the glory of His Son would shine forth most brilliantly? In order to accomplish this, He made His beloved Son, who knew no sin, become sin for us, so that vile sinners, so utterly unworthy of such a favor, might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21), and become the adopted sons and daughters of God. What an astonishing truth: the Son of God, who as the second Adam is also the Son of Man, will forever be the Elder Brother of the Father's adopted children. In Him they will forever belong to His Father's family.

Here words fail, and we must cry out in holy amazement with the apostle Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:33–34).

### **The Goal of the Father's Plan of Redemption: The Glory of His Son**

In the midst of our failure to grasp these mysteries, one truth emerges: the entire plan and work of redemption revolves around the Father's



Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is the Father's good news to a fallen world, and by way of the gospel, the Father unveils His precious Son to lost, guilty, and hell-worthy sinners. In the gospel, the Father declares that in His Son He has provided a perfect and complete Mediator through whom fallen sinners can be reconciled with Him, inviting sinners to believe in His Son for the salvation of their souls.

Therefore, the Father's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the sum and substance of the gospel—a gospel in which the Father freely offers His Son to sinners without money and price (Isa. 55:1–2). In this gospel, the Father declares to sinners even today, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5).

### **Faith in God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ:**

#### **The Unmistakable Fruit of the Spirit's Work**

The Father's heart stirs when sinners believe in His Son and put their trust in Him alone for salvation. What joy fills the depth of His being when sinners delight in what He delights in: His Son and His finished work on the cross!

This explains why the Father promises to bestow such extraordinary blessings upon all who believe in His Son. His unconditional promise to them is eternal life (John 3:16). This gift of eternal life encompasses the extraordinary blessings of the full pardon of sin, full reconciliation with the Father, adoption into His family, the abiding presence of His Spirit, and the prospect of dwelling forever in His presence. All this God the Father bestows on sinners who truly believe in His beloved Son, no matter how weak and feeble their faith might be.

It is the hallmark of the saving ministry of His Spirit to work in the heart of sinners in such a fashion that the Father's beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, becomes so irresistibly attractive to them that they confess, “Give me this Jesus, or else I die!” To accomplish this, the Holy Spirit teaches sinners how guilty and lost they are before God, thereby making room in their hearts for the Father's beloved Son. As a fruit of that instruction, sinners see that Jesus Christ is the only solution for guilty and polluted souls. As the Spirit of the Father and the Son, He does not rest until sinners, brought to the end of themselves, embrace Jesus by faith; it is His special work to glorify the Son whom the Father loves (John 16:14–15).



Christ Himself put it this way: "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). Since the Father loves the Son, it follows that when sinners hear and learn from Him by the Spirit, they come to His Son. Coming to and believing on the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is therefore the ultimate proof that the Father, by His Spirit, is accomplishing His saving work in the heart of a sinner.

### **Faithful Gospel Ministry: The Preaching of Christ, the Father's Beloved Son**

Since it is the Father's good pleasure that sinners come to and become like His Son, the focus of the ministry of the Word must be the Son. The great purpose of faithful gospel ministry is always to preach Christ: to invite sinners to come to and close with Him, and to urge believers to abide in Him and follow Him. As the entire solar system revolves around the sun, so every aspect of gospel ministry must revolve around the Father's Son, the blessed Sun of Righteousness. The expression "Christ-centered preaching" in one sense is a redundancy, for preaching that is not truly Son-centered is not true preaching. Preaching that pleases the Father, honors the Son, and is according to the mind of the Spirit always engages in the faithful exegesis of the written Word and always leads us to the Son, the Living Word and the Christ of the Scriptures.

The Father therefore raises up men who bear witness to His Son, so that His Son may be supremely glorified in the hearts and lives of sinners through their ministry. Only when preaching is Christ-centered is the Father glorified, for He is exalted only when His Son is exalted to the highest. The mark of a true minister of the Word is that he is preoccupied with Christ, the Father's Son, with an all-consuming desire to preach this Christ and His unsearchable riches. Such a ministry is endorsed by the Father through His Spirit; such was the ministry of the apostles, of whom we read, "They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42).

The Father chooses to use this kind of faithful, Christ-centered ministry to form a people for Himself, so that Christ, His Son, might be supremely glorified and might be formed within them—all because the Father loves the Son. This and this alone is why He chose His people in His Son, gave them to Him in the eternal counsel of

peace, redeems them in Him, unites them to Him, conforms them to Him, and molds them into a people who will eternally delight themselves in Him—a people who will forever worship the Son, “saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:12).

The Son of God, our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is the great focal point of God’s redemptive purpose toward us. The Father loves us with an eternal love because we are eternally comprehended in His Son. He is *the* Elect in whom the Father delights Himself (Isa. 42:1), and therefore He delights Himself in us, a people chosen in Him. We are the recipients of the love wherewith the Father loves His Son.

The Father loves us because He loves His Son, for He always beholds us in His Son. This is what Paul has in mind when he writes that we are “accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:6). This explains the stupendous truth expressed by Christ in His High Priestly Prayer, namely, that the Father loves us with the same love with which He loves His Son (John 17:23, 26). What an extraordinary comfort and privilege this is, for this love is infinite, unchanging, and unwavering! Herein lies the security of God’s saints, for nothing shall ever be able to separate them from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:35–39).

### **The Holy Obligation of the Redeemed:**

#### **To Love the Father’s Son**

How can we ever magnify the Father sufficiently for the fact that He was eternally moved within Himself to make us, wretched sinners, the recipients of the love with which He loves His Son—and that, to make this a reality, He gave the Son of His love to be a sacrifice for our sins?

Is this magnificent God not worthy of our love? Should not every fiber of our beings love the Son of God whom the Father loves? Is this not the great purpose for which the Father redeemed us, namely, that we would love and honor His precious Son both now and forever? Should such amazing love not kindle in us a flame of devoted love in return?

Nothing delights and pleases the Father more than when His people love His Son and endeavor to be like Him by His grace. That

is the Father's ultimate objective in sanctifying His people: His eternal purpose is that those He has chosen in His Son also bear the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28–29). It is therefore the special work of the Holy Spirit to sanctify the people of God—to conform them to the image of the Father's beloved Son. It is His special work to glorify Christ, the Father's Son, and He is ceaselessly at work in the people of God to bring forth conformity to Him.

This explains why sin so grieves the Spirit of Christ, for when we sin we manifest the very opposite of the image of Christ—something abhorrent to the Father. Whenever we sin, we transgress the written Word of God, and whenever we dishonor the written Word of God, we dishonor the Living Word of God, the Father's well-beloved Son. This is what makes sin so ugly and obnoxious in God's sight. There is nothing more grievous to God than when we dishonor His Son. This is especially true when His people are guilty of this, those He has formed for Himself that they would show forth the glory of His precious Son.

How ruthlessly we ought to deal with sin in our lives, and by God's grace pluck out the eyes and cut off the hands that bring dishonor to His Son! How love for God's Son ought to motivate us to honor Him by keeping His commandments! The Father is filled with unspeakable joy when He beholds in His people the likeness of His well-beloved Son. What a sacred duty of love we have to abide in the Son who gave Himself for us, so that we, as we abide in Him, may bring forth much Christlike fruit to the glory of the Father (John 15:5, 8)!

### **The Distinguishing Mark of the Adopted Sons and Daughters of God: Love for the Eternal Son of God**

In light of these truths, how evident it should be that Christians, as members of the Father's spiritual family, are people who love whom their Father loves—the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ—because the love of God the Father has been shed abroad in their hearts (Rom. 5:5). This is significant, for we have observed that the object of the Father's love is His only begotten Son. This love for His Son truly defines the Father's love, and when He sheds His love in a sinner's heart, and when this love begins to function in the heart of that regenerated sinner, it too has the Son of God as its object.

True believers therefore are always people who love the same Son the Father loves. They are redeemed sinners who are indwelt by the Spirit of the Father and the Son—a Spirit whose special work it is to glorify the Son and show Him to His people (John 16:13–15). This spiritual delight in the Son is the essential ingredient of the communion between the Father and His children, for “can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3).

As they increasingly and experientially become acquainted with their own wretchedness, true believers become increasingly pre-occupied with the Son of God and His inexpressible beauty; Jesus Christ becomes their all and in all. They love the Son the Father loves and cry out in holy ecstasy: “My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.... His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem” (Song 5:10–16). Yes, indeed, they love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity (Eph. 6:24), and worship His Father by exclaiming, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!” (2 Cor. 9:15).

### **The Ultimate Benchmark for Self-Examination:**

#### **Do We Love the Son of God?**

Sincere love for the Lord Jesus Christ is always the crucial litmus test of religious experience. After all, love for God’s Son is the mark of all marks of grace. That alone conclusively confirms that the love of the Father has truly been shed abroad in our hearts.

However, God’s Word is equally clear that we cannot lay claim to loving the Lord Jesus Christ unless we demonstrate our love for Him by keeping His commandments. If we truly love the Living Word, the Father’s beloved Son, we endeavor to honor Him by seeking to live in obedience to the written Word. True Christians always love the Scriptures precisely because they bear witness to the Living Word, Jesus Christ. This fully agrees with the love that functions within them, for He is the object of their love.

It should come as no surprise that the more we love and honor the Son, the more the Father is delighted—for the Father loves the Son! Jesus Himself testifies of this when He says, “He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father” (John 14:21). After all, the Father regenerates sinners by His Spirit so that they might know, love, honor, and serve His Son. He wants His children to resemble His eternal Son in

their disposition, words, and actions; He will not rest until, by His Spirit, they are conformed to the image of His Son. As we observed earlier, that is the great goal of predestination (Rom. 8:29).

**The Wrath of God: Provoked by Those Who Do Not Love the Father's Son**

If, then, the Father is eternally preoccupied with the Son of His love, has created all things for Him, and is redeeming sinners to become like Him, it follows that He neither can nor does tolerate anything that opposes His Son. The Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, who loves Him with an infinite love, can respond only with wrath against all who reject and oppose His beloved Son.

The wrath of God is the response of His whole holy being, in the totality of all His attributes, to the unbelieving rejection of His Son. The wrath of God is not one of His attributes per se; rather, it is the response of all of His attributes to those who hate His Son and reject His Word. Had there been no sin, there would have been no manifestation of God's wrath, for there would have been no occasion for it. However, man's sin, and particularly the unbelieving rejection of His Son, has provoked the Father to wrath—a wrath that is as infinite as His love for His Son. Nothing offends the Father more than our failure to love and honor the Son whom He loves.

There is thus a direct correlation between the love of the Father and His wrath. We could say that the wrath of the Father is the negative manifestation of the love He has for His Son. The intensity of His love for His Son demands the intensity of His wrath against all who hate and reject His Son—and especially against all who make Him a liar by not believing the record He has given of His Son in His Word (1 John 5:10). This is what prompted Paul to write, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema [that is, accursed]!" (1 Cor. 16:22).

How fearful it will be for those who reject God's Son in unbelief to fall into the hands of the living God! How fearful to be confronted by the wrath of the Father who loves His Son (Heb. 10:31)! This explains the solemn admonition of the apostle, when he writes: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh [the Living Word]. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth [Moses], much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven

[the Father's Son]... For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:25, 29). This also explains why immediately following our text (John 3:35), John the Baptist concludes his magnificent doxology about the Son by saying, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (v. 36).

This leads to an inescapable conclusion: the existence of hell has everything to do with the Father's love for His Son. Hell is created by the God whom John says is love—a love that has God's Son as its ultimate object! Hell is the Father's affirmation that He loves His Son—and that He loves Him so much that He will forever pour out His wrath upon all who hate Him. Hell is the only suitable and appropriate punishment for all who reject the Son.

This wrath will burn most intensely against those who lived under the gospel and to whom God's beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was freely offered. To be guilty of not having believed on this Christ, the Father's beloved Son, is the crime of all crimes! The Lord Jesus addressed this unbelieving rejection of the cities to whom He preached, saying:

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee (Matt. 11:21–24).

The burning of God's wrath toward those who have rejected the Christ who was offered to them shall indeed be a hell in hell, for the Father loves His Son.

### **Conclusion**

All of this makes the conclusion of Psalm 2 remarkable and fitting as a conclusion for this chapter: "Kiss the Son, lest he [the Father] be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little," for "blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (Ps. 2:12). May all of us trust in the Father's beloved Son alone for salvation,

and may our lives confirm that we know, love, and serve this precious Christ.

May there also be a holy longing for the day when the Father will create a new heaven and a new earth by His Son and for His Son—the day of which Paul writes that the Father will “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ” (Eph. 1:10–12).

May that blessed prospect cause us to pray with the church of all ages, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” What a day that will be when the Father’s beloved Son will present His beloved, blood-bought bride to His Father, and when the triune God and all true believers will celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb forever! The adopted sons and daughters of the Father will forever dwell in that city of which it is written, “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (Rev. 21:23). That will be the day when the Father and His adopted children will delight themselves in the Son of His good pleasure, and forever He shall be all and in all!