

3-2018

## The Doctrine of the Father

Harold Willmington

*Liberty University*, [hwillmington@liberty.edu](mailto:hwillmington@liberty.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/first\\_person](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/first_person)



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "The Doctrine of the Father" (2018). *The First Person File*. 1.  
[https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/first\\_person/1](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/first_person/1)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Theological Studies at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in The First Person File by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact [scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu](mailto:scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu).

# THE DOCTRINE OF THE FATHER

## INTRODUCTION

Imagine yourself among a group of Christians who have been given a biblical test with but three essay questions on it. Here are the questions:

Number one: Put down everything you know about the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Second Person in the Trinity. (Probably most of the group could fill several pages of material about the Savior in a reasonable amount of time. So far, so good!)

Number two: Put down everything you know about the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person in the Trinity. (Now the pens do not move as rapidly or as confidently as before. There are long pauses between sentences. At the end of the given time period the average believer has probably written at least half a page or more.)

Number three: Put down everything you know about the person and work of the God the Father, the First Person in the Trinity. (Oh, how silent the room now becomes! Finally, one statement is written: "He is the Father of Jesus Christ." But what can be added to this? It is my opinion that precious few in that group of Christians would be able to write even half a dozen lines about the Father.)

This all but universal ignorance about the Father is inexcusable because of the number of references and the various relationships ascribed to him!

### I. The References Involved

A. He is referred to as Father on 271 occasions in the Scriptures.

1. 13 times in the Old Testament
2. 258 times in the New Testament
  - a. 178 times in the Gospels
  - b. 80 times from Acts through Revelation

B. He is mentioned by the title Father in six Old Testament books (2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachi) and in every New Testament book, with the single exception of 3 John.

1. The Old Testament first and final references
  - a. First: 2 Samuel 7:14
  - b. Final: Malachi 1:6
2. The New Testament first and final references
  - a. First: Matthew 5:16
  - b. Final: Revelation 14:1

C. Jesus refers to him as "Father" on all but 2 of the 178 occasions in the Gospels. The two exceptions are John 13:1, 3. He mentions him:

1. 17 times during the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7)
2. 22 times in the Upper Room (John 13–14)
3. 22 times during his final discourse (John 15–16)

4. 6 times during his great high priestly prayer (John 17)
- D. Our Lord began and concluded his ministry by referring to the Father.
1. The beginning, in the temple of Herod – “And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49).
  2. The concluding, on the Mount of Olives – “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).
- E. Jesus began and concluded his Calvary experience by praying to the Father.
1. His first statement – “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots” (Luke 23:34).
  2. His final statement – “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost” (Luke 23:46).
- F. Jesus revealed basic facts concerning the nature of the Father.
1. He is Spirit (John 4:24).
  2. He is invisible (John 1:18; 6:46).  
Question: Will we see the Father in heaven? There are two passages that seem to suggest we will (see Dan. 7:9-10; Rev. 4:2-3).
  3. He is perfect (Matt. 5:48).
  4. He is omnipotent (Matt. 19:26).
  5. He is omniscient (Matt. 10:29-30).
  6. He is holy (John 17:11).
  7. He is righteous (John 17:25).
  8. He is loving (John 3:16; 17:23).
  9. He is good (Matt. 6:26, 28-30).

## II. The Relationships Involved

- A. The Father and Creation – “For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light” (Psa. 36:9). “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26). “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:24-25). “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. 4:17-18). “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork” (Psa. 19:1). “Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created” (Psa. 148:2-5).

1. He tends and cares for vegetation – “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth... the trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted” (Psa. 104:14, 16). “And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you O ye of little faith?” (Matt. 6:28-30).
2. He tends and cares for brute nature – “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth.... The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.... Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.... These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season” (Psa. 104:14, 16-18, 20-21, 27). “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” (Matt. 6:26). “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father” (Matt. 10:29).
3. He tends and cares for the weather – “Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries” (Psa. 135:6-7). “Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.... He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow” (Psa. 147:8, 16-18). “Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word” (Psa. 148:8).
4. He tends and cares for the seasons – “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22). “Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17).

## B. The Father and Angels

1. They worship and minister to him – “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened” (Dan. 7:9-10). “And immediately I was in the spirit:

and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow roundabout the throne, in sight like unto an emerald . . . The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:2-3, 10-11).

2. He commanded them to worship the babe at Bethlehem – "And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Heb. 1:6).
3. He controls their activities – "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place" (Psa. 68:17), "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53).
4. He sent them to aid believers – "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14).

#### C. The Father and Israel

1. He is viewed as the source and strength of Israel's very existence – "Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever, Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all" (1 Chron. 29:10-12).
2. He is the potter, and Israel is the clay – "But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Isa. 64:8).
3. He is Israel's eternal Redeemer – "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" (Isa. 63:16).
4. He dearly loves Israel – "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Psa. 103:13).
5. He protects her widows and orphans – "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation" (Psa. 68:5).
6. He had a special relationship with Israel's most beloved king, David (2 Sam. 7:4-17; 1 Chron. 17:3-15; Psa. 89:20-3) "I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him.... But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.... He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.... His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me" (Psa. 89:20, 24, 26, 36).
7. He received, however, no respect or honor from Israel (Mal. 1:6; 2:10).

8. In fact, he described himself as the faithful husband married to an unfaithful wife – “Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord” (Jer. 3:20).
9. He anticipates the day when Israel will acknowledge him as Father (Jer. 3:19).
10. He then will forgive and restore his erring children – “They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn” (Jer. 31:9).

#### D. The Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ

The relationship of the second person to the first person has from all eternity been that of a Son, and, like all else related to the Godhead, is not only eternal but is unchangeable. He did not become a Son of the Father, as some say that He did, by His incarnation, or by His resurrection, nor is He a Son by mere title, nor is He temporarily assuming such a relationship that He may execute His part in the covenant of Redemption.

He was the only begotten of the Father from all eternity, having no other relation to time and creation than that He is the Creator of them. It is evident that the Father and Son relationship sets forth only the features of emanation and manifestation and does not include the usual conception of derivation, inferiority, or distinction as to the time of beginning.

It is probable that the terms Father and Son, as applied to the first and second persons in the Godhead, are somewhat anthropomorphic in character. That sublime and eternal relationship which existed between these two persons is best expressed to human understanding in the terms of Father and Son, but wholly without implication that the two Persons, on the divine side, are not equal in every particular. (*Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, pp. 313–315)

#### E. The Father and the Christian – “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not” (1 John 3:1).

1. He foreknew the believer – “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29). “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (1 Pet. 1:2).
2. He predestinated the believer – “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will . . . in him 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” (Eph. 1:5, 11). (See also Rom. 8:29.)
3. He elected the believer – “And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bears long with them?” (Luke 18:7). “Who shall lay any

thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Rom. 8:33). "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Col. 3:12). "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God" (1 Thess. 1:4). "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13). "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness" (Titus 1:1). "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied" (1 Pet. 1:1-2). "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

4. He gave all the elected believers to Christ – "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:29). "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God" (John 13:3).
5. He called the believer – "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called" (Rom. 8:30a). "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:14).
6. He conforms the believer to the image of Christ – "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).
7. He redeemed the believer – "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In

whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Eph. 1:3-10).

8. He justified the believer – "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Rom. 8:33).
9. He indwells the believer – "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).
10. He sealed the believer with the Holy Spirit – "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13). "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).  
It was, of course, the Father who sent the Holy Spirit at the request of Christ to the believer in the first place. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.... But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:16, 26). "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26).
11. He keeps the believer – "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:29). "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11).
12. He honors the believer – "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:26).
13. He blesses the believer – "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).
14. He loves the believer – "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" (2 Thess. 2:16). "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:23). (See also John 14:23.)



15. He comforts the believer – “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation” (2 Cor. 1:3-7). “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4). (See also 2 Thess. 2:16.)
16. He sanctifies the believer – “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called” (Jude 1). “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).
17. He bestows peace upon the believer – “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). (See also 1 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; Titus 1:4.)
18. He is glorified when the believer bears fruit – “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:8).
19. He reveals truth to the believer – “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11:25). “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:17). “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him” (Eph. 1:17). (See also Luke 10:21.)
20. He supplies the needs of the believer – “(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:32-33). “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19).
21. He seeks the worship of the believer – “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him” (John 4:23).
22. He chastens the believer – “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be

without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 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. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:5-11).

23. He restores the believer – "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psa. 23:3). "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit" (Psa. 51:12). "And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:21-24).
24. He will someday gather all believers in Christ – "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Eph. 1:10).
25. He will someday reward all believers – "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 6:1). "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).
26. He will someday glorify all believers – "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30).
27. He has prepared a kingdom for believers – "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 13:43). "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).