

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 6 January 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Down from His Glory

Ephesians 4:6-10

In the Judaeen wilderness nearly 2,000 years ago, a man named John the Baptist began to preach the Gospel to the people of Israel; and as he preached, he made a very important statement about God the Father, and about His Son Jesus Christ. He said, ***“No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared (or “revealed”) him.”***

Now, to the Jewish people of John’s day, it was a new thing to speak of God *personally* as “Father.” The Jewish people did think of God as their Father *in a national sense*; but they did not, as *individuals*, address God as “Father.” Old Testament saints certainly enjoyed a close and intimate relationship with their God; however, it was not quite like the level of intimacy that New Testament saints are able to have with God. “Father” was not a name by which they addressed God in their personal prayers.

However, all that was about to change. When the Son of God began His earthly ministry, He ***“declared”*** the Father in a way that the world had never seen before. For one thing, Christ’s *teaching* about the Father was breath-taking. He shocked His disciples when He taught them to pray, ***“Our Father, which art in heaven.”*** To them, it was a new and amazing revelation that God could be personally addressed as “Father.” Secondly, because Christ came from the very bosom of the Father, His very *presence* was a revelation of the Father. On the night before His crucifixion Jesus said to Philip, ***“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?”*** Christ’s miracles proved that He is equal to the Father. Christ had authority, in Himself, to do these miracles, *and to forgive sins*, because He is very God. He is *the express image* of the Father in every way.

Christ revealed the Father through His teaching, and through His own personal presence. Above all, Christ revealed the Father by making a way for us to be *reconciled* to the Father. By His death and His resurrection for our sins, Christ has opened the way for us to go straight to the Father. Those who have been born again into God’s family may freely call Him ***“Abba”*** (“Daddy”); and they may go to the Father at any time in prayer, in Jesus’ name. Furthermore, because of Christ’s sacrifice for us, the Father now has some wonderful *gifts* to give to His children. That is what we will be talking about today.

In the last few messages from **Ephesians 4**, we learned about the unity that believers have in the Holy Spirit, and in the Son. This morning, we will learn about the unity that Christians have in the Father. As we learn about this unity that we have in the Father, we will see that the Father has some wonderful gifts for us; and he wants us to use these gifts for His glory!

The title of this message is ***Down from His Glory***.

Read Ephesians 4:4-10.

I. The unity that God’s people have in the Father (v. 6)

So far, we've examined six of the seven Christian unities. We've learned that there is **“one body”** (the local church). We've learned that there is **“one hope of his calling”** (the hope of the resurrection). We've learned that these two unities flow from **“one Spirit”** (the Holy Spirit of God). We've also learned that there is **“one Lord”** (the Lord Jesus Christ). We've learned that there are two other unities which flow from our **“one Lord.”** There is **“one faith”** (the Word of God, which was delivered to us by our Lord); and there is also **“one baptism,”** by which new Christians publicly *identify* themselves with the Lord.

So, we've learned that there is **“one Spirit,”** and **“one Lord”** Jesus Christ. Not surprisingly, then, we find that the seventh unity is *God the Father!* In **verse 6** Paul says that there is **“One God and Father of all.”**

Now, there is something that you need to understand. When Paul says that there is **“one God and Father of all,”** he is not talking about *all the people in the world*; he's talking about *all believers*. Remember, Paul is not writing to a mixed audience of saved and unsaved people; he is writing exclusively to *Christians* in the church of Ephesus. When Paul says **“all,”** he is talking about “all of us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ.”

Christian, it is vital that you understand this truth, because there is a false teaching out there called “the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.” (The Freemasons, and other occultic societies, have made this idea popular in the last couple hundred years.) According to this teaching, “We are *all* the children of God.” Have you ever heard someone say, “We're *all* God's children”? (Most likely, you *have* heard it!) This statement is utterly false; and as Christians, we need to be prepared to tell lost people *why* they are not “God's children.” We need to make sure that *we ourselves* do not mistakenly refer to lost people as “God's children,” or in any way leave our lost friends with the *impression* that they are God's children.

To be sure, God certainly is the *Creator* of every person who has ever lived. When Paul was preaching to the lost people of Athens, he said that all men are the **“offspring”** of God (**Acts 17:28-29**). By this, Paul simply meant that we were all *created* by God. However, Paul did *not* say that we are all the “*children*” of God. Only the saved are called God's “children.”

Now, as I mentioned earlier, in Old Testament times, God did call Himself the “Father” of the Jewish *nation*. Collectively, God did refer to the whole *nation* of Israel as His “son.” Yet, not once in Scripture is God called the “Father” of an unsaved *individual*! God is Father *personally* only to those who have repented of their sin and placed their trust in Him.

When Scripture speaks of a “Father-son” relationship between God and an individual, it is always talking about a *personal relationship* between God and a *saved person*. Lost people *have not* entered into a family relationship with God. They *do not* belong to God. Lost people are *never* called the “sons of God,” nor is God called their Father. In fact, Christ made it very clear that every man, woman, and child is *by default* a child of the devil! You don't have to do anything “really bad” to get into Satan's family: you are *already* a member of Satan's family when you are born into this world, because you are a sinner. There is only one way that a sinner can be delivered from Satan's family, and born into God's family. What is that way? Let's see what Jesus said about it.

Read John 8:39-44.

Read John 1:12-13 and 14:6.

To those who refused to believe on Him, Jesus made it exceedingly clear that their spiritual father was not God, but **“the devil.”** Many of these people were very religious, outwardly moral people; yet, Jesus said that their father was **“the devil.”** They were *not* the “sons of God.” Now, as we saw in **John 1:12**, there is only one way to become a “son” (or daughter) of God; and that is to *receive Jesus Christ*, by believing on His name. You cannot be born **“of blood”** into God’s family. (In other words, no one is “born a Christian” by being born into a “Christian home,” or a certain religion.) You cannot be born into God’s family by the **“will of the flesh,”** either. (In other words, you cannot earn your salvation by your own efforts.) Nor can you be born into God’s family by **“the will of man.”** (In other words, no one can “make” you a Christian by sprinkling you with water, by catechizing you, or by listening to a confession from you.) Salvation is entirely the work of God. It is a free gift; and it is received by simply believing on the Son of God. You must humble yourself before a holy God. You must admit that you have been going your *own way* in rebellion against Him, and that you deserve hell. You must believe that the gift that He purchased for you is all you need, and, by simple faith, *receive* the Son of God into the throne of your heart, to be your new Master.

Do *you* belong to God? Is God really *your* Father? If you have experienced only physical birth, and have never received the *new, spiritual birth* that Jesus said you must have, then you are lost. If you think that you’ve “always been a Christian,” then you are lost. You *must* be born again into God’s kingdom and God’s family. You must repent of your self-righteousness, and trust instead in what Jesus has already done for you on the cross.

Now, let’s go back to our passage in **Ephesians**. (Read **Ephesians 4:6**.) Please notice what else Paul says about God. Not only does Paul call God the **“Father of all”** who believe: he also says that the Father is **“above all.”** Paul is reminding us that although God is our Father, He is still our Lord and Master! He is **“above”** us. He is to be *obeyed*. God is not a soft, senile grandfatherly figure. He does *not* foolishly dote on His children, and let them get away with things. He is our heavenly Father, and He loves us: but He is also our sovereign Master. If you sin against Him, He *will* chastise you! **Hebrews 12:6** says, **“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”**

The Father is **“above all.”** He is our Master, and is to be obeyed. But there’s more. Paul also says that the Father is **“through all.”** If you know Christ as your Saviour, then God saved you so that He can now work **“through”** your life to accomplish His purpose. The Bible says that you are a “vessel” to be used for God’s service. By the way, think about that analogy! A vessel does not have self-autonomy, does it? It is created to be used! Likewise, God has created you anew in Christ Jesus so that He may use *your* life to honour and serve Him.

Read 2 Timothy 2:19-21.

Do you realise that God can work “through” lost people? God uses even lost people as “vessels” to accomplish His purposes (just as he used Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, and Pontius Pilate). Yet, they do not belong to God. They are vessels: but they **“vessels unto dishonour”** (vessels that will one day be destroyed). *Believers*, on the other hand, are **“vessels unto honour.”** Christians are like precious vessels of silver and gold. Yet, even vessels of silver and gold must be *clean* in order to be used. Christian, how clean and fit for service are *you*? Are you keeping your heart and mind clean through the water of God’s Word?

Now, Paul isn't done yet. He also says that the Father is "***in you all.***" The Father *lives inside* every believer. By the way, the Scripture makes it clear that *all three* members of the Godhead indwell the believer. The *Holy Ghost* indwells all believers. **First Corinthians 6:19** says that a Christian's body "***is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you.***" The Bible also tells us that *Christ* dwells in all believers. In **Galatians 2:20** Paul said, "***I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.***" And here in **Ephesians 4:6** Paul says that *the Father* is "***in all***" believers, as well. How's *that* for security?

There is no other part of creation that God indwells except Christians. *Only* God's people are His habitation. By the way, while I'm still on this point, I would like to point out that it is important which version of the Bible you use! You see, in the corrupted Greek text which nearly all modern versions are based upon, there is one little Greek word that is missing—the word *umin*. *Umin* is the word for "you." Instead of reading, "in you all," most modern versions simply read "in all." For example, the NIV reads, "***One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.***" Folks, do you realise what the omission of the word "you" means? It opens the door to the pagan idea of *pantheism*—the idea that everything is "god." At the very least, it opens the door to *panentheism*—the idea that "god" is a force which is *in* everything in nature. In fact, there is one modern version that *very blatantly* pushes the idea of pantheism in this verse. In the New Century Version, the "translators" dared to change the wording of this verse to this: "He rules everywhere, and is everywhere, and is *in everything.*" This is blasphemy, brethren! The Bible teaches that although God is omnipresent, He is *above and separate from* His Creation. He is not "in" nature. There is only one part of nature that He chooses to indwell; and that is the bodies of Christians.

Now, the fact that God is "Father" to every believer has some deep and powerful implications. It has implications in regard to God's plan for you, and in regard to your relationship with your brothers and sisters in the Lord. This leads me to my next point.

II. The gifts that the Father has given to His people (vv. 7-10)

(Read **Ephesians 4:7** again.) There are different kinds of gifts that we, as humans, give to each other. For example, there is the "**thinking of you**" gift. Oftentimes, this kind of gift doesn't have much practical value: it is simply a "complimentary" gift to let a friend know that "I'm thinking about you." Then, there is the kind of gift that brings **enjoyment**. This kind of gift brings enjoyment for a while; but it eventually wears out, or becomes irrelevant or forgotten. (Oftentimes, the toys that parents buy their kids for Christmas are forgotten within months—or, worse yet, are broken before the end of Christmas day!) But then, there are gifts that last for a lifetime. This kind of gift **actually meets a need**. Better yet, this gift might meet **other people's needs** in the long run. For example, suppose that a young man wants to become a surgeon, and a parent sacrifices substantially to help put him through medical school. Through that parent's gift, the young man becomes a skilled surgeon, and is able to improve (or save) many people's lives. We would consider this to be a great gift.

However, there is no gift in this world that can compare to the gifts that the Father gives to His children. Of course, salvation is the greatest gift of all! Through the gift of salvation, a sinner has the incredible privilege of being saved from eternal wrath, and becoming a child of God.

However, it doesn't stop there. The Father has other gifts to give His children: and they are of priceless value. A full ride through medical school is nothing compared to the gifts that *the Father* gives. The gifts that God gives His children are of *eternal value*. They are gifts that

can be used to lead lost people to the Saviour. They are gifts that can be used to encourage and edify other Christians. The Father's gifts are perfect.

Read James 1:17.

According to James, every good and perfect gift comes from the Father. It is through the *gifts* that God gives His children that He is able to work “*through*” us, and “*in*” us. Let's look again at **Ephesians 4:7**. (**Read Ephesians 4:7**.) In this verse, Paul says that God has a spiritual gift to impart to every believer. Furthermore, God knows exactly what “*measure of grace*” we need in order to *exercise* our gifts. The Father gives us gifts so that through those gifts we might serve God and others. (In **verses 11-16**, which we will examine next week, we will see how God intends his children to use their gifts for the benefit of the other members of the church.)

Now, let's move on to **verse 8**. (**Read verse 8**.) In this verse, Paul is referring back to the Old Testament in order to drive home his point about spiritual gifts. He is quoting from **Psalm 68:18**. In this Scripture, King David explicitly foretold that Christ would give gifts to His people after His resurrection from the dead. Let's look at this Scripture.

Read Psalm 68:18.

What is David talking about here? Well, let's look closely at the verse. First of all, David says, “*Thou hast ascended on high*.” What does this mean? This is a prophecy about Christ's ascension back into heaven on the morning after His resurrection.

Read John 20:11-17.

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to His Father. He is still sitting on His throne, awaiting the day when He will return. However, that is not the ascension that Jesus was talking about here in **John 20**, when He spoke to Mary Magdalene. He was talking about an ascension to heaven that He would make *that very day*. Just after Christ's conversation with Mary, He ascended to heaven for a very specific purpose, and descended back down to earth that same day. How do I know this? Because Jesus instructed Mary to “*Touch me not*.”

This is a very important point. We know that Jesus *invited* His disciples to touch Him later that day, when He appeared to them in the upper room; yet, when He appeared to Mary earlier in the day, He did *not* allow her to touch Him. Why? Because He was getting ready to do His High-Priestly work. He was about to present His own blood on the mercy seat in God's heavenly Temple, as the ransom for man's sin. In **Hebrews 12**, Paul says that the “*blood of sprinkling*” is still in heaven. Christ's blood is still on the mercy seat in heaven, as an eternal covering for the sins of God's people!

Now, when Christ ascended to heaven and presented His blood to the Father, He took some very important people with Him. Let's read **Ephesians 4:8** again. (**Read Ephesians 4:8**.) Paul says that when Christ ascended on high, He “*led captivity captive*.” Who were these “*captives*” who were led by Christ up into heaven? Were they Christ's *enemies*? Certainly not. Satan was defeated when Christ died on the cross; but he didn't go to *heaven* with Christ! Who *did* go with Him, then? Who were these people who were in Christ's “*victory train*”? They were the Old Testament saints!

For centuries, God's saints had been waiting in a place called "Paradise" (or "Abraham's Bosom"); but this place was *not* in heaven. It was in a spiritual dimension deep in the earth. Paradise was on the other side of a deep divide from hell (the place of torment for the lost). Paradise (at *that* time) was a place of rest and comfort; but it wasn't heaven. It was a place where God's saints were waiting. They were waiting for the day when they could be released from their "captivity," and go up to heaven, to be in the immediate presence of God. Why could they not go to heaven yet? Because their *sins* were not paid for yet! Christ had to die on the cross to pay for their sins, and rise again to seal their justification. *After* His resurrection, He ascended to heaven to present His blood as the ransom for man's sins; and as He ascended, He brought all the Old Testament saints with Him! He led captivity captive!

From the time of man's fall into sin, it seemed that Satan had the power over death. Even the saints could not be in God's presence. They were "captive" in the heart of the earth. However, when Jesus died on the cross, he defeated him "***that had the power of death***" (**Hebrews 2:14-15**). Satan has no power to keep one soul that comes to Jesus for salvation! His power over death is broken. From henceforth, those who die in the Lord go *immediately* to heaven, to be with the Lord forever!

Now, let's look at our passage again. (**Read Ephesians 4:8 again.**) After Jesus rose from the dead, He "***led captivity captive.***" However, there is something else that He did. He also "***gave gifts unto men.***" Because the price for our sin is paid, God is now able to impart precious gifts to His people. By the way, you may have noticed that here in Ephesians Paul says that Christ "***gave gifts unto men.***" However, in **Psalm 68** David said that Christ "***received gifts for men.***" Is this an error? Was Paul misquoting this verse? No, this is not an error. The same Holy Spirit Who gave **David** the words to **Psalm 68** also gave **Paul** the words of **Ephesians 4:8**. Through Paul, the Holy Spirit is expanding on the meaning of **Psalm 68:18**. He's making a *point*. His point is that there is a chain of authority in the Godhead. Christ *receives* these spiritual gifts *from* the Father, and *gives* them to men.

Now, *what kind of* men receive these gifts from Christ? In **Psalm 68**, David said, "***Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also.***" Do you realise who "the rebellious" are? *We* are! Before we were saved, we were wicked rebels against God. Even now, we still often rebel against God's commands. Yet, despite our unworthiness, God had a plan for us before we were even born. He had a purpose. He saved us from the penalty and power of sin; and then He gave us spiritual gifts to use for His glory. Let's see exactly what these gifts are.

Read Romans 12:4-8.

If you know Christ as your Saviour, then you have been given one of these gifts. Your spiritual gift was given to you by the Holy Spirit on the day you were saved. Perhaps you don't know which of these seven gifts God has given you. If so, you need to find out! Ask God to show you what your gift is; read God's Word to find confirmation; and get busy serving God in whatever way you can! (As you serve, it will start to become evident what your particular gift is.) God wants you to allow Him to develop your gift in you, so that you may serve Him with it! As for myself, God showed me, years ago, that my gift is **teaching**. I didn't realise, until I was an adult, what my gift was; but now that I look back, I can see that the Lord was developing this gift in me even when I was little. I still remember how I would talk with my grandma on the phone for hours; and I would spend most of the time telling her about what I was learning in the Bible. I didn't realise it then, but I was *teaching* her. (Having been saved later in life, my grandmother was still learning; and she loved to learn

from me!) No one is too young or too old to be used of God. Christian, you've been given a gift with which to serve the Lord; so use it!

Now, let's look again at **verse 9. (Read verse 9 again.)** In this verse, Paul is reminding us of the long journey that our Saviour had to make in order to make these gifts available to us. Before Christ *ascended* to His Father, He first had to *descend*. Paul says, "***what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?***" What does Paul mean by the "***lower parts of the earth***"? As always, we must let Scripture interpret Scripture.

Read Psalm 139:14-16.

What did *David* mean when he said that he was "***curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth?***" Obviously, David was speaking figuratively of "the womb." In the same way, Paul is saying that Christ came down from heaven to this earth, and was "***curiously wrought***" in the "***lowest parts of the earth***" (in other words, in the womb of Mary). Christ came down from heaven in order to pay for our sins, reconcile us to God, *and* make it possible to serve God with our lives. *That* is how important your service to God is, Christian! Serving Him isn't a drudgery: it is an incredible privilege! The Creator of all things desires *your* service!

Before we close this morning, I would like to point out one more thing. Let's look again at **verse 10. (Read Ephesians 4:10.)** Stop and think about this. Paul says that Christ has "***ascended up far above all heavens.***" Paul is talking about the *heavens* of this physical universe. Now, I have no idea how far away the edge of the physical universe is; but I do know that there *is* an end to the universe somewhere. Scripture makes it clear that God is infinite, and that His creation is finite. Yet, even though Christ is sitting on a glorious throne, in a beautiful city that is unimaginably far away, He is still thinking about *you*—*constantly*! At this very moment, He is "***filling all things.***" In other words, He is filling His people with the gifts and graces that they need to serve Him. He actually cares that much for *you*!

Christian, when you think that God is far off, or that He isn't hearing your prayers, please remember this truth. Before you were saved (or even born), God already had a plan for your life! Christ descended from His glory and died on the cross not only so that He might save you, and bring you with Him to heaven one day, but also that He might give you gifts whereby you may serve Him, and fulfil the plan He has had for you since the beginning of the world!

Conclusion: As we close this morning, I would first address the saints. Christian, your Father has given a spiritual gift for you. If you don't know what it is yet, are you seeking to find it? If you *have* discovered it already, are you using that gift for His glory? Are you keeping your vessel clean, so that the Lord can use you for His service? If not, now is the time to go to Him for cleansing from sin!

I would also like to address those who might not know Christ. Perhaps you are bothered by the idea that God has a plan that He'd like to fulfil in you; and perhaps the reason you are bothered by this idea is that you like being the master of your *own* life. If so, I urge you to abase your pride, repent of your sin, trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins, and surrender your heart to Him. Set Christ upon the throne of your life! He will save you today, and give you a wonderful new life in Him, if you will only let Him.