

BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE 2000

Article IIA – God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT GOD THE FATHER?

The second article of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 is about God, and this week we are specifically addressing God the Father. This first subheading explains what the Bible means when it says that he is our Father, and what implications that necessarily has on us. It discusses the attributes unique to God the Father, and how he relates to his creation.

- What do you think of when you hear the term “father”, whether that is our heavenly father or earthly father?
- What scripture immediately comes to mind when we talk about God being our “father”? (*Matthew 6:9*)

1) Providential Care

It is through his love and care for his creation that God demonstrates his fatherly character. The article says that God cares for “His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace.” We see in his word that he is intimately involved with his creation.

Matthew 6:25-27

*[25] “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? [26] **Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.** Are you not of more value than they? [27] And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?”*

God is a Father who is involved in the details of all that happens. We talked about this a bit last week, but it is important. He does not just sit back and let his creation unfold, but he cares for the details. He is intimately involved.

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God providentially cares for his creation, his creatures, and all that unfolds. God's providence is displayed in a number of ways.

a. God's providence is seen in His care and protection

God exercises his providence over all things with his care and protection in individual's circumstances. He is not hands-off, but rather he is a Father who orchestrates all things to come to pass according to his will. We see examples of this in the Old Testament. Joseph's life is a good example of how God will orchestrate events, even difficult and trying events, in order to bring about his good and perfect will. Joseph was beaten by his brothers, sold into slavery, mistreated by Potiphar, thrown in jail, forgotten about by his friends, and ultimately placed in a position of authority in Egypt so that a great many people could be saved through the famine. Though he is never an author of sin, it was God that planned and orchestrated all of this.

Genesis 50:15-21

*[15] When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." [16] So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: [17] 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. [18] His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." [19] But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? [20] **As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.** [21] So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

God didn't just use difficult situations and turn them for good. Rather, what men *meant* for evil, God *meant* for good. God orchestrated all things for his divine and good purpose. He exercised care and protection over Joseph in order that he might save his people.

- Given the fact that we see working things according to his purposes, how does this affect the way we view our own circumstances?
- Does this give excuse to sin around us?
- How do you reconcile God's providence and man's sin? (We hold both in tension, because the Bible teaches that God is over all things, and man is responsible for his own sin.)

b. God's providence is seen in His provision

We see all over God's word that he is the one who provides for mankind. All good things are from him. He is the one who is responsible for our life, breath, our food and water, our shelter, our families, our societal structure, our recreation, our fellowship, and our gathering here this morning. We have nothing apart from his good pleasure. This is why we are instructed to look to him for our provisions.

Matthew 6:7-13

[7] “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. [8] Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. [9] Pray then like this:

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. [10] Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. [11] **Give us this day our daily bread,** [12] and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. [13] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

1 Kings 17:1-7

*[1] Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.” [2] And the word of the LORD came to him: [3] “Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. [4] **You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.**” [5] So he went and did according to the word of the LORD. He went and lived by the brook Cherith that is east of the Jordan. [6] **And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.***

Now this is an extreme example, but we see that it was the Lord God that took care of Elijah's needs. He is the one on whom Elijah depended for his most basic necessities, and it is no different with us today.

c. God's providence is seen in the moral structure of the universe

God has structured the universe in an orderly fashion. We talked last week about the order that he established in his creation, enabling us to observe predictable phenomenon and use that to promote human flourishing. That is why we can have airplanes, and microwave ovens, and cell phones, and cars, and modern health care, and all the technological advances that have made our lives look far different than the lives of people a few hundred years ago, or a few thousand years ago. God's orderly creation has enabled us to use science in a way to really benefit man, and we should be thankful for that.

God has also structured the universe with a moral structure that is common to all mankind. God created us in his image, and as such we have a moral compass. Though this has been severely scarred by the fall, it is still something that is innate to us as humans. This is why even those who claim not to have a category for “evil” universally think of murder and theft as evil and wrong. People can claim that there is no absolute truth across all cultures, but the data simply does not bare that out. Civil laws are remarkably similar across all cultures when it comes to these basic violations.

Romans 2:14-15

[14] For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. [15] They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.

God, therefore, has established his creation so that there is a moral cause-and-effect structure to it. This is a gracious gift from a good and just God. He has made a world that does not immediately devolve into total chaos, but has a legal structure that protects its people. Even as this is not perfect, it is still a good gift that promotes human flourishing. We saw in the Old Testament that rewards for obedience and curses for disobedience were explicitly proclaimed in the covenant.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20

*[19] I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that **I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse.** Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, [20] loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."*

We see in the New Testament that God promises that our actions here on earth have necessary consequences.

Galatians 6:7-9

*[7] Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for **whatever one sows, that will he also reap.** [8] For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. [9] And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*

Hebrews 11:4-6

*[4] By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. [5] By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. [6] And without faith it is impossible to please him, for **whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.***

- What are ways that we see God's moral structure enforced temporally (here on earth)?
- What are ways that we see God's moral structure enforced eternally?
- How does this aspect of God's providence affect our interactions with the lost? With the church?

d. God's providence is seen in the unfolding structure of God's grace

Finally, we see God exercising his providence through the unfolding of events. The article says he extends his "**providential care over... the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace.**" We've already talked about how God is intimately involved in the details of people's lives. But this extends even beyond that. He has his hand in directing the course of human history. He is responsible for how our history

has been structured, and he has planned how our future will go. There is nothing outside of his control. Even as we are morally responsible for our actions and choices, God is above all an over all. There is nothing that happens without his divine direction. He is the king on high.

Proverbs 21:1

*[1] The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; **he turns it wherever he will.***

Daniel 2:20-21

*[20] Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. [21] **He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;***

Jeremiah 17:12-13

*[12] A glorious throne set on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. [13] **O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living water.***

Acts 1:6-8

*[6] So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" [7] He said to them, "**It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.** [8] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

This is especially comforting to us in a time like this. We see our country in an uproar over the changing of power in our political system. And as important as it is for us to be involved in the life of those around us through the political system God has given us, this is not where our ultimate hope lies. We do not place our trust in Barack Obama, or Donald Trump, or whoever the next person is to come on the scene. We trust in our God who is ruling and reigning over all.

- What is the ultimate revelation of God's grace to us in human history?
- How does the cross of Christ change the way that we look at our lives here? (It restructures our priorities, it changes who our allegiance is to, and it changes who we find out identity in.)
- Looking forward, we see the end of human history culminating with Christ's return. Given that this is a certainty, how should we live in light of this truth? (God's word tells us to live holy lives now, expecting and hoping for the day to come.)

2) Personal Attributes

We talked a great deal last week about the attributes of God. The attributes we covered included: intelligent, spiritual, personal, self-existent, self-sufficient, eternal, glorious,

unchanging, sovereign, and holy. We also said that we could add several others: just, loving, merciful, etc. Today we are going to cover four more that are mentioned here in Article 2A.

a. God is All-Powerful

God is all-powerful, meaning that he alone has the power to do whatever it is he will. He is the creator who spoke the universe into existence. All he wills comes to pass. There is nothing that can thwart or frustrate the will of God. We cannot change or force the hand of God. He alone is the almighty king. One of the ways the Old Testament refers to God is to call him *El-Shaddai* – God Almighty.

Genesis 17:1-2

[1] When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, [2] that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”

Later on we see the apostle John’s vision of God, and his words are remarkably similar.

Revelation 19:6

*[6] Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For **the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.**”*

Ephesians 4:1-6

*[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4] **There is one body and one Spirit**—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—[5] **one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.***

It is the Lord God almighty that rules and reigns over all things. He is all-powerful, and this should inspire fear and awe as we dwell on this truth. We have to be very careful that we do not think of God as our buddy or our pal. It is true that we have a friend that sticks closer than a brother, but we always need to be cognoscente of the fact that our God is an all-powerful God. He is to be both loved and feared.

- How does God’s power affect the way we approach him? In prayer? In corporate worship? In his word? As we interact with the world? (*We approach him with proper fear and humility because he is the Lord Almighty. We look to his word for his commands, and we obey them because we serve a God powerful enough to keep all of his promises.*)

b. God is All-Knowing

We talked about this a little bit last time when we talked about God being an intelligent being. We said that he is a thinking, rational being, and that we were made in his image with a similar capacity. We are rational like him, though we are not intelligent to the same degree. These attributes are where we really see the division between God and us. Though we are like him insofar that we are able to know things, we are not like him because we do not know things perfectly. We do not know what will occur in the future. We do not have an exhaustive knowledge of all things. God does, and this is one of the reasons we can trust him.

Job 37:14-16

*[14] "Hear this, O Job; stop and consider the wondrous works of God. [15] Do you know how God lays his command upon them and causes the lightning of his cloud to shine? [16] Do you know the balancings of the clouds, **the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge.***

Psalms 147:1-5

*[1] Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. [2] The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. [3] He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. [4] He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. [5] Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; **his understanding is beyond measure.***

Psalms 139:1-5

*[1] O LORD, you have searched me and known me! [2] You know when I sit down and when I rise up; **you discern my thoughts from afar.** [3] You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. [4] Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, **you know it altogether.** [5] You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. [6] **Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.***

- How does God's knowledge affect the way we approach him? In prayer? In corporate worship? In his word? As we interact with the world? *(We trust that God knows our heart and knows what is in store for us. We pray to him because we trust he knows what we need. We look to his word, trusting that he knows how we should worship him and how we should interact with the lost. We should be thirsting for this knowledge from him.)*

c. God is All-Loving

God the Father is all-loving. There is a huge misconception that the God of the Old Testament was a wrathful God, but the God of the New Testament is all about love. This is a terrible mischaracterization of God. First of all, God does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Secondly, no one speaks about Hell more than Jesus himself. God is indeed wrathful and just as he deals with sinners, but he is and always has been loving. We see this all over the Old Testament as he graciously and lovingly redeems a people for himself.

Psalm 86:5

*[5] For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, **abounding in steadfast love** to all who call upon you.*

Psalm 33:5

*[5] He loves righteousness and justice; **the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.***

Nehemiah 9:16-17

*[16] “But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments. [17] They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, **gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love**, and did not forsake them.*

In the New Testament, we see John declare simply that, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). We see this steadfast love for his people played out in the pages of the New Testament. God justly punishes sin, but he does this through the sacrifice of his Son, placing his wrath on a substitute.

Romans 5:6-8

*[6] For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. [7] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—[8] but **God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

John 3:16

[16] “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Because this loving Father has redeemed us, we have a relationship with him that is established by his love.

Galatians 4:4-7

*[4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. [6] **And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”** [7] So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*

- How does God’s love affect the way we approach him? In prayer? In corporate worship? In his word? As we interact with the world? *(We approach God with confidence, knowing he loves us and is for us. We sing of this love to encourage our hearts, and we read of his love all over the Bible. We love him through communing with him corporately and privately. We seek to spread his love to the unbelieving world.)*

d. God is All-Wise

God is all-wise. We spoke about this last week as well, but we need to touch on it again here. According to Article 2A, God the Father **“is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise.”** This wisdom does not simply refer to knowledge, but there is a moral aspect to it. Biblical wisdom not only applies to knowing what is right, but also doing what is right. As all-knowing, God has knowledge of all things, but in being all-wise, God always does what is best. His discipline for his children is ultimately what is best for them.

Hebrews 12:7-11

*[7] It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? [8] If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. [9] Besides this, **we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?** [10] For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but **he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.** [11] For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

God is infinitely wise, and therefore he should be trusted. Paul eloquently summarizes this near the end of Romans.

Romans 11:33-36

*[33] Oh, **the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!** How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! [34] “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” [35] “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” [36] For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*

- How does God’s wisdom affect the way we approach him? In prayer? In corporate worship? In his word? As we interact with the world? *(We trust that God knows what is best for us in all situations. We look to his word and seek to do what it says, knowing that he has always prescribed what is wise in life, in corporate worship, and in our interactions with the lost.)*

3) Paternal Relationship

Finally, we see that we have a relationship with God the Father as his children. The article says, **“God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.”** When we repent of our sin and place our trust and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, we become a child of God. We are given his Spirit, and we are adopted as his children. We no longer relate to God as simply creator and judge, but there is now a deeper aspect to our relationship with him.

Romans 8:12-15

[12] So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. [13] For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the

body, you will live. [14] **For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.** [15] *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”*

Because we have this new relationship with the Father, we are to conduct ourselves in a particular way. We are to truly become our Father’s children. This means that we begin to look like him. We are conformed to his image.

1 Peter 1:14-19

[14] *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, [15] but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, [16] since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” [17] And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, [18] knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, [19] but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*

Matthew 23:1-12

[1] *Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, [2] “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, [3] so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. [4] They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. [5] They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, [6] and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues [7] and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. [8] But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. [9] **And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.** [10] Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. [11] The greatest among you shall be your servant. [12] Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*

Even as God’s people are adopted as sons and heirs by God the Father, God still interacts with the rest of his creation with a Fatherly posture. The article says, **“He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.”** God does not condemn mankind immediately for sin, but rather he is good to them, extending his kindness to all mankind in a fatherly way.

Matthew 5:43-48

[43] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ [44] But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. **For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.** [46] For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? [47] And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? [48] You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

- What difference does it make to us that God is a personal God, and he relates to us as a Father? Does this comfort you? How so?

HOW SHOULD I RESPOND?

God has revealed himself as a triune God, and the first person of the Godhead is God the Father. God the Father exercises his providential care over all things. God is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. He relates to his children as a spiritual father, and relates to his creation with fatherly care.

A) What difference does this make in my life? How should my life look because of these truths?

B) What changes do I need to make because of these truths?

C) How can I share these truths with family, friends, or neighbors?

HOMEWORK

For next week, read Article 2B and all of the associated scriptures with this article.