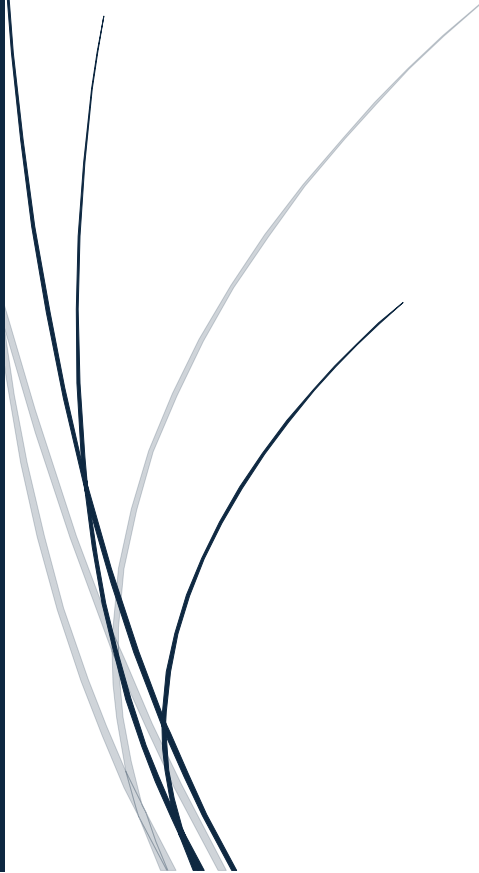


Summer 2025

# The Gospel Gleaner

*For the Lord, His Word, and His Church*



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## THE GOSPEL GLEANER

The first issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* was published in the spring of 1985. Much has changed in the world since then, but the mission and values of the *Gleaner* remain the same. Through the medium of electronic subscriptions, the *Gospel Gleaner* is more accessible than ever. Past issues can also be found on our website: [www.gospelgleaner.com](http://www.gospelgleaner.com).

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# Cardinals, Conclaves, and Popes

Andy Erwin

On May 8, 2025, Robert Prevost of Chicago, Illinois was elected pope by the college of cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church, becoming the first pope from the United States ever to be elected. He chose the name Pope Leo XIV. Extensive media coverage of the event may leave some Christians wondering about the process and the terminology used.

## Roman Catholic Church Government

Roman Catholics have a hierarchal form of church government, wherein an archbishop has authority over many bishops.<sup>1</sup> An archbishop is usually the bishop of a major metropolitan archdiocese and may also be a cardinal. The college of cardinals is selected from among the world's bishops. These men ordinarily function as advisors to the pope. Those who qualify as electors also gather in a conclave to elect a new pope.<sup>2</sup>

A "conclave" occurs to elect a new pope by the college of cardinals (under the age of 80) and derives its name from the Italian "con clave" (with a key) to underscore that cardinals are sequestered until they find a winner. Two-thirds of the majority votes are required for election. Up to two votes can take place in the morning and two in the afternoon during the conclave until the new pope is elected.

## Successor to Peter

In his first speech as pope, Robert Prevost thanked the cardinals for choosing him "*to be the successor of Peter.*" What did he mean by this claim? To understand, we must learn about the doctrine of apostolic succession.

In the second century, some felt because of the close relationship they or their congregation had with the apostles in times past that they had a greater role or

prestige in the church. One historic example of this theory in practice was Clement of Rome's letter to the church at Corinth, *1 Clement*. He felt because he was the presiding bishop of Rome that he had succeeded the apostles Peter and Paul and, therefore, had the authority to admonish the quarreling church at Corinth.

By the fourth century, elderships began to take on the pattern of the Roman magistrates of the day. A Roman magistrate would be responsible to the emperor for the region of communities (diocese) under his control. Presiding bishops in the congregations were already common by this time. The next step was to make a presiding bishop over the presiding bishops in that area. Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem were the five main dioceses with presiding bishops over their areas.

It was also during the fourth century that Constantine began to take on more ecclesiastical control and exude his influence in church affairs as Emperor of Rome. Thus, by the fifth century the way had been paved for Valentinian III to issue an official decree (445) which declared Rome's bishop Leo the Great (440-461) supreme over the Western Church. We should also note the influence of Augustine of Hippo (354-430). It was said by B.B. Warfield that Augustine is the "founder of Roman Catholicism."<sup>3</sup> Warfield was especially referring to the influence of Augustine's teaching pertaining to the complete and total authority of the church. Augustine believed even the scriptures owed their authority to the church. In time, it was concluded that the church was the divinely appointed custodian and interpreter of the Bible.

Although various men had claimed the title of universal bishop, it was not recognized until 606 when

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<sup>1</sup> The meaning of "bishop" in this sense differs from the meaning of the word in the New Testament. In the New Testament a bishop was one of the elders, pastors, or overseers of a local congregation (cf. Acts 14:23). Qualifications for this office are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

<sup>2</sup> [www.uscatholic.org](http://www.uscatholic.org)

<sup>3</sup> B.B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1974), 313.

Boniface, the Bishop of Rome assumed the title. It is claimed that Boniface is just one successor in a line of bishops dating back to Peter. However, one of Boniface's predecessors, Gregory I, denounced the idea of a universal bishop. Moreover, past bishops of Rome who claimed the title, like Victor I (190 AD), were never recognized by their peers.

The universal bishop is known today as the pope or "Holy Father" – a title never found in the Bible, never assumed by Peter or any of the apostles, and never recognized until nearly 600 years after the church's beginning. Contrariwise, Jesus instructed us not to call any man "father" but God (Matthew 23:9). Peter certainly never claimed this title for himself. Although he was an elder in the Lord's church, he viewed himself as a "fellow elder" (1 Peter 5:1) and the Lord to be the Chief Shepherd and Overseer of the church (1 Peter 5:4).

In the Fourth Session of the Vatican Council<sup>4</sup> it was declared: "...that the Roman Pontiff...by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority...is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed..." It should be noted that his infallibility is limited to occasions when he speaks officially while seated upon his papal throne. The doctrine of papal infallibility raises the following objections: (1) if these men are infallible, why did it take 1800 years to recognize it? (2) If the office of the pope is from God, why has it been so vehemently protested by devout and God-fearing souls since its inception? (3) How is it that such infallible men have committed so many atrocities against their fellowman throughout the history of this office? (4) Why did not the Holy Spirit reveal the office to the apostles when He guided them into all truth (John 16:13)?

That such authority and title is not in scripture is clear by their attitude toward the scriptures through the history of Roman Catholicism. The following is an address by the Cardinals in the Roman Catholic Church to Pope Pius III. It is preserved in the National Library of Paris, folio number 1068, volume 2; pgs.650-651.

"Of all the advice that we can offer your holiness we must open your eyes well and use all possible force in the matter,

namely, to permit the reading of the gospel as little as possible in all countries under your jurisdiction. Let the very little part of the gospel suffice which is usually read in the mass, and let no one be permitted to read it more. So long as the people will be content with the small amount, your interest will prosper; but as soon as the people want to read more, your interest will fail. The Bible is the book, which more than any other, has raised against us the tumults and tempests by which we have almost perished. In fact, if one compares the teaching of the Bible with what takes place in our churches he will soon find discord, and will realize that our teachings are often different from the Bible, and oftener still, contrary to it."

At the Council of Toulouse (1229), it was decreed: "We forbid the laity to possess any of the books of the Old or New Testament, except, perhaps, the Psalter or Breviary [book of psalms] for the Divine Offices...but having any of these books translated into the vulgar tongue, we strictly forbid."

- Pope Hildebrand ordered Bohemians not to read the Bible.
- Pope Innocent III forbade the people reading the Bible to their own language.
- Pope Gregory IX forbade laymen possessing the Bible, and suppressed translations.
- Translations among the Albigenses and Waldenses were burned, and people burned for having them.
- Pope Paul IV prohibited the possession of translations without permission of the Inquisition.
- The Jesuits induced Pope Clement XI to condemn the reading of the Bible by the laity.
- Popes Leo XII, Pius VIII, Gregory XVI, and Pius IX condemned Bible Societies.
- John Wycliffe was posthumously condemned as a heretic for his efforts to translate the Bible into English.

### A Successor, But Not to Peter

Robert Prevost succeeds a lineage, but not one

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<sup>4</sup> July 18, 1870

consisting of apostolic approval or authority. He is now in the lineage of the most wretched and wicked men ever to live; men who have used their false claim and dubiously inherited title to sanction and commit vile atrocities against their fellow man blaspheming the name of God and usurping the authority of Christ.

- Pope Sergius III (904-911) had a mistress, Marozia. She, her mother Theodora, and her sister, turned the Papal Palace into a den of robbers.
- Pope John X (914-928) was brought to Rome and made Pope by Theodora. He was smothered to death by Marozia, who, then, in succession, raised to the Papacy, Popes Leo VI (928-929), and Stephen VII (929-931), and John XI (931-936) — her own illegitimate son. Another of Marozia's sons appointed the four following Popes: Leo VII (936-939), Stephen VIII (939-942), Martin III (942-946), and Agapetus II (946-955).
- Pope John XII (955-963) was a grandson of Marozia, who violated virgins and widows; lived with his father's mistress; made the Papal Palace a brothel; and was killed while in the act of adultery by the woman's enraged husband.
- Pope Boniface VII (984-985) murdered Pope John XIV. The Bishop of Orleans, referring to Popes John XII, Leo VIII and Boniface VII, called them "monsters of guilt, reeking in blood and filth; Antichrist sitting in the Temple of God."
- Pope Benedict VIII (1012-1024) bought the office of pope with open bribery. This was called simony, that is, the purchase or sale of church offices with money. Pope John XIX (1024-1033) bought the office as well, going from layman to pope in one day.
- Pope Benedict IX (1033-1141) was made pope as

a boy of 12 years old through a money bargain with the powerful families that ruled Rome. He committed murders and adultery in broad daylight. The people ultimately expelled him from Rome.

- Pope Gregory VI (1045-1046) bought the papacy. There were three rival Popes at this time: Benedict IX, Gregory VI, Sylvester III. It is said that "Rome swarmed with hired assassins."
- Pope Clement II (1046-1047) was appointed pope by Emperor Henry III of Germany because no Roman clergyman could be found who was free of the pollution of simony and fornication.
- Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) claimed to be "Vicar of Christ," "Vicar of God," and "Supreme Sovereign over the Church and the World." He claimed the right to depose Kings and Princes; and that "All things on earth and in Heaven and in Hell — are subject to the Vicar of Christ." He brought the Church into supreme control of the State. The Kings of Germany, France, England, and practically all the Monarchs of Europe, obeyed his will. He even brought the Byzantine Empire under his control. He also . . .
  - ordered two Crusades,
  - decreed Transubstantiation,
  - confirmed Confession to priests,
  - declared Papal Infallibility,
  - forbade the reading of the Bible in the language of the people,
  - ordered the extermination of those who opposed him,
  - instituted the Inquisition,<sup>5</sup> and ordered the Massacre of the Albigenses!<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Inquisition, called the "Holy Office," was instituted by Pope Innocent III, and perfected under Pope, Gregory IX. It was the "Church Court for Detection and Punishment of Heretics." Under it, everyone was required to inform against heretics. Anyone suspected, was liable to torture, without knowing the name of his accuser. The proceedings were secret. The Inquisitor pronounced sentence, and the victim was turned over to Civil Authorities to be imprisoned for life — or to be burned! The victim's property was confiscated and divided between the Church and the State.

<sup>6</sup> In the period immediately following Pope Innocent III, the Inquisition did its most deadly work against the Albigenses — but also claimed vast multitudes of victims in Spain, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands. Later, the Inquisition was the main agency in the Papacy's effort to crush the Reformation. It is stated that in the 30 years between 1540 and 1570 — no fewer than 900,000 Protestants were put to death in the Pope's attempt for the extermination of the Waldenses.

More blood was shed under his direction, and that of his immediate successors, than in any other period of church history, except in the papacy's effort to crush the Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries. Think of Monks and Priests torturing and burning alive innocent men and women and doing it in the Name of Christ — by the direct order of the “Vicar of Christ.” The Inquisition was the most notorious and devilish thing in human history. It was devised by popes, and used by them for 500 years, to maintain their power. For its evil record — none of the subsequent line of “Holy” and “Infallible” popes have ever apologized.

- Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) gave the infamous papal bull, “Unam Sanctam,” wherein he said, “We declare, affirm, define, and pronounce that it is altogether necessary for salvation — that every creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.” However, he himself was so corrupt that Dante, who visited him during his pontificate, called the Vatican, “A sewer of corruption!” and assigned him, along with Popes Nicolas III and Clement V — to lie in the lowest parts of hell.
- Avignon Popes (1305-1377) reigned for 72 years as the Papal Palace was at Avignon, France. The avarice of the Avignon Popes knew no bounds. Burdensome taxes were imposed. Every church office was sold for money, and many new offices were created to be sold — to fill the coffers of popes and support the luxurious and immoral court. Petrarch accused the papal household of rape, adultery, and all manner of fornication. In many parishes, men insisted on priests keeping concubines, as a protection for their own families.
- Two Popes (1377-1417) – during these 40 years, there were two popes — one at Rome, and one at Avignon, each claiming to be “Vicar of Christ,” hurling anathemas and curses at each other.
- Pope John XXIII (1410-1415) is called by some, “the most depraved criminal who ever sat on the Papal Throne.” He was guilty of almost every crime. As cardinal in Bologna, 200 maidens, nuns and married women fell victims to his amours. As pope, he violated

virgins and nuns; lived in adultery with his brother's wife; was guilty of sodomy and other nameless vices; bought the papal office; sold cardinal offices to children of wealthy families; and openly denied the future life.

- Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) sanctioned the Spanish Inquisition. Decreed that money would deliver souls from Purgatory. He was implicated in a plot to murder Lorenzo de Medici, and others who opposed his policies. He used the papacy to enrich himself and his relatives. Made eight of his nephews cardinals, while some of them were mere boys. It is said, “In luxurious and lavish entertainment — he rivaled the Caesars. In wealth and pomp — he and his relatives surpassed the old Roman Families.”
- Pope Innocent VIII (1484-1492) had 16 children by various married women. He multiplied Church Offices and sold them for vast sums of money. He decreed the extermination of the Waldenses and sent an army against them. He also appointed the brutal Thomas of Torquemada as the Inquisitor General of Spain and ordered all rulers to deliver up heretics to him.
- Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) is called the most corrupt of the Renaissance Popes. He was licentious, avaricious, and depraved! He bought the papacy; made many new cardinals, for money; had a number of illegitimate children, whom he openly acknowledged and appointed to high church office while they were yet children — who, with himself, murdered cardinals and others who stood in their way. He had for a mistress, a sister of a cardinal.
- Pope Julius II (1503-1513) was the richest of the cardinals, with vast income from numerous bishoprics and church estates. He bought the papacy. As a cardinal he had made sport of the Catholic doctrine of celibacy. He was involved in endless quarrels over the possession of cities and principalities, he maintained and personally led vast armies. He is called the “Warrior Pope.” He also issued indulgences for money, which would ultimately lead to Luther's Ninety-Five Theses.
- Pope Leo X (1513-1521) was made an archbishop

at the age of 8; and a cardinal at 13. He was appointed to 27 different church offices, which meant vast income, before he was 13. He was taught to regard ecclesiastical office purely as a source of revenue and bargained for the papal chair. He sold church honors. All ecclesiastical offices were for sale, and many new ones were created under his oversight. He appointed cardinals as young as the age of 7. He was in endless negotiations with kings and princes, jockeying for secular power, and was utterly indifferent to the welfare of the church. He maintained the most luxurious and licentious court in Europe! He also declared that the burning of heretics was a divine appointment.

- Pope Paul III (1534-1549) had many illegitimate children. He was a determined enemy of the Protestants; and offered Charles V an army to exterminate them.

Enter the Jesuits! The Jesuits were an order founded by Ignatius Loyola, a Spaniard, on the principle of absolute and unconditional obedience to the pope — having for its object, the recovery of territory lost to Protestants and Muslims, and the conquest of the entire heathen world for the Roman Catholic Church. Their supreme aim was the destruction of heresy — that is, thinking anything different from what the pope said. For the accomplishment of which — anything was justifiable — deception, immorality, vice, even murder! Their motto, "For the greater glory of God."

Jesuits set up schools, seeking especially the children of ruling classes, aiming in all schools to gain absolute mastery over the pupil. They used the Confessional, especially with Kings, Princes and Civil Rulers — blackmailing them in all kinds of vice and crime, for the sake of gaining their favor. By force, rulers were persuaded to execute Inquisition sentences. In France, they were responsible for St. Bartholomew's Massacre, Persecution of the Huguenots (French Christians), Revocation of the Toleration Edict, and ultimately the French Revolution. In Spain, the Netherlands, South Germany, Bohemia, Austria, Poland and other countries — they led in the massacre of untold multitudes. By these methods, they stopped the Reformation in Southern

Europe and virtually saved the papacy from ruin.

- Pope Gregory XIII (1572-85) celebrated, in solemn mass, with thanksgiving and joy — the news of St. Bartholomew's Massacre!
- Popes Clement VIII (1592-1605), Leo XI (1605), Paul V (1605-1621), Gregory XV (1621-1623), and Urban VIII (1623-1644), with aid of Jesuits — blotted out Protestants in Bohemia.
- Pope Pius VII (1800-1820) issued a Bull against Bible Societies, restored the Jesuits, and decreed one "infallible" pope.
- Pope Leo XII (1821-1829) condemned all religious freedom, tolerance, Bible societies and Bible translations. He declared that "Everyone separated from the Roman Catholic Church, however unblameable in other respects — has no part in eternal life." He declared that kings reign only with his sanction; and issued a Bull against Bible Reading.
- Pope Pius VIII (1829-1830) denounced liberty of conscience and Bible Societies.
- Pope Gregory XVI (1831-1846) was an ardent advocate of Papal Infallibility, and condemned Bible Societies.
- Pope Pius IX (1846) decreed Papal Infallibility; proclaimed the right to suppress heresy by force; condemned separation of Church and State; and commanded Catholics to obey the pope, rather than civil rulers. He denounced liberty of conscience, liberty of worship, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. He decreed the Immaculate Conception and Deity of Mary. He condemned Bible Societies; declared that Protestantism is "No form of the Christian Religion" and that "Every dogma of the Roman Catholic Church has been dictated by Christ, through His Vice-regents the Popes."
- Pope Pius IX (1854) proclaimed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Its reception emboldened him to call the Vatican Council (1870), for the express purpose of having himself declared Infallible, which, under his skillful manipulation, they

did. The decree reads that it is “divinely revealed” that the pope, when he speaks “ex cathedra,” is “possessed of Infallibility in defining doctrines of faith and morals,” and that “such definitions are irrevocable.”

- Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) claimed that he was appointed to be Head of All Rulers, and that he holds the place of Almighty God on earth. He emphasized Papal Infallibility; pronounced Protestants “enemies of the Christian Name,” claimed complete submission to the Roman Pontiff, and denounced Americanism.
- Pope Pius X (1903-1914) denounced leaders of the Reformation as “enemies of the Cross of Christ.”
- Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) in 1928, re-affirmed the Roman Catholic church to be the only Church of Christ, and the re-union of Christendom impossible except by submission to Rome.
- Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) declared 1950 to be a “Marian Year” and helped define the nature of the “Assumption” (the belief that Mary was taken bodily up into heaven). In doing so, he invoked the doctrine of papal infallibility to underscore the importance of this particular belief. This was the last time, so far, that papal infallibility has been used. He is most infamously remembered for his refusal to condemn German war atrocities and the Holocaust.
- Pope John Paul I (1978) was pope for only 33 days and died mysteriously in the midst of the Vatican banking scandal.
- Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) oversaw Catholic attempts to cover-up the vile activities of homosexual, child-molesting priests.
- Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013) served in German air force and army in WWII and made policies which did not require acts of child-molestation to be reported if not required by civil law.

- Pope Francis I (2013-2025) was the archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge Bergoglio. During his time as pope the Roman Catholic Church has faced criticism for its continued lack of action in the child sex-abuse scandal and now also must address financial concerns including money laundering.
- Pope Leo XIV (Present) when bishop of Chiclayo in Peru, three victims reported alleged sexual abuse to civil authorities after no progress was made in the canonical case they filed with the diocese. The victims claim Prevost failed to open an investigation and sent inadequate information to Rome, while the diocese allowed the priest to continue delivering mass. Reports indicate his complicity in the church’s coverup of the sex abuse scandal.<sup>7</sup>

### The Better Way – The Bible Way

For these and other reasons, Christians have come to see the pope in Paul’s man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2) and in many of the images in the Book of Revelation. When surveying an overview of the evil of the Catholic church and the papacy, as we have herein attempted, one is reminded of a better course, a return to the Bible and the organization of the New Testament church.

The graphic is a dark blue banner with a starry background. At the top left is the GTKYB logo, a stylized white 'G' and 'K' forming a square. To its right is the text 'GTKYB' in large white letters, with 'GETTING TO KNOW YOUR BIBLE' in smaller white letters below it. Below the logo and text is the title 'FREE BIBLE STUDY HELPS BY BILLY LAMBERT' in white. In the center are three book covers. The first is '20 GOSPEL SERMONS' with a sunset and cross image. The second is 'THE HARVEST OF AN EVANGELISTIC CHURCH' with a field of wheat. The third is 'SEEKING GOD AFTER THE DUE ORDER' with a man reading. Below the books are five social media icons: Facebook, Instagram, Google, Twitter, and Spotify. At the bottom is the website URL 'www.gettingtoknowyourbible.com'.

<sup>7</sup> [Clerical Abuse Survivor Group 'Gravely Concerned' by Election of New Pope - Newsweek](#)

# The Structure of the Local Church

Andy Erwin

## Introduction

- I. The church is the assembly of all who have been called out of sin by obedience to the gospel (Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9).
- II. The Lord's assembly is comprised of autonomous, independent, and individual congregations.
- III. In this lesson we shall focus on the structure and responsibilities of such congregations.

## Discussion

- I. Leadership
  - A. The organization and government for the church has been provided by God.
    - 1.) Such an organization consists of independent, local congregations being overseen by a group of elders<sup>1</sup>
    - 2.) The minister facilitates in the teaching of the gospel, and the deacons assists in serving the congregation.
    - 3.) Each congregation is made up of men and women who have obeyed the gospel and have been added to the church by God Himself (Acts 2:42, 47).
  - B. Elders are to be ordained in every congregation (Acts 14:23). The qualifications for elders are found in the Bible (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1). The work of the elders is also found in the Scriptures. These men are to feed and oversee the flock (Acts 20:28; Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:2-3). They are to guard against "wolves" and "gainsayers" – shepherding the flock as examples and not as lords of God's heritage. They are to look to the Chief Shepherd, Christ Jesus, as an example in all things (1 Pet. 5:4).
  - C. The following New Testament passages show that the will of God is for a plurality of elders to oversee each local church:
    - 1.) "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Acts 14:23).
    - 2.) "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).
    - 3.) "And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present" (Acts 21:18).

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<sup>1</sup> In the biblical sense of the word *pastor*, the words *elder*, *bishop*, *overseer*, and *shepherd* are synonymous. The pastor and the evangelist clearly had two different positions in the early church. In the New Testament, a bishop was one of the elders, pastors, or overseers of a local congregation (cf. Acts 14:23). Qualifications for this office are found in 1 Tim. 3:1-7.

- 4.) "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1).
- 5.) "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Titus 1:5).
- 6.) "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Heb. 13:7).
- 7.) "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17).
- 8.) "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14).
- 9.) "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (1 Pet. 5:1).

#### D. Deacons

- 1.) Deacons are servants in the local church and the work of the church.
- 2.) The qualifications for deacons are also found in the Bible (1 Tim. 3:8-13).
- 3.) The things that qualify the man should also disqualify him. A congregation should never have elders and deacons just to say they have them.

#### E. Preachers

- 1.) Note the qualifications (2 Tim. 2:2).
  - a.) "Faithful men" are required.
  - b.) Women are not to be elders, deacons, or preachers (1 Cor. 14:34 ff; 1 Tim. 2:11 ff).
  - c.) Unfaithful men should not be preachers.
- 2.) Note the responsibilities (1 Pet. 4:11).
- 3.) Note the pay scale (1 Cor. 9:7-14, 18).
  - a.) Gospel preachers should not "charge" for their preaching (v.18).
  - b.) The church should take care of their preachers according to their needs (vv.7-14).

## II. Membership

- A. Note the terms of admission (Acts 2:38-41).
- B. Note the terms of membership (Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 John 2:6).
- C. Congregational responsibilities include:
  - 1.) Encouragement (Heb. 10:24)
  - 2.) Conflict management and discipline (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5)
    - a.) Withdraw from the immoral brother (1 Cor. 5).

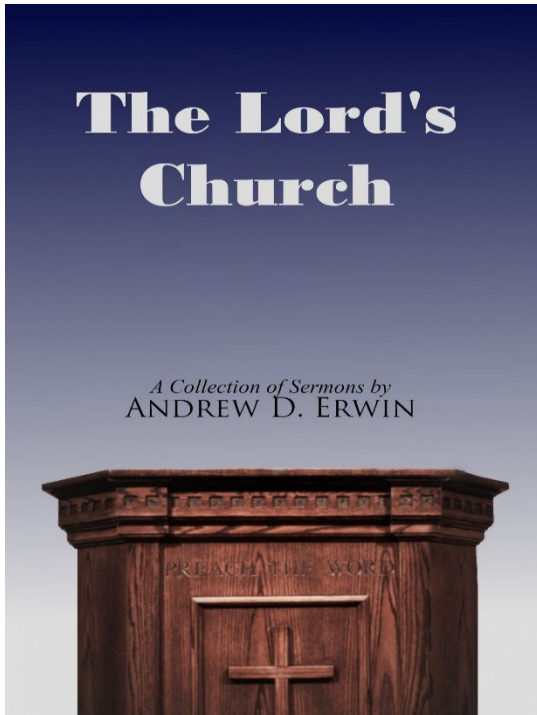
- b.) Withdraw from the divisive brother (Titus 3:10).
  - c.) Withdraw from the disorderly brother (2 Thess. 3:6).
  - d.) Withdraw from the false teacher (Rom. 16:17-18).
- 3.) Submit to biblical elders (Heb. 13:17).
  - 4.) Support to those who labor in the ministry (Gal. 6:6).
  - 5.) Maintain good work (1 Cor. 15:58).
  - 6.) Worship in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24).

### III. Fellowship

- A. Fellowship is more than a meal.
- B. Fellowship describes the relationship we have with one another as Christians (1 John 1:3).
- C. "One Another" Passages
  - 1.) Love one another (John 13:34, 35; 15:12, 17; Rom. 13:8; 1 Thess. 3:12, 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23, 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5).
  - 2.) Be kindly affectionate one to another .... in honor preferring one another (Rom. 12:10).
  - 3.) Be of the same mind one toward another (Rom. 12:16).
  - 4.) Edify one another (Rom. 14:19). This same truth is revealed in Eph. 4:16.
  - 5.) Admonish one another (Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16).
  - 6.) Salute or greet one another (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Pet. 5:14).
    - a.) Serve one another (Gal. 5:13).
    - b.) Bear the burdens of one another (Gal. 6:2).
    - c.) Forbearing and forgiving one another (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13).
    - d.) Be kind one to another (Eph. 4:32).
    - e.) Submit one to another (Eph. 5:21; 1 Pet. 5:5).
    - f.) Lie not one to another (Col. 3:9), rather, speak truth one to another (Eph. 4:25), not evil (James 4:11).
    - g.) Comfort one another (1 Thess. 4:18).
    - h.) Compassion for one another (1 Pet. 3:8-9).
    - i.) Grudge not one against another (James 5:9).
    - j.) Confess faults one to another (James 5:16).
  - 7.) From these passages we see what it means to consider one another in the way God intends.
  - 8.) We cannot be living faithfully unless we are treating each other properly.

## Conclusion

- I. Every member in the local congregation is important to the overall health of the church.
- II. Each member has qualifications and responsibilities.
- III. A church that pleases God is a church that is qualified for service takes its responsibilities seriously



The previous outline has been taken from the book, *The Lord's Church*, written by Andy Erwin. For further study, the reader can purchase it from Amazon or directly from the publisher.

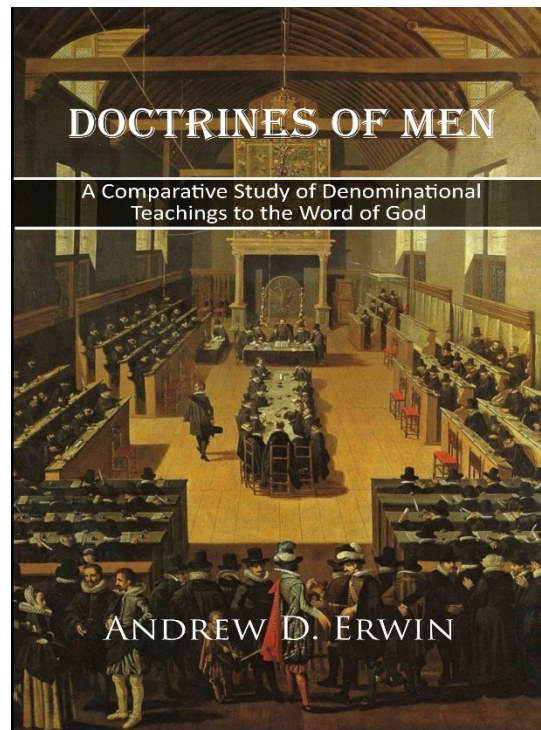
[The Lord's Church \(Andrew D. Erwin\) – CobbPublishing](#)

\$12.99

The reader might also benefit from the book *Doctrines of Men*, also written by Andy Erwin and also available through Amazon or the publisher.

[Doctrines of Men \(Andy Erwin\) – CobbPublishing](#)

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# When a Step Back Becomes a Step Forward

Billy Lambert

How many times have you thought how nice it would be to go back in time? How good would it be to return to some of the ways of the past? How profitable would it be to go back to the "good old days?"

It is impossible to go back in time. Time marches on and culture changes from decade to decade. The way things are is not the way they once were. Some of the changes brought on by the passing of time may be helpful; others may be detrimental.

When it comes to spiritual matters, going back in time is not an option. We must walk in the "old paths" - the paths of yesteryear. By that, we do not mean the way our grandparents did it, but we advocate going back to the source of all that is good and right. This entails a return the word of God as the all-powerful authority in our spiritual lives.

## The Principle Stated

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16).

As we look over all our options in life, we are made conscious of a multiplicity of ways. "Stand in the WAYS" Which way is right? Some ways that appear right lead to death (Prov. 14:12). Which way is God-approved?

We must look over our field of options. "See." Investigation of what one hears from preachers is encouraged as being noble-minded (Acts 17:11). Put what you hear to the test.

We must be active in seeking the right, God-approved way. "Seek." "Ask." We must eagerly, earnestly seek truth (Prov. 23:23).

We acknowledge the value of truth in our lives when we testify in court, when a doctor makes a diagnosis for our physical health, when a pilot is flying a plane, when we exchange vows on your wedding day, and when the druggist fills a prescription.

Truth is valuable, knowable, and essential to our spiritual lives (John 8:31-32; 14:6). Jesus' word constitutes truth (John 17:17). Once truth is known, it should become our guiding light. "Walk therein" - Psa. 119:105. Our feelings, man's standards of conduct, and subjective experiences should never become the light of our life. Neither can a church set the agenda of truth. Faithful; churches follow the pathway of Christ rather than charting a new one. No one can go back - walk in the old paths - without having a deep, abiding respect for the authority of the Bible.

## The Principle Illustrated

When God's people were carried into 70 years of captivity, God had plans to bring them back home. He raised up Ezra to lead in the rebuilding of the temple. Nehemiah was chosen to lead in reconstructing the walls of Jerusalem. During the time spent in captivity, the walls and the temple were unkept.

The work of Ezra and Nehemiah were similar - go back to the way things used to be. Rebuild the temple. Rebuild the walls. Neither was without specific details as to how this would be accomplished - God gave the plan. To understand the impact of this principle to modern life, it must be

stated that we have as much need to return to God's original plan - "the old paths" - as was the case in their time.

## The Principle Applied

The church was and is near to the heart of God

- He planned it - Eph. 3:10-11
- He predicted it - Isa. 2:2-3
- He prepared for it - Matt. 3:1-2
- He perfected it - Matt. 16:18-19
- He promised it - Matt. 16:18-19

It was God's original intent for unity to prevail among His people (John 17:20-21; Acts 2:44-45; Eph. 4:4-6). Jesus prayed that His disciples be one as He and the father are one. They did not agree to disagree. They did not have unity in diversity. They did not see the gospel differently.

Jesus and His Father were and are one in purpose and in message. Can you conceive the Father teaching one thing and the Son another? Likewise, Christians must "speak the same thing" (1 Cor. 1:10).

The unity for which Jesus prayed was corrupted. He warned of corruption coming (Matt. 7:15). Paul warned of its coming as well (1 Tim. 4:1-3; Acts 20:28-31). It was from among the leaders of the church that men began to "stand in the ways" and not "the good way."

When chief bishops were appointed over a local church elderships they violated God's plan and pattern for the organization of His church. When a man was selected to reign over the church on earth, God's plan and pattern were violated. However, one of the largest religious bodies in the world evolved from this attempt to replace God's plan. Apostasy was now in full swing

From these original departures from "the good way" there were other key departures:

- The doctrine of transubstantiation

- Teaching of purgatory
- Practice of celibacy
- Substitution of sprinkling for immersion
- Introduction of instrumental music

Some renowned leaders of that day felt that something had to be done to reform the apostate church. Such men as John Calvin, John Wesley, Martin Luther, and countless others dared to challenge the things they saw as being deviations from the "old paths." Some sacrificed life and limb to proclaim their protest - which came to be known as the Reformation Movement

They did not intend to start another movement or church but rather they sought to reform the apostate church. As a result of the work of these reformers, there sprung up different churches with different names, teaching different doctrines even about such vital subjects as "What must I do to be saved?" Since that time, the denominational groups have multiplied worldwide.

Many good, honest, truth-seeking people want to know "What am I to believe with all of the confusion and obvious division in the religious community?" Are we destined to swim in the muddy waters of confusion or is there a better way? There must be a better way.

Jeremiah says, "Ask for the old paths." To go forward we must go back. Some of the reformers, independent of one another, became disenchanted with what they saw happening and what they heard being taught. They became convinced that God must have given a better way. They began to advocate going back to the "old paths."

Such men as James O'Kelly, Abner Jones, Barton Stone, Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell began to preach the concept of restoration rather than reformation. They sought to restore the New Testament church to its original state. This required making great sacrifices to break

away from previously held positions to proclaim the New Testament in its purest form.

### Is The Principle Applicable Today?

Is it possible to go back to the Bible in all matters of faith? Is it possible to have Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as it was taught in the 1<sup>st</sup> century? Churches of Christ around the world are dedicated to the concept of restoration. Restore the temple of God! Restore the walls of scriptural truth that lie in ruins. Restore the unity for which Jesus prayed (John 17:20-21).

Restore not reform. Restore not agree to disagree. Restore not divide. Restore not denominate. Restore by going back. Go back to Jerusalem when the church began (Acts 2). Go back to the accounts of conversion in the book of Acts. Go back to the simplicity of worship (John 4:24; Acts 2:42). Go back to the divine pattern for church government (Phil. 1:1).

Yes, there is a better way! God's way is always the better way (Jer. 10:23). We may launch out on our own and create something of our own design

and thinking, but in the final analysis, God's way "the old path" is best.

### Conclusion

Picture a man in the forest. He looks for water to drink and finds a stream. The water is bitter. He goes upstream to the fountain head, the source. There the water is good, and he can be refreshed.

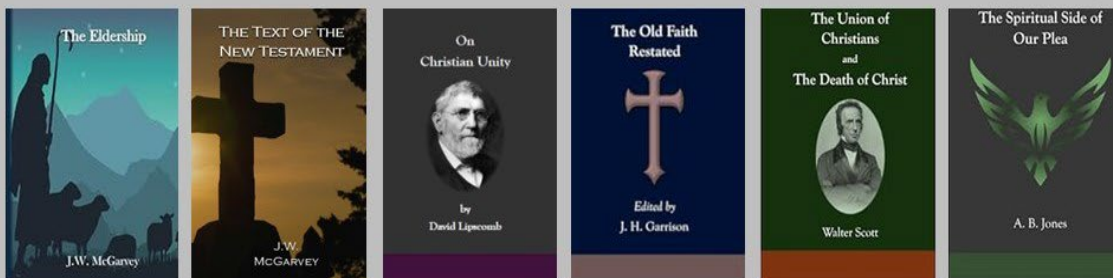
To have pure, fresh, simple God-approved Christianity, we must go back to the source. This is the only way we can truly go forward.

Churches of Christ are and must remain devoted to the restoration of New Testament Christianity.

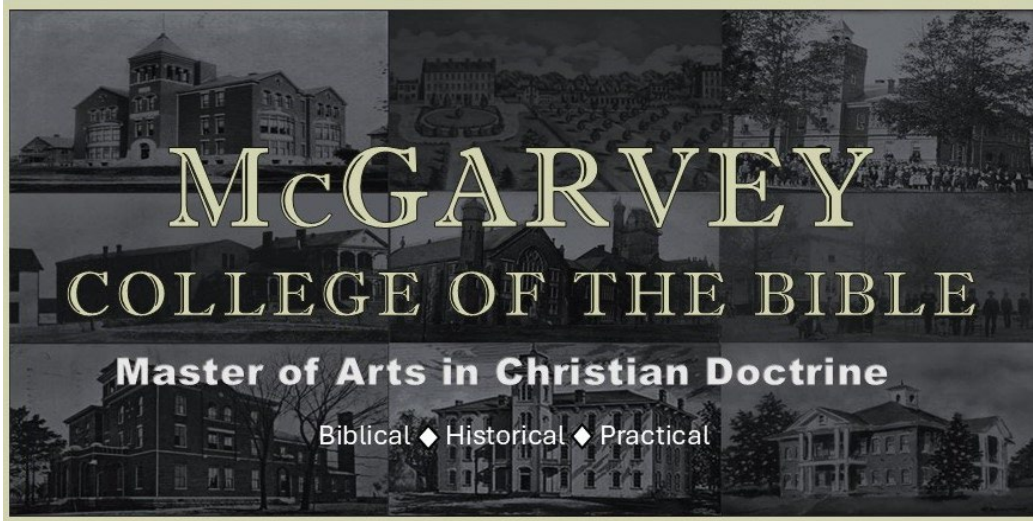
- No book but the Bible
- No Creed but Christ
- No aim but to save
- In Christ, unity
- In all things, love

"All the churches of Christ salute you" (Romans 16:16).

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# The Victory is Already Won

Johnny O. Trail

The resurrection of Christ was one of the most important events in all human history. His death was an atoning sacrifice for sins to those who avail themselves to the blood of the Lamb. 1 John 4:9-10 says, "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins."

While His death was extremely important, His resurrection proved that He was the Son of God who had power over the grave. Romans 1:4 says, "And declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Any person could potentially die for the benefit of another person—only the Son of God could offer up His life and later be resurrected by the power of God never to die again. Acts 2:22-24 says, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it."

We should be very happy that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, because His resurrection is a promise that we will be raised in like fashion. If there is no resurrection of the dead, we have nothing to look forward to beyond this earthly existence. 1 Corinthians 15:13-19 says, "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also

empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."

Christ fought the battle at Calvary that can potentially secure the souls of those who are obedient to the gospel. There are no battles left for us, because Christ overcame the last two enemies that all of humankind must face—sin and death. Hebrews 9:25-28 says, "Not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

Death is in fact the last enemy that we will all face unless Jesus returns before our earthly sojourn is completed. 1 Corinthians 15:26 says, "The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death." Those "in Jesus" will enjoy a resurrection for the dead unto eternal life. Acts 4:1-2 says, "Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead."

Jesus' resurrection from the dead is our surety that we will be saved through obedience to the

gospel. 1 Peter 3:21-22 says, "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him." Just as Jesus was surely resurrected from the dead as attested to by many witnesses (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8), we will be saved through Him.

While the resurrection of Lazarus from the grave was only temporary in nature, it demonstrated the power over death that the Messiah possessed. John 11:25-26 says, "Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" The ones who believe (cf. Mark 16:15-16) will have their part in the resurrection from the dead that leads to eternal life.

The theme of victory over the grave is an important leitmotif in scripture. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57 says, "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY." "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O HADES, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?" The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Bible contains many passages that allude to the resurrection of Christ as a factual occurrence that has tremendous applications for the child of God.

Scripture teaches that those in Christ are conquerors and no earthly power can separate a

Christian from the love of Jesus. Romans 8:34-39 says, "Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE KILLED ALL DAY LONG; WE ARE ACCOUNTED AS SHEEP FOR THE SLAUGHTER." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In death, we have confidence that eternal life is awaiting us. 2 Corinthians 5:4-8 says, "For we who are in *this* tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." Indeed, the victory is already won!



# The Relationship between the Father and the Son

Joshua Seth Houston

Among the most intimate relationships described in the New Testament is that between Jesus Christ (i.e., the son) and God the Father. Our task is to examine the relationship between Jesus and the Father, focusing on their unity considering their various roles. We will explore how the New Testament portrays this relationship, the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son, and the way their unity is central to salvation. Our goal is to better understand the person of Jesus Christ and his unique relationship with the Father within the framework of the Trinity.

## The Father and the Son: A Relationship of Unity and Distinction

Throughout the Gospels, we see a clear and consistent portrayal of the deep unity between Jesus and the Father. One of the most profound statements of this unity is found in Jesus's words in John 10:30: *"I and the Father are one."* This statement reflects both the unity of their being and their cooperative will. They are distinct persons, yet their essence is the same. The Father and the Son share in the same divine essence, as seen in John 14:9-11, where Jesus says, *"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."* This unity is not merely theoretical; it is a functional unity. Jesus is not just one who shares in the Father's being, but also one who acts in perfect harmony with the Father's will. As we read in John 5:19, *"The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing."* The mutual knowledge and purpose between them are inseparable, demonstrating a perfect, unbroken relationship.

While the unity between the Father and the Son is emphasized, the New Testament also

maintains the distinction between them as persons. The Father is often depicted as the one who sends the Son, and the Son is the one who obeys and fulfills the Father's will. In John 6:38, Jesus says, *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me."* This reflects the distinct roles within the Godhead, where the Father initiates and the Son responds. The distinction is not only functional but personal. The Father is never referred to as the Son, and the Son is never referred to as the Father. Each person of the Godhead, while fully divine, retains a unique role within the economy of salvation.

## The Mission of the Son: A Relationship of Love and Obedience

In the Gospel of John, Jesus repeatedly emphasizes the love the Father has for Him. For example, in John 3:35, He states, *"The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand."* This love is active, shaping both the identity of the Son and the mission that he undertakes.

The love between the Father and the Son is foundational for understanding the nature of God's relationship with humanity. In John 17:24, Jesus prays, *"Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world."* The eternal love shared between the Father and the Son is the source of salvation offered to humanity.

The relationship between Jesus and the Father is also marked by the Son's obedience to the Father's will. In the Garden of Gethsemane, we see Jesus wrestling with the impending suffering, but ultimately submitting to the Father's plan, saying,

*“Not my will, but yours be done”* (Luke 22:42). This obedience is rooted in the love and trust that Jesus has in the Father.

The obedience of the Son to the Father demonstrates the perfect harmony of the Godhead in accomplishing the work of salvation. Jesus’s entire earthly ministry, culminating in His death on the cross, is an act of obedience to the Father. Philippians 2:8 states, *“he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*

The Father sent the Son for the salvation of the world. John 3:16 makes this clear. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.”* The Father sent the Son into the world to accomplish the redemptive mission, which was the ultimate expression of his love for humanity.

In the Gospels, Jesus speaks frequently about His mission as one that the Father has entrusted to Him. In John 5:36, He declares, *“For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.”* Jesus’s existence is marked by his identity as the one sent, whose mission is to fulfill the will of the Father.

### **The Glorification of the Son by the Father**

Jesus’s relationship with the Father involves a mutual glorification. The Father glorifies the Son by revealing his divine nature through the works of the son and his resurrection. In John 17:1–2, Jesus prays, *“Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.”* The Father glorifies the Son by raising Him from the dead and exalting Him to His right hand (Acts 2:33).

The Son also glorifies the Father through his obedience and his sacrificial death. In John 17:4, Jesus declares, *“I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”* The life of Jesus—marked by perfect obedience to the Father’s will—is the glorification of the Father.

The death of Jesus, far from being a defeat, is the moment in which the Father’s glory is most fully revealed through the Son’s self-sacrifice for the redemption of humanity.

### **Implications of the Relationship Between Jesus and the Father for Christian Life**

The relationship between Jesus and the Father serves as a model for the unity that should characterize the Church. Just as the Father and the Son are united in will, purpose, and love, so should believers be united with one another in love and in the mission of the Gospel. Jesus prayed in John 17:21, *“That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us.”*

The relationship between the Father and the Son also serves as a model for Christian obedience and love. As Jesus was obedient to the Father’s will, even unto death, so too are believers called to follow Christ in obedience and sacrifice. The love that the Father has for the Son should also shape how Christians love one another and how they live out their calling in the world.

Moreover, the relationship between Jesus and the Father highlights the centrality of Jesus Christ in our own relationship with God. Jesus is the way to the Father (John 14:6), and through his work, believers are brought into the intimate fellowship that he shares with the Father. Jesus makes it possible for believers to call God “Father” with the same intimacy that he shares with the Father.

### **Conclusion**

The relationship between Jesus and the Father is one of unity, love, and obedience. It reveals the very nature of God as relational. Through Jesus’s relationship with the Father, we are invited into a deeper communion with God by learning to live in obedience, love, and unity with one another and with the God who revealed himself in the Son.

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