

# I Believe in God the Father

2010/6/20

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Ps. 107: 1, 17

Ps. 33: 5

Ps. 33: 2, 3

Ps. 104: 1, 2, 7, 8

Ps. 89: 4, 5, 7

Scripture reading: Psalm 33

Text: LD 9

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

When someone knows the Lord, then he also fears the Lord.

It is characteristic of true knowledge of the Lord that it makes us to stand in awe, and to bow down, and to worship.

The more we come to know God, as He revealed Himself in holy Scripture, the smaller we become in His presence.

The more we know Him as He truly is, and the more we know ourselves as we are by nature, the greater He becomes, and the smaller we become.

Yes, the better we know this almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the more we are filled with a holy fear as we behold His glory.

Yes, if anyone knows God, he fears Him with a holy fear.

At the same time it is exactly this awesome majesty and glory of His divine being and divine power that makes our hearts beat with excitement; for **this** God, **the Almighty**, has become our Father!

He adopted us as sons!

And therefore, through our Lord Jesus Christ, all knowledge of the Father has become pure gospel to us!

And so, when we listen to the self-revelation of God the Father, our reaction should be twofold: we tremble **and** we rejoice at the same time.

Or, as David says: “rejoice with trembling” – Ps. 2: 11.

We see in our own day many who rejoice, but without fear.

Their rejoicing is as shallow as their knowledge. They don't really know the Lord, therefore they don't really fear Him.

But in the gospel both the fear of the Lord, and a heartfelt joy in Him are united in humble adoration.

Let us then approach God with fear, for we are standing on holy ground. Let us take the sandals from our feet, when we turn to LD 9. And let our hearts leap with excitement – for **this** God, the Almighty, has become our Father! **His** glory has become **our** riches.

With this understanding we will now come to the *first* article of our undoubted Christian faith:

“I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth”.

This afternoon I proclaim to you...

## **The *gospel* of God the Father**

We will note...

1. That the **Father's** glory has become **our** riches.
2. That He is the **Almighty**
3. That He is **the Creator** of heaven and earth

In the first place we note that...

## **The Father's glory has become our riches**

We confess:

“...the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and all that is in them, and who still upholds and governs them by His eternal counsel and providence, is, for the sake of Christ His Son, **my God and Father**”.

Or in short: I believe that the eternal Father is **my** Father.

But there is also more detail in this confession. We confess that He is the **eternal** Father. That means that He was always there. No one created Him. He has no beginning. Before creation He was. He was there from all eternity.

**Only** God is eternal. All other things are created things. Everything has a beginning, except God. There is only one Creator; and the rest is all creatures. He alone is God, and all other things are the works of His hands.

Dear congregation, this is not simply and interesting doctrine, something to amuse our minds. No, when we truly believe this, then we seek all goodness only in Him, knowing that there is nothing good to be found apart from Him.

He alone is the source and the fountain of all goodness. Yes, He is the Creator of all things; and therefore every possible blessing, or anything that may be enjoyed – in this life or in the world to come – is from Him alone.

Knowing this, we seek for nothing apart from Him.

Brothers and sisters, the eternal Father, from whom all blessings flow, has adopted us in Christ as His sons and heirs.

And as sons we have become heirs of all His riches.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...” – Eph. 1: 3

The Father blessed us with all His heavenly riches. In Christ He gave us everything. When He adopted us as sons through Jesus Christ, we became heirs together with Christ, sons and heirs of all the spiritual and heavenly riches of God Himself.

Where he says in Eph. 1: 5 that the Father adopted us as **sons** by Jesus Christ, the word **sons** should not be replaced with the word “children”. There are other places where we are called children of God, but when he speaks of our adoption as sons, then we are called sons for a specific reason; for this adoption includes an inheritance from the Father.

In Scripture we read that fathers divided the inheritance among their sons. Being a son was being heir of your father. Therefore the apostle uses this expression that the believers are adopted as sons, for by this adoption we became co-heirs with Christ of all the spiritual and heavenly riches of the Father.

This is stated even more clearly in Gal. 4: 7 where we read:

“Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and **if a son, then an heir** of God through Christ”.

He says: If you are a son of the Father, then you are also an heir of the Father.

There are translations that have changed the word son to “child”, but the original text in the Greek uses the word son. And it does so with a purpose. It links our adoption to the position of being heir of the inheritance. If you are a son, then you are an heir!

Now then, what *is* this inheritance? No, you should not think of the streets of gold and the gates of pearl – not in the first place!

**God Himself** has become our inheritance!

David prays to the Lord and says:

“Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and **my portion forever**” – Ps. 73: 25, 26.

God Himself is the portion of my inheritance!

What an inheritance!

Again David says:

“O my soul, you have said to the LORD, ‘You are my Lord, my goodness is nothing apart from You’ – Ps. 16: 2

And then, in the same psalm, he continues:

“O LORD, **You are the portion of my inheritance** and my cup; you maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance” – Ps. 16: 5, 6.

He rejoices in his inheritance. And what is the portion of his inheritance? Which property has been marked out for him? “O LORD, **You** are the portion of my inheritance.”

“...In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore”  
– Ps. 16: 11.

Brothers and sisters, ***we do not even know the extent of this wealth!*** It is as yet far beyond our comprehension. The infinite riches of the Father are more than we can imagine!

In faith we say “amen”, while we await that great day when this glory will be fully revealed. God Himself will be all our glory. On that day the vastness of the inheritance, the infinite riches which we inherit in Christ, will be revealed: the glory of having the eternal Father, the Almighty, as our Father!

Therefore the apostle John says:

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!...Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” – 1 John 3: 1, 2

The glory of being His children is a glory yet to be revealed in its fullness.

To confess: “I believe in God the Father almighty”, and to confess that this almighty God has become our Father through Christ, is the sum total of salvation: to have this God as **our** God.

What then does it mean that His glory has become our riches?

Brothers and sisters, when we hear of God’s goodness and faithfulness, we find peace, for this good and faithful God has become our Father. When we hear about His power, then

His power comforts us – for this all-powerful God is our Father. And when we hear of His majesty and glory, we are excited, for we are His heirs.

When we hear about His mighty deeds and His wonders, we start to boast in His greatness, for this is our Father!

Yes, **His** glory has become **our** riches.

And so we want to further explore the treasures of our Father, in the second place, by noting that...

## He is the Almighty

Therefore He is able to care for me. **Nothing** is beyond the might of His power; therefore I am safe. Because He is the Almighty, therefore I also know that He is **able** to do as He has promised. Nothing is able to stop Him from giving to me what He has promised me.

Therefore I trust in Him, the Almighty, who will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul; who will also turn to my good whatever adversary He sends me in this life of sorrow.

He is able to do so, for He is **almighty**.

Do you see how, in this confession, we are boasting with God's power?

A little child takes delight in boasting in the strength of his father? A child is not afraid when his father is near, because his father is strong! The child does not worry about anything, as long as his father is near, for his father is not only strong, he can also solve any problem!

Yes, we are speaking of a small child, for when they grow up they soon learn that their **earthly** father is also fallible and limited in his abilities. Not so with our heavenly Father!

But think of the boasting of that little child. His father's strength is his comfort. His father's abilities are his pride. His father's riches are **his** riches. When someone comes to visit little Johnny, he shows him everything: "Look, this is our house, this is our car, this is

our garden". Everything that belongs to his father, Johnny calls his, and rightly so, for he is heir of all, and may dwell with his father as his son.

Yes, it is the same boasting here in our confession, but in **this** case the boasting will never be in vain. For we do not **imagine** that our Father in heaven is almighty. We are not like a little child whose imagination is running away with him, who struggles to know the difference between reality and fiction – no! The Lord Himself has revealed this to us!

It is not our imagination; it is His holy Word.

He chose to reveal Himself to Abraham as God, the Almighty, saying: "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless" – Gen. 17: 1.

He revealed Himself in the same way to Jacob, saying: "I am God Almighty" – Gen. 35: 11

He reminds Moses of this, and says: "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty..." – Ex. 6: 2.

This is repeated throughout Scripture. Altogether about 60 times we read that He is the Almighty. Think for example how it is repeated by the angels in heaven and by all the living creatures before His throne, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God **Almighty**, Who was and is and is to come!" – Rev. 4: 8.

But what then does this word "almighty" mean? Does it only mean that He is very, very powerful? Or does it indeed mean that His power is infinite, without any limits?

Yes, the prophet Jeremiah says it clearly:

"Ah, LORD God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by  
Your great power and outstretched arm. **There is nothing too hard for  
You**" – Jer. 32: 17

You who made everything out of nothing, there is nothing too hard for You.

And the angel Gabriel declares to Mary:

“...with God nothing will be impossible” – Luke. 1: 37.

Nothing is too hard for Him, nothing is impossible for Him.

“...He does whatever He pleases” – Ps. 115: 3

“Whatever the LORD pleases He does...” – Ps. 135: 6

He declares:

“...I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel **shall** stand, and I **will** do all My pleasure’” – Isaiah 46: 9, 10.

What does He say? He says that the end is proclaimed by Him from the beginning. Everything in history happens exactly according to His eternal counsel. What He decided, that will happen.

Therefore He is able to make the future known, and to declare the end from the beginning, for nothing will stop Him, nothing will hinder Him in the execution of His will: “My counsel **shall** stand, and I will do all My pleasure”.

Only the Almighty can say this. He will do all His pleasure, for His power is without any limits.

And His infinite power is gospel to us.

Dear congregation, what then if I have to endure suffering and disappointments in this life? What then if everything seems to go wrong, as if God Himself has forsaken me?

What if trials and afflictions seem to ruin my life? Is the almighty power of God then irrelevant for my situation (which seems to be hopeless)?

No, it is exactly when our case seems to be hopeless, when we are in the deepest distress, and have no strength left to continue, that the Lord reveals His power.

We believe, and confess, that for the sake of Christ He will surely use His power in such a way that He will turn to my good whatever adversity He sends me in this life of sorrow.

As it is written:

“...that **all** things work together for good to those who love God...” – Rom. 8: 28

All things?

Yes, brothers and sisters, it is a confession of faith, for we cannot prove this by simply looking at our circumstances. Our circumstances may often seem to contradict this truth. When everything seems to go wrong and our troubles increase, then this confession becomes harder to confess. Then it becomes a matter of faith. When the blessings of the Lord seems to be withdrawn from us, then it is only faith that will continue to cling to the invisible promises of God.

Often the opposite of this comfort seems to be true when the ungodly is prosperous and the godly seems to perish.

Cain is prosperous; he builds a city, he becomes powerful. Cain has a great and skilful offspring. Abel dies without offspring.

Cain has a long life on the earth; Abel not.

Where is the benefit for Abel? Can it be said that his cruel death will be turned to his benefit?

Yes, it is when our small human minds struggle to understand, it is exactly when there is no visible proof of the fulfilment of the promises, that we simply have to believe the promises.

Abraham received the promise that his descendants will be as many as the sand on the seashore. But the years go by and nothing happens. In the end both he and his wife Sara become too old to have children. What happened to the promise?

And finally, when a miracle does happen, they have a son Isaac. But the Lord commands Abraham to slaughter Isaac! How will the promise then be fulfilled? How could Abraham make sense of it all? But he trusted in God, the Almighty. We may look back and say, yes, God fulfilled all His promises to Abraham. We may look back and say, yes, it all turned out well for the man Job. We may look back and say, yes, the Lord spared David's life time and again, and carried him through all his anxieties.

But when we ourselves are in the melting pot of trials, we can only look up to our almighty Father in faith, trusting His word, that for the sake of Christ He will surely use His power in such a way that He will turn to my good whatever adversity He sends me in this life of sorrow.

For His beloved children He turns even their death into victory!

He **shall** turn your misery into joy and your weeping into thanksgiving. **Nothing** will be too hard for Him.

This almighty power of our faithful Father is our comfort in all situations of life. For His power is ever present in all that happens, even here and now in **this** life! His almighty power upholds and governs all things, even here and now, according to **His** eternal counsel and purpose.

It is so different from what we know to be true of men. The director of a big company busies himself only with the main lines of policy. He will not know the details of every minor job done by his company. Even if one of his staff is fired unjustly, he may not even be aware of it, simply because of the size of his company and his own limitations. But the government of God the Father is totally different. He does not only govern the big things in this world in a general sense, no, He governs everything in the smallest detail.

Even the hairs of our heads are counted!

**Nothing** happens by chance! And therefore we are comforted in all situations. Nothing happens by chance, therefore we are content with everything that we receive from the hand of our faithful Father – riches or poverty, health or sickness, good times and bad times.

There is also another big difference between the government of man, and the government of God. The director of a company will have to adjust his plans from time to time. And sometimes a problem may arise that he has never foreseen. Then he has to alter his plans, or postpone it, or even forget about it. But nothing of that is true of God's government. He does not only foresee all things from all eternity, but He also **determines** the future. **He decides** what shall happen and what not. Only what He decides, that will happen – as we saw already in Isaiah 46: 10. Everything will happen as He has determined it from eternity.

He does not have to make new plans every day or to adjust His plans according to circumstances, nor is He ever frustrated in the execution of His plans. No, the counsel of the Lord **shall** stand. It cannot be frustrated or altered.

The apostle Paul says it so clearly in Ephesians chapter 1. He speaks of our election before the foundation of the world and of our full salvation in Christ, and then he says:

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being **predestined** according to the **purpose** of Him who works **all things according to the counsel of His will**” – Eph. 1:11.

He works all things according to the counsel of His will.

And you will note that he speaks of God's counsel in the singular – by His one eternal counsel all things are determined. This is not some fatalistic philosophy. It is God's Word. It is our comfort.

But there is yet another difference between God's government and that of man. The director of a big company is not almighty. No matter how clever or powerful, the director is never fully in control, and is not able to direct all things to the good of his company. Often he suffers losses, and he has to accept it as part of his business.

Not so with God. He is almighty, all-wise, all-knowing, always in full control of all the complexities of everything that happens in heaven and on earth.

Nothing is out of control – not even when the devil and evil men act contrary to His revealed will. By His infinite power and wisdom He uses even their wicked works for His holy purpose.

God is fully in control also when the future looks dark for His people; when the enemies of the church rise up and His people are trampled underfoot, God will turn all our sorrows and adversities to the good of His church, and to the good of everyone who fears Him.

In the hands of our almighty Father we are safe. Under the fatherly care of this almighty God we are well cared for.

Look at the birds of the air. Consider the lilies of the field. Even they are taken care of by our Father. No matter how small and insignificant they may seem to us, God cares for each of them in the smallest detail.

If God cares in **such** a way for birds and grass, how much more does He care for us!

“Cast your cares on the LORD and **He** will sustain you; He will **never** let the righteous fall” – Ps. 55: 22.

What then does it mean when we confess that He will provide us with all things necessary for body and soul? Does He also provide for my body when I am diagnosed with cancer? Does He provide for our souls when He sends us all kinds of sorrow?

Yes, we do not always understand His ways, and this life will indeed remain a life of sorrow. But we know that it is our Father, the Almighty, who is in control, and so we receive all things from Him who loves us: the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Him we trust so completely as to have no doubt that He will provide us with all things that **He** knows we need for body and soul. And He knows it better than we do.

Sometimes my body needs illness and my soul needs sorrow, for we have not yet arrived.

But in the end He will bring all things to completion and perfection. Then there will be no curse anymore. Paradise shall be restored. He will dwell with us and be our God. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain.

He will create new heavens and a new earth, for this Almighty God and Father, is also the Creator of heaven and earth.

We note that in the third place, that...

### **He is *the* Creator of heaven and earth**

Also this part of the article is pure gospel. If we give close attention to the wording of this Lord's Day, we will note that the Father as Creator is identified as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We read that it is the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who created out of nothing heaven and earth and all that is in them. In short: the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ created all things.

Of course Scripture clearly teaches that it is the **Father** who created all things, and that He created all things through Christ. The apostle Paul says: "**God**...created all things **through** Christ" – Eph. 3: 9. And we read in Hebrews that God spoke to us through His Son "through whom also He (the Father) made the worlds" – Hebr. 1: 2.

God the Father created. And He created all things through His Son. But still, our confession says more than that. It draws our attention to the fact that the One who created all things is not simply the eternal Father, but: the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And **this** identification of the Creator gives a different colour to all of creation! For when He created this world His eternal love for us in Christ was not absent from His act of creation; His love for us in Christ characterises all that He created!

Although Christ was not yet born at creation, the Creator was already **then** the Father of our Lord Jesus. In His eternal council God has already decided to send His Son to this world even **before** the world was created. And thus it is the same God who sent His Son to die for our sins, who also created heaven and earth.

It is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who created the mountains and the skies, who covered the fields with grass and flowers. The creator God has already fixed His eternal love on us, when He created the world as our dwelling place.

It is through Christ that we know the Creator, and it is also through Christ that we know His creation. And it is also through Christ that the Father will restore all things. The Creator will create new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells and where God will be all in all.

And thus we cannot properly perceive our Creator or His creation apart from His love for us in Christ.

When we look at creation we see the love of our Father who loved us from all eternity – in Christ. That is the first thing: the identification of the Creator as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But let us now also look at His act of creation. Scripture does not only mention to us **that** God created heaven and earth, but also **how** He created it. Here in Lord's Day 9 we confess expressly that He created heaven and earth "**out of nothing**".

These words say a lot! By these words every argument for a creation through evolution is defeated. Evolution has to start with something. Something has to evolve from something else. But God created out of nothing! This one sentence defeats all theories of a heaven and an earth that came to be through a process of evolution.

This confession that the Father created all things **out of nothing** also indicates **the extent** of the infinite power of the living God. For what does this mean that He created all things out of nothing?

The apostle John says:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” And then he says: “**All** things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” – John 1: 1 – 3.

The words “in the beginning” refers to the beginning of **all** creation. **Everything** that exists, he says, was created in the beginning – nothing excluded. And of course, nothing exists which was not created.

And thus all of creation has a beginning. No created thing is eternal. Only God is eternal. **He** has no beginning. He was always there **when nothing else existed**.

And thus we realize that the words “in the beginning” refer not only to the creation of this world with the sun, moon and stars, but to **all** of creation including all visible and invisible things, all powers, the angels, and everything else that were created.

Can you picture that? God from all eternity, and **nothing** else existing!

That tells us at least one thing: God is not dependant on His creation, and He does not need us. He is not in need of anything. From all eternity He is self-sufficient – even without anything else existing. God does not need you. God doesn’t need me. But we surely need Him.

Now, the fact that God created all things out of nothing, is confirmed when the apostle Paul writes of the Son of God, saying:

“...by Him **all things were created** that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or principalities or powers. **All things** were created through Him and for Him. And He is **before all things...**” – Col. 1: 16.

All things were created by the Father through the Son. All things in heaven – that includes the angels and all invisible powers that there may be. Everything that exists was created by the Son. And, as John declares, the Word created all things in the beginning. And He is **before** the beginning.

God alone is eternal. All created things have a beginning. And that applies also to matter. No matter, no dust, no element, no power is eternal.

Only God was there. Nothing else existed. And then He spoke, and through the power of His Word he called into existence those things which did not exist.

Gen. 1: 1 comes before Gen. 1: 2. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And **then** the earth was without form, and void.

It is not the other way round, that the earth was without form, and void, and that God then created the world out of the formless mass of matter. No, there was nothing, then God spoke, and there was.

We believe in a God who “**calls those things which do not exist as though they did**” – Rom. 4: 17.

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” – Hebr. 11: 3.

Yes, even all the invisible things and all powers were created “out of nothing”. God just spoke, and it was.

Brothers and sisters, **this** is the God who became our Father through Christ. **This** is His power. And His power remains. He did not only call all things into being, but also upholds and governs **all things** according to His eternal council.

We said that there was nothing. Yes, there was also no law of nature. All the laws of nature were created. He created the law of gravity. He created all the laws of science, and logic. He gave a law for the stars in heaven, so that not one deviates from its course. He

gave laws for order, laws for beauty, laws for life itself. God made the laws for all of nature and for the whole universe. As we read in the Psalms:

“He commanded and they were created. He also established them forever and ever; He made **a decree** which shall not pass away” – Ps. 148: 5, 6.

God’s own law is uncreated, and all things have to conform to His law. Also the laws of nature reflects the order and wisdom and beauty of our God. His handiworks testify of Him.

There is no law or power apart from Him. Apart from Him there is no law. Apart from Him there is no power. Apart from Him there is nothing.

At the same time He is also above His creation. He is not a slave of His own creation and of the laws of nature which He established. He spoke, and the earth was cursed for the sake of Adam’s sin. And all the laws of nature, in one moment, became subject to death.

He shall speak again, and no curse will remain. In the twinkling of an eye all the laws of nature shall, in one moment, become subject to life again!

He who created the sun and placed the planets and the stars on their course around the sun, as on a track, He also answered the prayer of Joshua and made the whole clockwork of the universe to stand still; even to turn back on the prayer of Isaiah! He is the Almighty.

Out of nothing He called all of creation into being. He **spoke**, and it was. He **speaks**, and all of creation obeys. He **shall** speak, and all things will be new.

Dear congregation, our Father, the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, will turn all things to our good. He will save and renew us. He will bring all things to completion and perfection. He will restore Paradise. There will be no curse anymore. **He** will dwell with us and be our God. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain.

He is able to do so as almighty God, and willing also as a faithful Father.

Amen.