

Catford Lectures 2014-2015

Part 8

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[00:00:01] We start by reading a scripture from the first epistle of John and chapter 1. First epistle of John chapter 1 and verse 3.

In John 1 verse 3, that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that he also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

[00:01:05] And then from the second chapter, verse 22.

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?

He is the Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same has not the Father. But he that acknowledgeth the Son has the Father also.

And then from Hebrews chapter 1.

[00:02:08] Epistle to the Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 1.

God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets has in these last days spoken unto us by or in his Son.

So far for now.

In one way I'd really like to carry on where our brother Paul left off this afternoon when he closed with the verse, the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me and the hymn [00:03:03] that spoke of the Lord Jesus. And we really have a wonderful topic in the Lord Jesus. Last week on Saturday, our house was absolutely crammed. There were so many people that we ran out of seats. And some were sitting on cushions and some not on cushions, just on the floor. And I'm not sure what the neighbors are thinking, why so many people are coming and you don't hear any loud party noise, just some singing of Christian sounding songs. In any case, the reason they did come was that we were studying one of the glories of the Lord Jesus.

It was an official glory, it was the glory of the high priest and only under one aspect that is under the garments in Exodus 28. Now we could spend other Saturdays studying other official glories. [00:04:06] On other occasions, we might be occupied with the Lord Jesus and we study his moral glories, how he acted in his life, how every word he spoke was appropriate, every action, how he took the children on his arms. And yet perhaps the deepest glories of the Lord Jesus are his personal glories. And what I'd like to do with the Lord's help this evening is to say a few words about the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, and I'd like to do this with the help of seven particular expressions you find in the New Testament where each time a slightly different name [00:05:01] is given to the Son of God.

Now there may be more than seven, I don't know, but these seven were the ones that jumped out at me and that warmed my heart and I hope will warm yours as well. The first verse we read in 1 John 1 makes a very important point.

Perhaps I should have read verse 4 also which says, And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full. And that's my opening question, would you like full joy? Perhaps I should first ask, would you like joy? And everybody says yes, but you can have more, you can have full joy, a full measure. And how would the recipients of this letter receive that joy? It's a joy that comes out of fellowship with the Father and the Son, the Father telling [00:06:05] us what he appreciates about the Son, and the Son telling us what he appreciates about the Father. It is really, therefore, it's not a question of theology, it is a question that is at the very heart of Christianity, of the Christian faith, and of our practical enjoyment and joy as believers.

Having said that, the second verse we read shows us something else. It said there in chapter 2, verse 22, He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.

It's not the Antichrist prophetically, but it is Antichrist in the sense of against Christ [00:07:05] and a substitute for Christ. It is a false Christ.

And what we learn, essentially, is that the enemy focuses his attacks on the Lord Jesus, and in particular, on the Lord Jesus as the Son of God. Now thinking about it, the two things really go together. If the truth about the Son of God is at the heart of Christianity, we shouldn't be surprised if the enemy focuses the attack on this.

So we are on a ground where we must expect the enemy to contradict and attack. But I just mention this, I don't want to focus on controversy this evening at all. I want to speak about that which is precious to all of us and that which can help us enjoy [00:08:08] this full joy.

Now the Son of God.

We read in Hebrews 1, a very important verse, it shows a complete change in time.

It shows that the coming of the Son brought about a big change. Incidentally, you will find the same in Galatians chapter 4, where it says that in the fullness of time, God sent his Son.

It is really before and after. The history of mankind and of everything is divided by this event, the coming of the Son. [00:09:02] And what we learn here in Hebrews 1 is that before the Lord Jesus came, it's not that God didn't speak, he did. It's not that he didn't send prophets, he did. It's not that he didn't reveal himself, he did. But it was partial. Today we would say it was piecemeal. It was here

a little, there a little. It was all true. It was all precious.

This afternoon we read about how the angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah and his wife, his wife first.

This is Christ before incarnation coming to man, speaking to man, but it is not yet the revelation in the Son.

And in these last days, it says God has spoken to us by his Son.

[00:10:01] It's also translated in or in the person of the Son. If I said to you that every word which the Lord Jesus spoke was word of God and was revelation from God, this would be true.

But it wouldn't be enough. It's not only what he said. His person was the revelation.

He had come, the Son.

The Son goes along with dignity.

There's a verse later on in this epistle that explains this very beautifully where it points out the marvel of the thought that the Son learned obedience. Normally, you would have expected obedience from a servant, but it says he being the Son, [00:11:02] the one in whom God had spoken, he learned obedience. God has spoken in his Son.

Now I need to move on to these seven expressions, seven different terms where something is added to the word Son.

And for the first one, I'd like to turn to Genesis chapter 22, a very well-known passage, Genesis 22 and verse 1, and it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham. And he said to him, Abraham, and he said, behold, here I am. And he said, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee [00:12:08] into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering.

So the first in the series of expressions is the only. The fact that he is the only son.

This is emphasized in this chapter, I think it's three times in this chapter that it's repeated that it was the only son that Abraham had to offer.

It was the one of whom God had said, in Isaac shall thy seed be blessed. There was no other in that sense. There was, of course, Ishmael, but God had blessed Abraham through Isaac. [00:13:02] It was the only one in whom God's promises could be fulfilled, through whom blessing could come.

And God says, this only son I want you to place onto the altar. I was struck when I noticed that this expression, only son, occurs seven times in the Bible, three times in this chapter, and then three more times in the Old Testament, where each time it is connected with mourning. Perhaps the best known of the three is Zechariah 12 verse 10. There will be a mourning like one mourneth about an only son.

The seventh time is in the New Testament, and in the New Testament you have a widow [00:14:02]

and her son has died, and it says that he was her only son, and I think taking those together we learn something about the value of God's gift. He gave the only one.

There was no other to accomplish redemption.

It's interesting that there are passages that apply to the Lord Jesus where he is called the chosen one or the elect one, like Isaiah 42, for example, and Psalm 89.

But when it speaks of the Lord as chosen one, this is not in eternity. In the past eternity there was no other to choose, but as man he is the chosen one, the one chosen out of many.

[00:15:10] Let's move on to another expression, and we go back to the New Testament now and to the epistle to the Romans, and I'll read three passages again.

First of all in Romans 8.

For what the law could not do, and that is was weak through the flesh, God sending his [00:16:04] own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.

And verse 32.

He that spared not his own son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

And for the third one we need to turn back to Acts chapter 20 and verse 28.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood.

[00:17:06] Or in the new translation it says with the blood of his own.

Now we've seen the Lord Jesus as the only son, now we see him as God's own son. And the word own of course indicates property, possession. And the point is made that the one whom God gave was his very own personal property.

And what did God do? Romans 8 verse 3, it says, sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, for sin condemned sin in the flesh.

Our brother spoke about this earlier, that there is the problem of the flesh and keeping [00:18:07] the flesh in death.

Now God dealt with that problem in a principle in a fundamental way.

The flesh could not be improved, repaired, mended in any way and what God did is he judged the flesh.

Where did he judge the flesh? He judged the flesh on the cross in the three hours of darkness when Christ suffered. And pointing us to those moments the scriptures say his own son, who would give his

own son to bear that judgment.

But look at the consequences. [00:19:01] If you think of the three great facts in these chapters 7 and 8, but there are more, but three I want to draw your attention to particularly, you first learn, and the person in chapter 7 learns it through a struggle, sin is still in me. And then you learn secondly in Romans 8 verse 1, but I am not under condemnation, although sin is in me.

Now how is that possible?

Chapter 7, sin is in me. Chapter 8 verse 1, there is no condemnation. Well, because God has already condemned sin.

God has condemned sin in the flesh, in his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, his own son. It's interesting that we find this expression again, to my knowledge only in these passages [00:20:05] we've read, but we find it again in the end of the chapter, verse 32, that he spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us.

How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Perhaps we've got used to this, perhaps we've read it many times, but do we imagine what it means not to spare one's own son?

Last week I got a phone call, it was a brother in the Congo. He was traveling to a conference and he told me that his nephews had gone into the forest to hunt.

[00:21:01] Sometimes, when they have a really good day, they get perhaps an antelope, more often perhaps a monkey or some furry creature, a bit smaller than that. But on that occasion, on that night, something tragic happened. While they were hunting, I don't know whether it was with bow and arrow or with some sort of spear, in any case, they tragically wounded another boy.

And this other boy died from the consequences.

And what then happened was perhaps something we can't easily imagine here. The father of that boy, he went to the village where these nephews came from and he took revenge.

And he actually killed the mother of our brother. [00:22:03] Now that is what the death of his son did to him.

It brought enmity between him and those who were the culprits, even though unintentionally, of that death.

I'm reminded of Romans, where it says, chapter five I think, that we have been reconciled by the death of his son.

Those nephews and their whole family had been alienated by the death of this man's son. But the death of God's son has reconciled us, because as we read here, he did not spare him. But the reason Paul mentions this here is a very special one. Why does he tell us that God did not spare his son? Because he wants to explain to us how God will give us everything that's good for us [00:23:04] in

our lives.

And he says, if you have a God who did not even spare his own son, how will he not give us everything? Basically, he says, the smallest present, the smallest gift is included in this largest of all gifts, the greatest gift ever, the gift of his own son.

In Acts 20, we read almost the same expression again, even if son is not mentioned, but it says his own.

And it says that God purchased the assembly with the blood of his own, obviously, his own son.

So Romans 8, verse 3, sin was judged in his own son.

[00:24:04] Romans 8, 32, it's the guarantee that God is for us, he will give us everything that's good for us.

In Acts 20, we have a third truth connected with God's own son, and that is that his blood was the price that God paid for the church. The price tells you something about the valuation. Apparently, an arts museum in Qatar just now paid 200 million pounds for a painting, 200 million pounds.

They must have loved that painting. But what is 200 million pounds against the price that God paid, the blood of his own son? That's the price he deemed had to be paid in order to possess the church.

[00:25:08] That's very practical, by the way, to see two things in connection with this. One is the value of the church in God's eyes. The other is the church belongs to him.

We should never think of the church, or even a small part of it, as our. Peter warns against this, not to act as though it was our possession, 1 Peter 5. But to be conscious it is God's church, he paid the price. And any service we do for the benefit of believers, it's a service for that, for the benefit of that, that is so precious in God's eyes. [00:26:01] Now let's turn to the Gospel of John and chapter 1.

John's Gospel, chapter 1, verse 14.

And the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. And we beheld his glory, the glory of an only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Verse 18, no man has seen God at any time.

The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.

[00:27:02] I hope you've all picked out the number three, the third expression. The only Son, the own Son, and now the only begotten Son.

And there are five passages in the Bible that speak of the Lord Jesus as the only begotten Son, all by the way in John's writings. And the question is, what does this expression actually mean? I know that some of you have been brought up on a German Bible and they will have been used to an expression that essentially means the only born Son. And some of you have been brought up with a French Bible that says his unique Son. And some of us have been brought up with an English Bible that says the only begotten [00:28:01] Son. Now let me start with the French.

I'm sure the good brother who translated in this way, he chose the word, the closest word that he found to render what is behind this wonderful name.

And I wouldn't know a better French word.

And yet, I think it is not exactly the same as unique.

We have the only in Genesis 22, the only Son, but the only begotten Son is more than that. It is not only unique, but it is unique and very special.

Unique and the center of affection.

It is the one who is unique and to whom the love of the Father flows out. [00:29:08] I could say, just to explain the difference, there has only ever been one person who has burgled my house and put everything, turned everything upside down. Now that man would be unique, but he wouldn't be very special to me and he wouldn't be the center of my affection.

So the only Son is already a very important title, but the only begotten Son takes us further.

Now what we should not connect with only born or begotten, and I don't think anybody here would do this, is any sort of a point in time or a beginning.

We will see in these passages that when we read about the only begotten Son, we read [00:30:03] about him as the one who was the Son eternally. I should have mentioned this, by the way, in Hebrews 1, where it says, by whom he made the world. He was already the Son when the world was made. There is no beginning, there is no creation, of course, there is no derivation, there is no impartation of life.

It is the Eternal One of whom it says, in him was life. He is the I Am, the one who however far back you go in time, he was there and he was already the Son.

Now in the two verses we read, we learn two very precious truths about the only begotten [00:31:07] Son. In verse 14 it says, and the Word was made flesh and dwelled amongst us.

What we find here is that God acts, and God acts because he has a very special desire. His desire is to reveal himself and to show to his creatures the truth about his Son and how much he loves his Son.

I believe that whenever God reveals himself, he really does this through his Son and he does it for the glory of his Son, even in creation. Have you ever thought why God created the rest of the universe apart from the Earth [00:32:07] and the Moon and perhaps a few stars for us to see or have orientation? Why are there so many galaxies?

Why are there distances that are just mind-boggling for us, places in the universe where light would have to travel for a long, long time before it would even get there with the speed of light?

Why did God do this?

God has this desire. God wants to show man how great his Son is and God wants to show man how much he loves his Son.

And he says, I love my Son so much that I've made all this to place him as heir over that and I want people to see a little bit of his glory. [00:33:06] Now for that to happen, and it had never happened before in the Old Testament that God was fully revealed, for that to happen the Word had to be made flesh. The Word is the expression, everything God had to say. And now he had to not come as angel of Jehovah, but he had to become man. And now how does God reveal himself in his only begotten Son? It says we beheld his glory. Now we shouldn't think of this as some sort of outward appearance, some sort of halo that would have marked the Lord out. Many people didn't notice, but there were people who were close to the Lord, like John, [00:34:02] leaning on his breast. And he can say, we beheld his glory.

Now what did they actually see when they beheld his glory? It's the glory of an only begotten with a Father full of grace and truth.

I'm so thankful for the order here.

You know, if it said, and we beheld his glory, full of truth and grace, I think none of us would be here.

If God had first acted towards us in truth, he would have had to condemn us. But God first acted towards us in grace, but then also in truth.

It's interesting that the Lord says of himself, I am the truth. [00:35:02] And he says of the Word, thy Word is truth. And he says of the Spirit, 1 John 5, the Spirit is truth.

Now how can that be possible? Well, the Lord is the truth, that which is being revealed. The Word of God speaks to us about it, and the Spirit helps us apprehend that truth. And there wasn't just a little bit of grace and truth, but he was full of grace and truth. Now in verse 18, we come, if you like, to the flip side, the opposite perspective.

It says no man has seen God at any time. If in verse 14 God had the desire to reveal himself, in verse 18 man has the desire to see God. [00:36:04] I think our brother mentioned the verse this afternoon, Exodus 33, where Moses says, let me see thy glory. And you find again and again that man have this desire in their hearts, they want to see God. And yet nobody really could see God.

Now what did man do? Man said, well, if we can't see God, then we must make something we can see. They refused to glorify God as creator, and they started making little idols and pictures and images, and bowed down before them, Romans 1. And they still didn't see God. In order for man to see God, what had to happen? The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him, only in his Son. [00:37:07] It's interesting that it says, who is in his bosom.

Can make two mistakes here. Some have thought he came into his bosom, and some have thought he came out of his bosom. And both are completely wrong. It's his eternal place, being in his bosom. That means in the place of the Father's affection for him.

I need to move on. Chapter 3, verse 16.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, [00:38:01] that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Verse 18, but he that believeth on him is not condemned.

But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

We learn five things about the only begotten Son of God. The first one was God wanted to reveal himself. The second, man wanted to see God. In John 3, verse 16, we learn that the only begotten Son is the measure, I should say the gift of the only begotten Son, is the measure of the love of God. [00:39:01] You know when it says here, God gave, perhaps in our minds we think about the Son coming to earth, and we say now God has given his Son.

But I think there's more to it, because it's connected with verse 14, where it says the Son of Man had to be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. This is the cross.

But verse 16 says, if God gave his Son on the cross, this shows you the greatness of the love of God. And it doesn't say, for God so loved the elect, but it is the world. And that's everyone. And everybody here can substitute their name and say, for God so loved me.

[00:40:01] But can you also just substitute your name in the second half?

Not necessarily, because in the second half it says that whosoever believes has everlasting life. Love of God is for all, but the benefit is only for those who believe. Now perhaps you say, well, this eternal life, this higher quality of life as it is sometimes presented to us, you know, knowing the Father, knowing the Son, I'm not so interested on this. I'm quite happy I'm just alive. Just, you know, any life will do for me. Why do I need this special, this eternal life? Well, a brother once explained that very nicely. He said, you know, if I had the choice of living the life of a mouse, [00:41:05] you know, always of being afraid of the cat and rushing around and hiding, or if I had the opportunity to become a bird, he said, I think I would do that. I would become a bird, perhaps a sparrow. But he says, if I then got the chance to become an eagle, you know, so I don't need to flutter like crazy all the time, I would just, you know, soar into the heights and I would live the life of an eagle. He said, I would go for that.

Eternal life is a wonderful thing.

If we didn't have eternal life, we would not be able to enjoy a single thing in the Bible. We wouldn't be able to enjoy God at all. But God has given his only begotten Son, who was so precious to him, to give us that life. [00:42:09] Now, in verse 18, we have a fourth truth, and this is very solemn. It says, he who believes not on the only begotten Son is already condemned or is already judged.

I want to be very clear about this. Everyone, even the children, should know this, that if someone does not believe on the Lord Jesus, it's not a possibility that he could be judged, it's an absolute certainty. It says he is already judged.

If you remain in unbelief and you say, I'm not interested, I don't want to hear about all this, God says he is already judged.

[00:43:04] I sometimes use this when speaking with colleagues or friends who are not believers, and

they say, you know, what does God want of me?

What do I need to do? I said, you know, God will only have one question for you. God will say, what have you done with my son? I gave the only begotten, and make sure you have a good answer. Make sure you can say, I trusted in him. As it says here, he who believes in him is not judged, is not condemned.

Now quickly, 1 John 5, the fifth reference. 1 John 5, sorry, 1 John 4 and verse 9.

[00:44:16] In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten son into the world, that we might live through him. Here in his love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. We love it, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

It's very interesting how the truth of the only begotten son comes into this chapter, where the apostle really speaks about brotherly love. [00:45:01] He says, if you are children of God, you love those who are children of God. And if you don't love the children of God, you are not one of his. And in that chapter, we encounter again the only begotten. And it says that it is in him that we see the love of God, and in two ways. There are two things that have happened. Verse 9 says, God sent his only begotten son into the world, that we might live through him. That's number one, life.

Verse 10, sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

I'm so glad that we have both here. Just imagine, we only had verse 9. It's wonderful that it speaks about the love of God. But if we had only life as a result, without propitiation, would that not be terrible? [00:46:09] We would have an appreciation of how terrible sin is. We would have an everlasting existence. But without knowing that God's claims have been met, without knowing that propitiation has been made, but thank God, he has done both. In his only begotten son, he has given us life, and he has given us propitiation. And then John comes back to his subject, brotherly love.

And he says, look at this. We are children of God. God has demonstrated such love, now should we not love one another? It's hard to speak about this if you think about the measure that is applied here, how [00:47:02] God gave this treasure.

And then to say, looking at this, should we not love one another? But God has given us a new nature and he wants to encourage us to exercise that divine love. Now we had the only son, the own son, and the only begotten son.

I've got four more, and only about four minutes. So I'm afraid I will only be able to give you the headings, and I hope it will encourage you. I tell you, if you look into this a little bit, you will find you've struck gold. It's just wonderful. I'll just mention the other four now, very quickly. In Matthew 3 and other passages, you read of my beloved son. Remember the baptism? The Lord Jesus was baptized, like many others were baptized. [00:48:03] He came out of the water, but when he came out, Matthew 3, 17, the heavens opened and a voice was heard, this is my beloved son.

You find this expression seven times.

Three times in connection with the baptism, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and three times in connection with

the mountain of transfiguration, Matthew, Mark, Luke. Each time it appeared that the Lord was one of many or one of several, and heaven opened and said, no, this one, he is different. He stands out from the crowd. He is my beloved son.

And then in 2 Peter 1, talking about the mount of transfiguration again, my beloved son.

[00:49:04] Now then, let's just turn to one or two others.

Matthew 16.

Matthew 16 and verse 16.

And Simon Peter answered and said, thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. Have you ever noticed this? We often emphasize that Peter confessed Christ as the son of God and this was the foundation of the church, but have you ever noticed this little extra word here, the son of the living God? It's interesting to study where God is called the living God, for example, when people turn [00:50:04] to idols who are dead, it says you've turned away from the living God. Or Goliath, he mocked the armies of the living God, not aware how God could act and intervene. Now here we have the son of the living God and he actually went into death and he conquered death and this was pure grace.

And then he came out of death victorious. And I believe that is the basis for the church. Why? Because it goes on to say, the gates of Hades shall not prevail against her, because the son of the living God who went into death, he has come out of death, the son of the living God. The church is not marked by failure, the church is not marked by weakness, but it is marked [00:51:04] by these principles, the power and the grace. The son of the living God went into death by grace and in power he came out of that death.

Now interestingly, you find the expression elsewhere, for example, the church that is built on this foundation in 1 Timothy 3 is called the church of the living God. We must move on, Colossians 1, you find yet another name to do with the son of God and verse 13, Colossians 1, 13, it says, who has delivered us from the authority of darkness [00:52:03] and translated us into the kingdom of the son of his love.

Yet another expression, the son of his love. What is brought before us is how a complete, not even transformation, translation has been brought about. We were in an area, a realm called power of darkness. Like the Lord said before going to the cross, this is your hour and the power of darkness. And even a child growing up in a Christian family, before conversion, is in the power of darkness.

But if you have believed, you have been translated into a new realm and it's called a kingdom. I don't think it's the kingdom like in Revelation 1 where you have sufferings and tribulation. It is the kingdom as in the sphere where the son of his love is known.

[00:53:09] Now perhaps you say, look, how can I be comfortable in that sphere? This is too wonderful for me. No, it says, listen, he has made us fit. That means he has given us a new nature. And it's not that he will do it, it's that he has done it. He has made us fit to be partakers of this inheritance in the light and fit to be at home and to enjoy this kingdom of the son of his love.

I must close, and I close with a verse in 2 John where you have the seventh expression that I found,

second epistle of John, verse 3, grace be with you, mercy and peace from [00:54:06] God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of the Father in truth and love. Now remember, this epistle is all about the dangers of the attack from outside, how people were coming, not bringing the doctrine of the Christ. And what is the answer of faith? What does John do, the aged apostle? He writes to that family, to that sister. He wants to encourage her to be faithful to the Lord, and what does he do? He uses an expression only used here in the Bible, the son of the Father. And he basically says the thing to do in the last day, in the day of attack, is to hold up the banner and to encourage one another to say, let us cling to him, let us cling [00:55:02] to the truth, he is the son of the Father.

Now, if you don't mind me doing this, I'll close with the same verse that Brother Paul closed with earlier.

Having considered a little bit of who this son is, the only one, the own one, the only begotten one, the beloved son, the son of his love, the son of the living God, and the son of the Father, don't we want to encourage one another to live for him, to live for the one who loved us, and it's very personal, Galatians 2.20, the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

We have time to sing a hymn, I suggest number 436.

[00:56:16] God and Father, we adore thee, now revealed in Christ the Son, 436.