



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

“Honouring the Father by Hearing the Son”



The synopsis of a sermon preached by Rev. Ivan Foster in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church

“While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him,” Matthew 17:5.

What a scene is set before us here! Truly, it is breath-taking! The scene is best understood by considering the impact it had upon the three apostles who were privileged to witness it. It says in verse 6 that they “were sore afraid.” They were terrified! How unnerving to the creature is a mere glimpse of the glory of God and the world that is to come!

Sum

The words of the Father on this occasion sum up for us the message of the Bible. They focus our attention on Christ and particularly His words. He, says the Father, has the words of eternal life. Moses and Elijah, the law and the prophets, stand either side of Christ and bear witness also that it is to Him men should listen. Learn from these words:—

1. THE LOVE THAT GOD HAD FOR SINNERS IS DECLARED HERE.

The Father here calls Jesus His “beloved Son”. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins,” 1 John 4:10. As Abraham showed his love for God by not withholding his son Isaac (Gen 22:12), so God shows His love in that “He . . . spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.”

1. The measure of God’s love is here in these words. “This is my beloved Son.” God loved sinners to the extent that He gave up His BELOVED Son to die for them! It is beyond our comprehension. The word “beloved” contains a measure that we cannot understand.

2. The measure of God’s love is seen here in this act. The Father accompanies His Son, as it were, on the journey into this world to save sinners. He “sent” or ordered His Son into the world, 1 John 4:10, but goes along with Him as far as the threshold of visibility. He “delivered Him up”, He gave Him into the hands of the death on the cross. “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?” Romans 8:32.

3. The measure of God’s love is here in this appeal. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” God the Father would evangelise the world and have it understand that it should hear His Son speak the words of life.

Quacks

It never ceases to amaze me how many are ready to hear and heed the religious quacks and freaks of this world, but shut their ears to the sound of the gospel. The “churches” which feature the rock band, the “show-biz” atmosphere reminiscent of the world’s stage



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productions and circuses, are filled, while the place where the Word of God in its simplicity is proclaimed is forsaken and neglected. A recent advertisement on the web page of a Baptist church in Kelowna, BC, Canada, consisted of an invitation to attend their "Grey Cup Party" on Lord's Day, 21st November 2004, between 2.30pm and 6.30 pm. The party consisted of their "annual classic football event." "Worshippers" were urged not to "miss the giant screens, live commentary, fun and action. Food will be available by concession. The event is free. Consider inviting a non-church friend to this great event. Pick up invitations at Guest Services." Such activities on the Lord's Day are deemed the modern way of evangelising. It may get the crowd but any event which is essentially a desecration of the Lord's Day, and therefore a breach of the fourth commandment, cannot seriously be seen as a complying with the Saviour's command to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15).

II. CHRIST IS THE PERFECT SACRIFICE FOR SIN.

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Jesus is the One in Whom the Father is "well pleased." He truly was the "spotless Lamb of God."

1. The spotless perfection of Christ is hereby attested by the Judge of all the earth. Let us understand why it was that Jesus came into this world. It was to die as a sacrifice in the place of His people. He offered up Himself unto the Father in payment for the transgressions of His people. For such a sacrifice to be accepted and successfully atone for the sins of His elect, then Christ must be utterly without sin. Of course, He was in all points pure. That is the testimony of Holy Scripture. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Corinthians 5:21. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," 1 Peter 2:22. "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin," 1 John 3:5. In the words of the Father in our text we have an endorsement of the acceptability of Christ before the sacrifice on the cross took place.

2. The pleasure God finds in His Son cancels out the displeasure caused by our sins. The grief caused to God by our sins is soothed and removed by the pleasure that Christ provokes on behalf of His people. All those "in Christ" are thus rendered pleasurable to God. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Romans 8:1. The sins of God's elect have been cancelled out by the righteousness of Christ. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich," 2 Corinthians 8:9. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Corinthians 5:21. God now takes pleasure in those whose ways formerly caused Him vexation and anger. "The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy," Psalm 147:11. "For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation," Psalm 149:4. Are you clothed in the righteousness of Christ and pleasurable in God's sight? Or do you yet remain in your sin and thereby are an offence to God? "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away," Isaiah 64:6. This is our state by nature. By receiving Christ by faith we are robed in His righteousness and beauty.

3. Those "in Christ" are well-pleasing to God. This is the glory of the gospel. God sees



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the believer as He sees His Son. The beauty of Christ is made to be ours. "And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us," Psalm 90:17. Our full and final conformity to the beauty of Christ will take place when we are glorified with Him. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John 3:2.

III. THE SECRET OF THE GOSPEL IS SET FORTH IN THESE WORDS.

How may I partake of this salvation which renders me, a guilty, vile sinner, pleasing to God? It is by "hearing" Christ. Please learn:—

1. Salvation is found in the words of Christ. The words of the angel which was sent of God to Cornelius make this clear to us. "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved," Acts 11:14. It was in the capability of the angel to convey to Cornelius the way of salvation but he did not, for God has ordained that it is by the preaching of the gospel by men that sinners learn of the way of salvation. There is a vital lesson to be learned here by all of God's people in these days of laxity and carelessness. Many who profess to be God's people have no compunction in altering or abandoning God's methods of spreading the gospel. In the days before the Reformation, the pulpit had been replaced by the mass altar. Today, there is a great trend to push the pulpit aside in order to make room for the musician and the performer. In essence, both things are wrong. It has "pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe," 1 Corinthians 1:21. The adopting of any other method must of necessity be displeasing to God and a great slight upon His wisdom and power. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life," John 6:63. "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life," John 6:68. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life," John 5:24.

2. The words of Christ direct us to faith. The first words of Christ clearly indicate that. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel," Mark 1:15. According to the definition given in the Larger Catechism, "Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assents to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receives and rests upon Christ and his righteousness, therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation" (Answer to question 72).

Resting

Faith is an assenting to the truthfulness of the gospel promises and a relying upon Christ Who is offered freely in them, for acceptance with God and the full pardon of sin. Have you believed the gospel message and rested upon Christ alone for salvation?

3. As we hear, so faith is created and leaps into life. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Romans 10:17. The Word of God will work a hearing for itself and, as a result, faith will spring up. The Spirit of God powerfully persuades the sinner of the truth of the gospel as he listens to it and faith springs up and lays hold upon Christ as He is offered in the gospel. The power of the Word is seen in Acts 7:57 when



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Stephen was on trial and speaking. He bore witness to the message of God and as he spoke, the power of that message was felt by the wicked men who had him on trial. "Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord." They could not hear God's Word and simply ignore it. They had to stop the sound of it. How many have done this?

Different reaction

On the other hand, there are those who react differently to the gospel message. Christ mentions them in John 10:27. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," John 10:27. The elect of God are first distinguished from the rest of humanity by their reaction to the gospel. The picture presented to us in John 10 is of the village sheep fold where all the flocks of the village are safeguarded during the night, and in the morning the shepherds separate their sheep from all the rest by simply walking amongst the flock and calling to their own. Their sheep then follow their own shepherd out of the sheep fold to graze upon the pastures. So Christ moves amongst men and speaks unto them by His Word and those that are His are drawn to Him by the power of the Holy Ghost working faith within their hearts. They turn from their former activities and follow Christ in the paths of righteousness under His dominion. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed," John 8:31. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," John 14:15. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother," 1 John 3:10. evidence The keeping of the Word of Christ, and continuing in it; the doing of righteousness — this is the evidence of faith in Christ. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Change

Has this change been wrought in you? Have you heard the words of Christ, believed them and begun to follow Christ? Only if you can say a definite 'yes' to these questions can you claim to be saved and to have obeyed the Father's call to honour His Son by heeding His words. May God grant you grace today to believe and repent and rest in Christ alone for salvation!