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“Worthless man wonderfully favoured”



“LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!” Psalm 144:3.

A sermon preached by Rev. Ivan Foster in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, January 15th, 2007.

There is a repetition in this verse, for the matter touched upon is most wonderful to the psalmist and, doubtless, he had to utter his amazement twice over.

David has been here considering the gracious goodness of the Lord toward him.

In verse 2 there is a seven-fold goodness detailed by David: “My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.”

He credits the Lord alone as the author of all the benefits that he enjoys.

Man, on the other hand, is as nothing. “Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away,” he says in verse 4. It is because he is conscious of his own nothingness that he sees God’s goodness toward him as all the more wonderful.

I. THE FAVOUR OF GOD, AS SET FORTH IN THE GOSPEL, IS SEEN IN ITS FULNESS ONLY WHEN WE ARE CONSCIOUS OF OUR NOTHINGNESS!

1. Man in his perfection was, in himself, very little. He was but dust. “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul,” Genesis 2:7.

“The first man is of the earth,” 1 Cor 15:47. Man is but dust, and to dust he eventually returns and unites again with the elements whence he came.

He was the lowest of the created intelligent creatures. In his perfection he was no match for the devil in his fallen state!

2. Man in his fallen state is immeasurably lower. “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity,” Isaiah 40:15, 17.

Man is fragile. “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” Romans 9:21. He is an earthen vessel, easily shattered and broken.

Man is fading. “The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field,” Isaiah 40:6. “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is



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grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever," Isaiah 40: 7-8.

Man is helpless. Ezekiel 16: 3-6. "And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." Ezekiel 16: 3-6. What was said of the spiritual origins of Jerusalem may be said of us all. We lay in our helplessness and would have remained so, had it not been for the mercy of God.

Man is foolish. "And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels," Numbers 20: 10. What could be more foolish than for man to rebel against God? What can come of such a confrontation but disaster for sinful man?

Man is defiled and condemned. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God," John 3: 18. "Condemned already!" That is man's state. Many speak of ignoring the gospel and taking their chances with God. This is to misunderstand altogether the state of the unconverted sinner. His eternity is not something that has yet to be decided. No, the decision is made. He is "condemned already!"

Man is spiritually dead. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins," Ephesians 2: 1. Man is fit only to be buried. Abraham said of his beloved wife, Sarah, after she died: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight," Genesis 23: 4. Death renders it necessary to remove the most beloved one out of sight.

II. OF SUCH A CREATURE GOD TAKES NOTICE

"LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!"

The Lord acknowledges and sets His thoughts upon man the sinner for good.

1. Such favour does not flow from anything within man. Wrath is his due portion. ". . . and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," Ephesians 2: 3.

2. It is sovereign grace at work. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God," Eph 2: 8. "I will love them freely," Hosea 14: 4.

3. Man does not profit God. "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?" Job 22: 2. God is not enriched through His merciful treatment of sinners.

4. God acts in pity. "None eye pitied thee," Ezekiel 16: 5.

5. It is God that seeks out the sinner. Contrary to the common notion of men, it is the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, Who comes to seek the lost sheep. There are no men who



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seek after God until He by His grace quickens them to do so. Paul and Zacchaeus are but two of the many examples of this truth we may find within the pages of our Bibles.

III. THE TREATMENT GOD METES OUT TO MAN

1. Generally. For all of mankind God has provided a glorious environment. What a beautiful place is earth, despite 6000 years of man's vandalism! We can but guess at the beauty of this world before the fall of man into sin.

The earth is thoroughly fitted to meet all of man's temporal needs. From it springs our food, our clothing, our means of shelter and every comfort. "Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever," Psalm 136:25. "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth," Psalm 104:14.

God has pointed out the way to eternal happiness to all men. This may be seen in the last command of the Saviour to His disciples. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," Mark 16:15.

2. What knowledge the Lord has taken of His elect, His chosen from all eternity!

1. Before time He thought of them. The Lord thought upon His people before time began. He planned our redemption from sin at the cost of His own Son. "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Revelation 13:8. The death of the Saviour on the cross was planned and purposed before time began.

2. During time. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Galatians 4:4-5. Christ came and by His Spirit quickened and called those that were His sheep. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," John 10:27. Their sins are pardoned, they are made alive spiritually and sustained by the power and grace of God on the pilgrimage to glory. "For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death," Psalm 48:14.

3. After time. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," 1 Corinthians 2:9. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," John 14:2-3.

What a glorious place heaven will be! It is beyond our comprehension and yet that gives us some idea of its beauty. When we have imagined beauty to the limits of our ability then let us think that it will be a million times a million more glorious still!

Sadly, all too many take heaven for granted. They seem to think that they have an inalienable right to its glories. It is a place so commonly spoken of that it never enters the mind of most people that they are not on the road to heaven but to hell!

Please recognise this truth this evening.

You must be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son before you may consider heaven as your home. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath trans-



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lated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Colossians 1:13. This is the work of grace that must be wrought in us if we are to share eternity in heaven with the Lord. We need our sins pardoned, our hearts cleansed, our souls made alive.

Change

We need to undergo that wonderful change that changes us entirely. "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.

We need to call upon the name of the only One who can effect such a change in us. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," Acts 2:21.

Call upon the Saviour tonight and enter into that blessed happiness spoken of in the last verse of Psalm 144.

"Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD."

May such happiness begin for you tonight and stretch endlessly before you into eternity.