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“Seven blessings which follow a visit by Christ”



The synopsis of a sermon preached on Mark 2:1-13 by Rev. Ivan Foster in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church on Lord's Day evening, 1st August 2004.

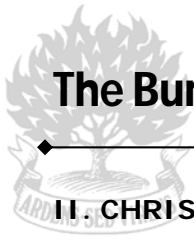
It appears from the narrative that this is the second visit by the Saviour to Capernaum. The name means “Village of comfort.” It certainly became that through the presence of Christ. Following His first visit, the Lord Jesus had left to go to seek His Father in prayer. “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed,” Mark 1:35. Does this not remind us of the Saviour’s ascension to His Father after His first advent? “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,” Romans 8:34. The parallel continues in the scenes that mark His return to Capernaum. What a time of blessing is coming to this earth when Jesus returns! The power and majesty of Christ will be manifested and multitudes will be brought under the rule of His gospel. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation,” Hebrews 9:28. Christ is coming again and what glorious scenes will follow that event. “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea,” Habakkuk 2:14. Physical life as well as spiritual life will benefit from the Saviour’s return, just as it did on His first visit, only then it will reach heights unknown before by fallen man. “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD,” Isaiah 65:20, 25.

Revival

But these scenes speak to us not just of the return of Christ but of any occasion when the Lord is pleased to manifest His power and presence amongst His people. These scenes picture revival in the Church of Christ. Considering what happens here in these verses, is it any wonder that the earnest believer longs for revival?

I. CHRIST'S PRESENCE MAKES THE HOUSE AN ATTRACTIVE PLACE FOR MANY

It was doubtless a very common dwelling and yet great numbers gathered to it because it had been noised abroad that the Saviour was there. They have come to see and hear Him. Note that this is what will bring people to the place of worship. Let us labour to bring Christ into our meeting house and make Him and His Word central to all that takes place. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” Matthew 18:20. Gather “in Christ’s name” means gathered under the guidance of His Word, with the purpose of glorifying His name in worship and praise and obedience.



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II. CHRIST'S PRESENCE AT THE HOUSE WAS MARKED BY PREACHING

“. . . and he preached the word unto them," verse 2. What a rebuke this is to those who seek to gather the crowds by music and circus-like stunts! I am dismayed at some of the antics which "evangelicals" promote in order to fill the house of God. There is an acceptance of frivolity and banter from the pulpits which would rival the theatre and the circus. It is all deemed acceptable to God since it is meant to show that Christians too may enjoy "a good laugh"!

Little knowledge

Such thinking shows little knowledge of the glorious person and infinite holiness of God as He is revealed in the Bible. Just where are such activity and such behaviour to be witnessed in the Bible's accounts of the worship of God amongst the host of heaven or in the presence of Christ while here on earth? The only parallel that may be seen is the ribaldry that the mob engaged in at the trial and crucifixion of the Saviour.

Banish

Such a spirit ought to be far from the pulpit and the pew. May God stir up His people and fill them with such a sense of His glory that they will banish such foolishness and sin from the courts of the Lord!

Endorsement

No greater endorsement of this ordinance or honour could be placed upon preaching the Word of God than the Saviour's singular use of it to spread His message. The Saviour commenced His great ministry with preaching. "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God," Mark 1:14. He continues that ministry today through His servants. "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen," Mark 16:20. As the Saviour worked through the preaching of the apostles, so it is His purpose to reach the elect by that same means today. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe . . . But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness," 1 Corinthians 1:21, 23.

III. CHRIST'S PRESENCE WAS SEEN AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR DOING GOOD TO THE NEEDY

A man sick of the palsy was brought. His friends saw the presence of Christ as a wonderful opportunity for their friend to be delivered. What a heightened desire to see good done in others Christ's presence in revival power generates amongst His people! When the Lord is on the move amongst His people in a special way then they too begin to move amongst their friends and neighbours, seeking those who require the ministrations of the Saviour. "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him," Acts 10:38. "Doing good" means bestowing benefits. In revival, the people of God begin to emulate the Saviour by "going about" seeking souls for the Saviour. How silent and stationary God's people appear today! This is a day when our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8), and we are so inac-



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tive!

First love

May the Lord arouse and awaken us to action once again! Is that not how it was with you, Christian, when first you loved the Lord? Did you not seek after loved ones and family members as well as workmates and neighbours? Oh for the breath of the Spirit to rouse us again to our first works! Such will be the impact of the Saviour coming to this house.

IV. CHRIST'S PRESENCE PROMOTED THE EXERCISE OF FAITH

Faith feeds upon Christ and grows strong in His presence. What unstoppable faith these men who brought their friend to Christ showed! It owed its vigour and its power to Christ's presence.

Oxygen

What heights of daring and trust faith will reach in the Saviour's presence! That is what moved the woman with the issue of blood, and others on different occasions, to such sanctified expectations. "And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole," Matthew 9:20-21. "And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole," Matthew 14:35-36. Christ's presence is the oxygen within which faith flourishes.

V. CHRIST'S PRESENCE BRINGS PARDON FOR SIN

Such a gift was the chief purpose of Christ's coming. So said Peter. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," Acts 13:38. Please note that the pardon of this man's sins came before the healing of his body. Men place the emphasis upon the body, but Christ here first dealt with the man's need of salvation. A man may be sick yet rejoice in the knowledge of sins forgiven and look forward to going to heaven where there is none of the afflictions of earth. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away," Revelation 21:4. However, a man may enjoy vigorous health during his earthly life but, because he was unsaved, go to everlasting damnation when he dies. Whose case is the better? That of the sick believer surely!

VI. CHRIST'S PRESENCE PROVOKED CONTROVERSY

Is this a blessing? Yes, it is. It is good when the subject of the person and message of Christ is upon every lip. Our land is filled with a cursed apathy, a peacefulness regarding Christ and His message that is the result, not of grace, but of indifference. Men will argue about Christ when His presence is manifested. It is better when they argue about eternal matters than dwell in the peacefulness of the graveyard. "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and



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the daughter in law against her mother in law," Luke 12:51-53. Christ causes men to divide, either siding with Him against the lie or with the lie against Him. He will not tolerate indifference.

VII. CHRIST'S PRESENCE RESULTED IN A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE

For the man cured of the palsy, life would never be the same again either in time or in eternity. Look at verse 12. "And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion."

A life of obedience to Christ. His first act was one of obedience to the Lord. I am sure that this was the pattern of the days that remained to him. That is what life should be for every believer. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him," John 14:21.

A life in which there is a public manifestation of God's power. How little of God's power is manifested in us believers today! Oh to be able to say with Paul in all truthfulness; "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Galatians 2:20. In this healed man there was manifested the power of Christ. Every day, for the rest of his life, he would be known as a man who walked and worked as a result of God's power in his life. Is that not an enviable testimony to have in our neighbourhood?

A life that was God-glorifying. ". . . he arose . . . and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God . . ." verse 12. Living in obedience to Christ brings honour and glory to Him. "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting," 1 Timothy 1:16. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Peter 2:9.

Time to pray

Christian, set your heart to pray for a visitation of Christ again to our meeting house and to the assemblies of the saints of God throughout the kingdom and across the world. Only then will we see the saints revived, sinners saved and the name of the Saviour exalted.