

Lesson #6 – The Mystery of the Gospel – 29 July-4 August 2023

Christ would have us know what was the source of His strength – it was this: “I will put My trust in Him” (Hebrews 2:13), He said. “He trusted in the LORD that He would deliver Him” (Psalms 22:8). Christ said: “Thou didst make Me trust when I was upon My mother’s breasts” (Psalm 22:9). Again: “For the Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded” (Isaiah 50:7). “I can of Mine own self do nothing” (John 5:30). No man can be any more helpless than that. But He trusted in God, and was not put to shame. For what did He trust the Lord? – For everything; for wisdom and strength for every emergency; for He is “the wisdom of God and the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). “As He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17). The only trouble with us is that we are not as willing as He to confess that we are nothing – “without strength” (Psalm 88:4). Although as the only begotten Son who was in glory with the Father before the world was, even “from the days of eternity” (Micah 5:2), He possessed all power in Himself as Creator, He “emptied Himself” (Philippians 2:7), so that He was on this earth nothing except what He allowed the Father to put in Him. And it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell (Colossians 1:19), because He put His trust in Him. And you hath He quickened with Christ, giving us the same Spirit in equal measure with the gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:7) that being strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, Christ might dwell in the heart by faith, so that we also “might be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:16-19). This is the comfort of the Gospel; and thus, the memory text, “unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Sunday: Paul: Imprisoned Apostle to the Gentiles – Like Paul in prison, how can we learn to trust God and His ways amid what can be very trying circumstances? The apostle Paul was in a Roman prison for preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. A Jewish mob had seized him, and Roman soldiers were guarding him. Yet in an epistle to his brethren he refers to himself as “Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:1). And so he was. The Roman Emperor thought that he had Paul in his power, and Roman soldiers thought that they were keeping him. But he was in the power of the Lord, and the angels of God were his keepers. He was in the hands of the Lord, who could lead him out of prison in an instant, if He wished, just as He did Peter (Acts 12:1-11). And so Paul was content. Happy is he, even though he is in prison, who knows that he is “the prisoner of Jesus.” “The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated” (James 3:17). This is the wisdom which God gives, therefore it is characteristic of God. What a comfort it is to know that He is “easy to be entreated.” We do not have to work hard to induce Him to be gracious to us, for “He delighteth in mercy” (Micah 7:18). Even when we have been foolish, disobedient, and hateful, breaking all His commandments, He is still “easy to be entreated.” For a man to be stern and unrelenting, standing stiffly for his “rights,” and exacting from his transgressors or debtors all that the law will possibly allow him, is evidence of a deplorable lack of wisdom. It shows that his wisdom is only of this world, which is foolishness with God, who is the source of all true wisdom. He who knows God and His ways, how that “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psalm 103:10), will, like God Himself, be “easy to be entreated,” and “gentle to all men” (2 Timothy 2:24).

Monday: The Long-Hidden Mystery of the Gospel – What is the mystery that has been entrusted to Paul (Ephesians 3:1-6)? This is indicated by the apostle when he says that to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ is “to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:9). Elsewhere the apostle says that this mystery “is Christ in you the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:25-27). Thus, the Gospel is the making known of Christ in men. Or rather, the Gospel is Christ in men, and the preaching of it is the making known to men of the possibility of Christ dwelling in them. And this agrees with the statement of the angel, that they should call the name of Jesus Emmanuel, “which, being interpreted, is God with us” (Matthew 1:23); and, with Paul’s statement that the mystery of God is God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim 3:16). When in Luke 2 angels told the shepherds of the birth of Jesus, it

was the announcement that God had come to men in the flesh; and when it was said that this good news should be to all people, it was revealed that the mystery of God dwelling in human flesh was to be declared to all men, and repeated in all who should believe Him.

Tuesday: The Church: Revealer of God's Wisdom – How does the church, that is, the believers, reveal God's wisdom? The Gospel is proclaimed "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10). The church of Jesus Christ, the believers or every follower of Jesus, is to be a revelation to the angels of the power of redeeming grace. No wonder, then, that the apostle should say, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Ephesians 4:1). It is a tremendously responsible calling to stand forth as an object lesson, in this life's span of ours, to show to principalities and powers the glory of the Lord, who hath called us out of darkness for this end. One who lives in the conscientiousness of this will not ask what the world will think, but only what God says or requires. In Christ's day the great majority, even of those who professed the service of God, "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). Every believer who finds the light that is sown in the word for the righteous will continually have to choose between these two; but what are the praises of men to the praise of God? Forget the presence of men in the sacredness of God's presence, and instead of acting for the pleasure of men, think of the host of angels that excel in strength and power, who yet are watching these lives of ours to see the operation of the Gospel of our Lord.

Wednesday: Christ, Dwelling in Your Heart – Does Paul mean that we have two Individuals, the Spirit (Eph. 3:16) and Christ (Eph. 3:17), as the Lesson writer alludes? Nay! Paul teaches that there is One Spirit (Eph 4:4) and the Lord is that Spirit (2 Cor 3:17), for Christ was made a quickening Spirit (1 Cor 15:45) and sent into our hearts (Gal 4:6). Paul says that "we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal 3:14) and interchangeably "The promise of Jesus Christ was given to them that believe by faith" (Gal 3:22). The same Spirit is also "the Spirit of God" and "the Spirit of Christ" (Romans 8:9). "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named (the family of God), That He would grant you...to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph 3:14-17). The Spirit of God in the inner man is Christ dwelling in our heart. His presence in our minds makes it possible for us "to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, so that we might be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:18-19). The Spirit of Christ affects our minds, our comprehension, our understanding. The Spirit of Christ unite us in the bond of peace (Eph 4:1-3); "One body [body of Jesus, the church, Eph 4:15-16], and one Spirit [mind of Jesus, Phil 2:5], even as you are called in one hope [hope of glory, Christ in you, Col 1:27] of your calling" (Eph 4:4).

Thursday: The Church, a Holy Temple – What blessings from God are especially valuable to you? The blessing of knowing that Christ's work as Mediator is not limited either as to time or extent. To be Mediator means more than to be intercessor. Christ was Mediator before sin came into the world, and will be Mediator when no sin is in the universe. "In Him all things consist" (Col 1:17). He is the very impress of the Father's being (Heb. 1:3). In Him is life (John 5:26; 1 John 5:11). "All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all" {DA 21.2}. In Christ life pervades the universe. He did not first become Mediator at the fall of man, but was "from the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2). Not just man, but no created being, comes to the Father but by Christ (John 14:6). No angel can stand before God except in Christ. No new power was required to be set in motion by the entering of sin into the world. The power that had created all things only continued in God's infinite mercy to restore what was lost. In Christ were all things created, and so, in Him we have redemption through His blood (Col 1:14-17). The power that pervades and upholds the universe is the power that saves us. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph 3:20-21).