

1 Corinthians - Commentaries by Alexander Hume Rule

Things New and Old: Volume 32, Glad Tidings of God: No. 1

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Glad tidings were announced to Abraham when it was said to him, "In thee shall all nations be blessed," Glad tidings were also announced when the angel proclaimed to the watching shepherds the birth of a Savior, Christ the Lord, and the praises of the heavenly host rang through the heavens: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." In a fuller way still, glad tidings were preached after Jesus died, and rose, and ascended, as we have it in 1 Cor. 15: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you.... for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve," &c. There is also the gospel, or glad tidings, of the glory of Christ, which Satan labors to obscure, as it is written: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:4-6.)

What was announced to Abraham was something to take place in the future. It was not an accomplished fact. It was something he could look forward to as a hope—a sure hope, no doubt, but only a hope. To us—to you, reader—something better is announced. It is the blessed fact of a present salvation, through Him who died on the cross, and who rose again for our justification. The facts announced in the gospel of our salvation are:—

1. Christ died for our sins.
2. He was buried.
3. He rose again the third day.
4. He was seen by many witnesses after His resurrection.
5. He is now a Man in the glory of God. Blessed facts announced to those who are lost! facts of eternal importance to every ruined child of Adam!

Reader, are you a child of Adam? Then know that these are facts which deeply concern you for time and eternity. Let me ask you to look at that blessed, lowly, obedient Man, who walked down here among men thirty-three years, in absolute grace and goodness and love. Look at Him as disease of every kind vanishes at His touch, and demon-tormentors of wretched men leave their victims at His command! Look at Him as poor sin-laden wretches come into His presence, and find in Him One who has power on earth to forgive sins! Who is this blessed One? this Friend of sinners? It is the eternal Son of God. Hear the Father's voice saluting Him, as the heavens open over Him at His baptism in Jordan: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Here, then, we have God's well-beloved Son down here among men, the perfect expression of all that God is. He was "the exact expression of his substance," the One who, made flesh, came, full of grace and truth, to present God to men, and of whom the apostle could say, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." But now that blessed One has gone back to the Father, and is now in the glory of God, the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. He has gone back as Man, and is now a Man—the God-man—in the glory of God. In Him man has got a place in the presence of God, according to divine righteousness. Is there no good news in this for poor sinners, shut out from God's presence because of sin? Is it nothing to know that there is now really a Man in the glory of God? Sinner, it is this that opens the door of hope for guilty man. It is Christ having gone in there as Man that has opened the way for you also to enter in, but wait a little. We have said that Christ the Son of God has gone back to the Father. How did He go? What road did He take? He went by the way of death and resurrection. He passed through death's dark, raging river, and dried up its waters of judgment, that others might pass over. That One, at whose word all diseases vanished, and whose authority demons were forced to own, must die upon the cross, or the door of mercy must be closed forever against the guilty. Look at the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the Creator of the universe, as He hangs upon that middle cross between two thieves! Why did He hang there? Why did He give Himself up to be crucified and slain by wicked men? Were not legions of demons subject to His word, and had He no power to save His own life from those who sought it? Why did He cry out on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why did God allow Satan to lead on the world against Him at the cross, and why was His hand against His own Fellow, and His face bidden from Him who had ever been His delight? Why did darkness envelope Him, and the waves of divine wrath close over His soul in that hour of unparalleled sorrow and anguish? Was it an accident? Was there some mistake? Listen to God's answer: "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 Cor. 5:21.) He "died for our sins." He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He suffered once for sins, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." He took the place of His guilty people, and bore their sins in God's presence, draining for them the bitter cup of God's judgment, in order that they might be saved, and drink the cup of eternal joy and blessing as His companions in glory. Oh! what a Savior!

And now, my reader, let me ask you a plain question. Have you in God's presence bowed to the fact that you are a lost sinner? —not merely a sinner, but a lost sinner—one whose wretched case nothing could meet but God's spotless Lamb, going to that cross to bear your sins there? You say, Yes. Then know assuredly that Christ's death applies itself to you, and gives you full clearance from guilt in the presence of God. Look up into the glory of God, and behold that Man there! He is there because He has most perfectly met the whole question of sin which

shut you out from God, He has glorified God as to sin, and God has opened the heavens to receive Him, and to receive in Him all who believe in His name. Do you believe in Him? Then your sins are gone, and you are one with Christ in glory. Gaze into His blessed face there! Behold the glory of the Lord! Let your eye ever rest there! Beholding, you will be changed into the same image from glory to glory. And, what is more blessed still, you will soon be there with Him, and with all the ransomed of His blood. Blessed, glorious prospect! Surely it is glad tidings to a poor, lost sinner to hear from God Himself that there is absolute and eternal forgiveness of sins, simply through faith in the name of Jesus, and that he who believes is one with Christ—one with that accepted Man in the glory of God.

But what I would especially press here is that these glad tidings are the glad tidings of God. They came from One whose very name, whose very being, is LOVE. GOD IS LOVE. The blessed Lord Jesus was the expression of this down here among men: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Behold the eternal Word made flesh, the only-begotten Son of the Father, dwelling among men, full of grace and truth! "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH. Do you want to see Him? Do you want to know Him? "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. 5:19.) Look at the Lord Jesus in His ministry down here—His ministry of grace and love. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Himself the Truth, the Light, the poor sinner was manifested in His presence a loathsome picture, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; a mass of corruption, ruined by sin, and covered with guilt. But oh, amazing grace! God was not imputing sins. He sent not His Son to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved. The sinner's terrible ruin and need were brought out in His presence; but it was in the presence of One who was able to meet the sinner's utmost need. He could touch the unclean without being defiled. Himself the mighty God, the power of evil vanished at His touch. And He was the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. O sinner, behold Him! One real, true look of faith will bring life and salvation, and dispel every doubt and fear. Satan has perhaps filled your heart with wicked thoughts about God, destroying all your confidence. Do not, I pray you, take Satan's thoughts about God. Satan is a liar from the beginning. If you want the truth, look at Christ. The truth, as well as grace, came by Him. He was God—God manifest in the flesh. Look then at Him, and you will see what God is. The deaf, the dumb, the halt, the maimed, the lame, the blind, the afflicted, the sorrow-tossed, and the sin-laden, came to Him for help. Was ever one of these needy ones sent away without help?

Not one. And now look at Him on the cross. Why was He there? He hung there for the guilty. God gave Him up to that. He spared not His Son. He gave Him up to that bitter death of darkness and indescribable sorrow. Why was it, sinner? Did God delight in the sufferings of His Son? Ah! no, surely not. But there was no other way by which He could get you and me, and lost men everywhere, into His own presence, to enjoy His love, and dwell with Him in eternal blessedness and glory. Surely God is love, and Satan, with all his lies, cannot hide it from those who gaze upon the Lord Jesus, His blessed Son, on the cross, giving His life a ransom for all.

Let me say to you again, poor, needy, anxious soul, in the words of scripture, "God is love." God gave His Son for you. God made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. God raised Him again from the dead, as the everlasting Witness that His work on the cross was finished, and that divine justice was satisfied. He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. He has gone into "the holy place"—the presence of God—"by his own blood." And today—this day of grace—God announces from a blood-sprinkled throne, unconditional forgiveness to every one who believes; and not forgiveness only, but eternal acceptance in His beloved Son, The tidings are GOD'S glad tidings to LOST MEN. Reader, have you taken the place of being LOST? Then be assured the good news is for you, for Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. The gospel applies itself fully to those who in truth plead guilty before God, the Savior-God.

The Lord's Day: Do You Devote It to Him?, Lord's Day and the Lord's Supper, The

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In the last place, we find it called "the Lord's Day" in Revelation 1:10. John was "in the Spirit" on that day, and received communications from the Lord for the saints in Asia. I would call special attention to this expression. In 1 Corinthians 11:20, we get the expression, "The Lord's supper." Can anyone question what is the meaning of this? Is it not clearly the Lord's supper in contradistinction to every one eating his own supper in verse 21? Now when the day is spoken of, precisely the same word is used — "the Lord's Day," "the Lord's supper." It is peculiarly His day, and His supper — a day and a supper which He claims as His. His supper, too, was observed on His day.

Neither the day, then, nor the supper are common. Shall we treat them as common? What would we think of a man who held that he could treat the Lord's supper as his own? This is the very thing the saints at Corinth were doing, and for which the Lord was rebuking them. Weakness and sickness and death were there as the result of their course. It was the Lord's judgment. The very thought of treating the Lord's supper as our own may well shock every heart sensitive to His glory.

But it is His day as well as His supper, and if we are not at liberty to treat the supper as our own, are we at liberty to treat His day in this manner? I appeal to the reader's sense of what is right and fitting in the light of these scriptures. I would ask, Is it either right, or fitting, that we should take that day which He calls His and use it for our own pleasure or temporal advantage? If His supper is devoted entirely to a holy and joyful remembrance of Him in His death and sufferings for us, and not for the gratification of our appetites or for the satisfying of our hunger, shall we not as carefully observe the day as devoted to Him and His things?

Not infrequently we find saints (we will admit it may be under pressure of circumstances) accepting positions of secular employment which require them to work habitually on the Lord's Day. And they plead their liberty to do so because there is no command. While not wishing to condemn any, I am perfectly satisfied that this is not of faith. And Scripture says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). Does not this make it very serious? If those who are tempted to such a course would say, "No, come what will, I will not dishonor the Lord," would not He make a way for His faithful disciples? Has He not said, "Them that honor Me I will honor" (1 Sam. 2:30)?

But it is to be feared that not a few, and that too where no pressure of circumstances has place, think that if they go to the meeting on that day and break bread, then when the meeting is over they are free to spend the remainder of the day as they please — visiting in a social way, conversing of secular affairs and interests, reading the newspapers, pleasuring and other such things. I ask, Is this devoting the day to Him? Is it giving the Lord the honor which is His due?

I do not say the day is a day of rest like the Sabbath, and that we are to cease from our labors and simply do nothing. But the Lord claims the day, and it is but right that we should cease from our ordinary labors and devote the day to Him, in a way in keeping with its character, occupying ourselves with spiritual things which will be for profit to our own souls and the souls of others.

But there is no command, it is pleaded. I am aware. But why should you wish a command? Has He not told us it is His day? Why should you rob Him of His due? Besides, He has proved His love to us in laying down His life for us, going through a sea of unfathomable sorrow, in order that we might be brought into blessing which only infinite love could conceive, and He counts upon our hearts responding to His love, and yielding loving and joyful obedience to His will. And shall we willingly, knowingly, disappoint Him, and grieve the heart that has trusted us, without putting us under the bondage of law and saying, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not"? Alas! it only shows what, and where, our poor hearts are. He has not the first place in them; His claim is ignored, and He is practically shut out by self-interest and worldliness.

He does not lay upon us as a legal exaction to observe the day, any more than He does to observe the supper, but He has not left us in the dark as to what is pleasing to Him, and our own blessing is bound up in obedience to His will. We cannot disregard His will in this, or in anything else, without loss to our own souls, becoming a stumbling-block to others, and bringing dishonor upon His name.

May the Lord give to both the reader and the writer to be sensitive to all that affects His glory and to prove the blessedness of faithful and loving obedience to all His revealed will.

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