

2 Corinthians 1:20 (J.T.) 51540

Things New and Old: Volume 30, Full Salvation, A (1:20)

The tendency on every side being to give up truth long avowed, it is well, however feeble may be the utterance, that there should be at least no uncertain, sound as to the fullness of the grace of the gospel. "Righteousness," it has been well said, "is not by priesthood..... Justification is not justification with the Father, but with God. He could receive no pleading till there was righteousness before Him,.... God clears the saint before the accuser, the enemy, but as soon as He gets alone with the transgressor He uses the rod..... If the least sin rested on me, and I thought I could approach to God, I should directly lower His holiness—there is a wide difference between having sins forgiven for communion, for purifying ourselves, and for our standing before God." And surely the inevitable consequence of lowering the standing itself is the loss of the truth in its sanctifying power: the loss of the Father's word, the loss of the fullness of the grace of the gospel. To a lost, guilty, helpless and hell-deserving sinner that gospel, in the fullness of divine testimony to the nature and character of God, conies as the power of God for salvation to everyone that believes. The believer, the one who hears the word of truth, the gospel of his salvation, is not merely cleared and safe from the avenging sword of divine justice, but the clearing is such as to place him before God in all the fragrance and acceptability of Christ. Nothing less than this could satisfy the heart of God the justifier, of God who spared not His own Son. Nothing less sufficed to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy which He had before prepared for glory. The sons of the living God are by faith in the precious cleansing blood of Christ identified in the sight of God with all the value of that atoning blood as it is in His sight. It applies to the condition of the lost, guilty, helpless and hell-deserving sinner as such, and nothing else in heaven or earth-could apply to that condition, if he is to be brought to God. No, blessed, adorable Savior,

In the gift of His Son, God sought the sinner, not imputing his trespasses, and with the view of reconciliation, and of bringing him into the present enjoyment of the gift of everlasting life in His Son, and of the most blessed relationship with Himself. The perfect grace brought out the deep enmity of our hearts against God. Nothing but the death of Christ could meet our condition. The Son of man must be lifted up: and further, as to the blessed details of that lifting up, the Christ must rise from among the dead the third day. As it has been well said, "All the sentence must be passed on the first Adam." There is no such thing in the scriptural teaching of the New Testament as a justified child of the first Adam, whether with or without collateral blessings. The believer is quickened together with Christ, having all trespasses forgiven. He is in Christ, as God has sought in the triumphant aggressiveness of His love to bring him to Himself, to the satisfaction of His own nature, which could reach forth after objects suited to be vessels of mercy: lost, miserable, dead in trespasses and sins, and as to the energies of their own life, hateful and hating one another, and enemies of God. But these vessels of mercy are those which He had before prepared for glory. What a wondrous word of living power in grace—when we consider what we were in our distance and enmity, darkness, misery and death—is that in 2 Cor. 1:20, "For whatsoever promises of God [there are], in him is the yea, and in him the amen, for glory to God by us." And the believer is in Christ in all the sweet savor and precious odor of the incense-cloud of Christ's personal acceptance as Man before God. He is brought into all the present and eternal—the unchangeable—blessing of the sons of the living God, children of God, possessors of eternal life in His Son, springs of living water springing up into eternal life, in the power of the indwelling Spirit, heirs of God and Christ's joint-heirs, called to the fellowship of the Son of God, united to Christ and destined to be conformed to the image of God's Son, and to form the bride of Christ, and the dwelling-place of God in the new heavens and earth. Nothing can surpass the blessing into which God in His gospel invites His enemies, for instant, and for eternal enjoyment and glory. And believers, having in Him whose death is the ground of their title and boast, redemption through His blood, stand in the pure and sovereign favor of God, taken into favor in the Beloved: the favor into which they enter being not merely a favor received through Him, but the Beloved's favor.

And to you, beloved unconverted reader, a few parting words. You may be old and gray-headed in sin, an enemy of God; you may be in the prime of your years, busy and active in the senate, the university, the military or naval profession; you may be a man of pleasure or of business, but without God, a stranger to His grace, and an enemy; or it may be these lines may fall under the eye of one that is young and thoughtless, full of gaiety and spirit, still an enemy of God: but whoever, whatever, wherever you may be, God's solemn testimony by His word as to you and your condition, is that you have sinned and come short of His glory, that you are guilty and lost, one of His enemies. Thank God, not finally lost; for the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost, and it is of Him that God speaks to you. He is not your enemy. He sends to tell you of His Son, He tells you of His glory as the Word that was in the beginning, who was with God, and was God, and was in the beginning with God. He sends to tell you that the Word was made flesh. God tells you of His gift of His own Son, He tells you of His sinless manhood, of His spotless life, His perfect obedience, His marvelous.....grace and wondrous service. But all this did not meet your condition. Christ's obedience was unto death, and that death was the death of the—cross. God sends to tell you of the sufferings of Christ, of the work of Christ, of the death of Christ. He appeared, once, to put away sin. by His sacrifice. He finished the work. God sends to tell you of His finished work. He sends to tell you of the resurrection of Christ. He is beseeching you, "Be ye reconciled to God." It is He who has given His Son. Christ died, yea, rather is risen again: and the believer is justified in the power of His blood. There God meets your condition as a sinner. This blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of man, could have gone back without dying, in the perfection of His holy manhood and fragrant spotless life; gone back to heaven from whence He came.

Death had no claim upon Him. Death has claims on you: it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment. When Peter and James and John heard in the holy mount the voice uttered by the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight," Jesus could have ascended alone from that holy mount into heaven. He said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." In the garden of Gethsemane He could have had twelve legions of angels. The sinless, adorable Sufferer went of His own, voluntary will to take the place of Victim. He "by the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." He suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. He said—and, oh, consider the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but IF IT DIE, it bringeth forth much fruit." He died; and God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

We pray Thee for all the little crossings of our-path this day—that, in the dealings towards, man with man, we may meet them in the Spirit of our God.

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