

Mark 13:31-34 (Alexander Craven Ord) 141427

Scripture: Its Inspiration and Authority, Practical Separation and Testimony (13:31-34)

Hebrews 11:13-16; Mark 13: 31-34; Ephesians 1:19-23

There is one point in Heb 11 in connection with what we have had before us, which is, that that which throws us out of this scene as to our hopes, expectations and joys, is the truth that God Himself is a stranger in His own world. God is not at home here, because His Son has been rejected and the effect of this is, that we who are united to Christ are thrown out of it too; but into His blessed company. It is this which has separating power with the saints.

We are so apt to look upon ourselves as losers because of this. It tests the heart continually while down here, thus proving whether we are content to let all go for Him. We gain everything.

To Abram God appeared as "the God of glory." God takes His start there with him, and from thence unfolds to him His purposes and counsels in Christ. God gives rest to the heart here by choosing us to share in His rest there and He calls us out from this scene, separates us from what is in it, that we may be able even now to take part in that rest.

Look at the Lord in Mark 3. They said, "He is beside himself." They could not understand His blessed path of self-renunciation, self-forget-ting toil in their midst.

Neither can a worldly Christian understand it. And to the extent to which the saints follow in His steps will the world be unable to understand them. It is "As long as thou doest well to thyself men will speak well of thee."

But what are these to the Lord who take His path with Him? He looks round with delight and satisfaction upon them, and says: "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." Priceless is that will to Him. All such as do it most near; all relationships dear and tender concentrated in one. This is the result of faithfulness to God in days of evil. Christ loves our company; He delights to have us with Him. If the church has left its first love, has Christ ever left His? He loves to have us in association with Himself, linked with Himself and how can that be? Only in the path in which God's will is everything; His disciples had left all to follow Him.

But then comes the question, are we content to take the lot of pilgrims? These of whom we read in Hebrews that they declared plainly that they sought a country "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." And what was the consequence? What did God do for them? When we link ourselves with God's interests, He can link Himself to ours. It is then He is "not ashamed to be called our God." It is wondrous that God should call Himself the God of men on earth.

It is seldom God takes up people in this way; it is only with the patriarchs and David. He links Himself to the interest of those who identify themselves with Him upon earth; to those who have no home, no country, no city here, and who are content to find themselves in company with Christ in His path of separation and rejection in this scene through which He passed. If through grace I can take this place, He says of me "My brother, and my sister, and mother."

But what does it involve? Self-surrender; there must be the giving up of self. The more self-surrendered we are here, the more we are able to enter into and learn the path of that blessed One on earth, the more we are able to walk with Him in it. How did He come into this world? The manger and the cradle tell. He says of Himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart." He came as the dependent One the obedient One. God never had but one obedient Man upon earth; never but One who always did His will, who could say: "I do always those things that please him." All else were disobedient; men were in open defiance of God and there is not a single one of us, though saved by His grace, that does not carry the principle, the root of this in his heart. So that though we know what this path of obedience is, yet how often we get out of it. There never was any trod the earth like Him. The meekest, the lowliest man ever seen here was the Son of God.

It was just this point that our brother touched upon which I wished to take up a little. Rest we must not seek here; our rest is to come, when all will be according to God's own heart.

As regards the testimony of God, there are only two places where the apostle says he is "not ashamed." He is "not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord" in Timothy and he is "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" in Romans. We get these two great subjects: the testimony of the Lord, and the righteousness of God, in these two epistles. How wonderful! A display of righteousness for man, and that God's own. Sin righteously met for the believer, by God taking all that His Son has done and using it to justify sinners!

Well may the Lord present Himself to Nicodemus as the only One who could tell of heavenly things, because He "came down from heaven." Thus, divine love is heavenly. (See John 3:12, 13, and 16.) Conversion is connected with this earth; but heaven itself came down to die for me, to sacrifice itself for me. Who can tell the wonders of this love! The divine wonders and depths that we shall enjoy, as we were hearing, in eternity, all flowing to us from that blessed One to whom "all power is given."

I once saw on a tombstone a little verse which struck me

It was not about the sinner, or even about the salvation, it was the beauties of Christ Himself. It spoke wonderfully and beautifully of the occupation of the soul through all eternity; and that is the essence of Christianity. The more I see men giving up Christianity and slighting it,

the more its beauties come out; and the more the blessed Person of Christ is despised, the more His beauty comes out too.

Then there is the other side to this path of separation on earth. We look up into heaven, and what do we see there? The glorified Man; the One who fills heaven with His glory. What do we find is the great subject there in the book of Revelation? It is the Lamb in the midst of the throne; the Lamb who was slain; it is the worthiness of the Lamb and the efficacy of His blood. And how is He spoken of? When John sees Him he says: "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow" {Rev. 1}. Just as the evangelist says of the transfiguration, His raiment was "white as snow." And Daniel gives us "the Ancient of days," whose garment was "white as snow."

The very selfsame words are applied to the sinner washed in that precious blood: he is made "white as snow, as white as wool" (Isa. 1). Such is the place, the portion, that He has won for me, and I glory in the means that has done it.

But this is not all; there is more than salvation. God has His eternal counsels in Christ. What is the will of God? Is it to

gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him {Eph. 1:10}

from the highest archangel down to a blade of grass? This is God's counsel as to Him who came down from heaven and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross that He might give us a place on His throne, a place in His glory. Thus is God working everything after the counsel of His own will. Thus He has

saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel {2 Tim. 1:9}.

He has gained too the victory over death and the grave and has gone up there to sit at the right hand of God. Man looks at death as the end of everything, his own complete overthrow, where-as the very first thought as to the testimony is that of death abolished, by Christ having taken His place in it. We are connected with Christ as the fruit of His death, and every after-step is connected with death He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens.

"God hath not given us the spirit of fear." The apostle did not give way under the consciousness of the difficulties that pressed upon him. He knows that he has the spirit of "power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Therefore he says, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner." He had not a fear however things might be failing outwardly. He was not going to give up; he would maintain it in every iota, and be himself in practical consistency with it, as our brother has been pressing.

I am sure we all feel the need of more earnestness on this point; I do. The apostle, as Moses, counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Is there a despising of this world in its objects, in its principles, in its progress? Do we not too often take up a little of it? And remember, the more we meet of its reproach, the better for us; it is really a thing to be loved to be valued, if it is the reproach of Christ.

If we are not on the ground that Moses was, counting it greater riches than all here, we shall surely be formed by the world around us. I am persuaded of this, and the more so as I look back and think of early days amongst us, when some can remember that the reproach of Christ was a thing gloried in; and now, when I look around, I see the great assimilation to the world that is coming in. What a contrast!

Surely it is for us to be refusing citizenship in this world; refusing a country, a home here. It is then God can say: I am not ashamed to be linked with those people; not ashamed to be called their God. And in the day that is coming we shall share in His throne as His companions His bride, partakers of His glory for ever.

Food for the Flock 8:330-337 (1882).

clickbible.org