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THE SANCTUARY

Visiting Durham Cathedral, one cannot but be impressed with its superb architecture, but one sight of very special interest is “St. Cuthbert’s Shrine”

Cuthbert (634-687 AD), a professing Christian, lived on Holy Island, Lindisfarne, in the kingdom of Northumbria. After his death a small building was erected to his memory, which became an Anglo-Saxon church, and from it ultimately developed Durham Cathedral.

For many centuries (in fact, until 1624), on account of its association with Cuthbert, this place was a sanctuary. The knocker on the Cathedral’s northern door is still known as the “Sanctuary Knocker”. If someone committed a “great offence” - some act which may have ruined another, or inflicted serious injury on him, or brought untold sorrow and misery to innocent people – he could flee to this place and, rapping “the Knocker”, he could receive protection and find peace.

We are told that “many a blood-stained foot has fled wildly toward that shrine, and many an innocent foot hounded by accusing cries.” From a window over the north porch a monk kept watch ceaselessly for sanctuary seekers, to let them in, at any time of day or night, and, indeed, as soon as the offender grasped the “Knocker” on the door, the refuge – called “St. Cuthbert’s peace” - was secured and experienced.

See a man rushing toward that door, his heart beating fast, his eyes dilating, his every nerve strained! Will he reach it before being seized, taken prisoner, and handed over to justice. One more terrific plunge, his hand is on that “Knocker” – he is safe. That wretched man’s conviction of crime, and his fear of its consequences, had sent him flying to the place of refuge; but there was an important stipulation and condition: he had to acknowledge his guilt and be reconciled to his enemies. If this was done, he would be saved; if it was not done, he would be condemned

Is not this our own condition before a just and holy God? We have all sinned, breaking His Law and its various Commandments. Perhaps, of late, something has happened in our lives to make us think seriously. We are now frightened at what may be the consequences of our sins. There is, however, a promise of deliverance and safety. In our fear and despair, we may – and must - turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. In His mercy, He reveals Himself to us in the Gospel; He shows us His wound-prints; He manifests His dying love; and He tells us to confess our many and grievous sins, and to lay the whole burden of them upon Him – and so we shall be saved.

Think of the monk ceaselessly watching to give an immediate welcome and entrance to poor applicants. Does he not lead our thoughts to our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who has said, “To him that knocketh it shall be opened.” The Lord Jesus is ever looking down upon us and watching for us to take the first step towards Him; and it is He – and He alone – who can open to poor, lost sinners the door of everlasting life.

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Over the weekend of 23 and 24 February we gave thanks to God for another anniversary: our church's 66th and Pastor Watts' 48th. Our visiting speaker for this occasion was our good friend Rev. Jonathan Stobbs, minister of Penzance Baptist Church, Cornwall.

The theme of the Saturday meeting was " The Sufficiency of the Word of God", with our thoughts being directed to 2 Timothy 3. Mr Stobbs emphasised the importance of the local church and its responsibility to make God's Word known. We were reminded that God himself owns the church and has set the foundation on which we should build. Mr. Stobbs particularly emphasized the importance of “the Regulative Principle”, that, in worship, everything done must have positive divine prescription in the written Word of God. The point was well made that the health of the church will be connected to the health of the pulpit.

We were pleased to welcome friends from other churches who joined us in sharing our thanksgiving; and refreshments after the service gave opportunity for further fellowship.

Mr Stobbs preached at both services on the Lord's Day, when we considered the prayer of the church, from Acts 4; and the salvation message of the church, from Hebrews 2. At an After-Church Fellowship Mr Stobbs jogged our memories of Church History by giving us a most interesting talk on aspects of the English Reformation. We were reminded that God works sovereignly in the hearts of Kings and Rulers to fulfil his purposes.

Once again, we give grateful thanks to God for upholding our Pastor over these 48 years, and for the benefit we receive from his consistent faithful ministry.

Another of our Evangelistic Suppers was held at Grove House on Tuesday evening 12 March. We were pleased to welcome an encouraging number of visitors who joined us for a good meal and fellowship. Our elder, Steve, gave a challenging gospel message during the course of the evening, which we pray will have created a desire in some hearts to know more of the precious truths of God's word.

We were very glad to have a visit from Mr. Mike Mellor, representing the Open Air Mission, on Thursday evening, 4 April. Mr Mellor began by reading from the 18th chapter of Acts reminding us of the apostle Paul who took advantage of every opportunity to make known the gospel to all his hearers wherever they were. He continued by giving us some very helpful instructions and some ideas on Open Air preaching, answering our questions and giving advice on various aspects of this ministry. We are glad to know that a team from the OAM are in Salisbury every other Thursday, and we pray they will know God's hand upon their witness.

Our first Open Air service of the season took place on Saturday 6 April. We are thankful to God that, once again, permission has been granted for this

outreach. We pray that the word preached will be used by God to bring people to see their need of a Saviour.

"My word... shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isaiah 55:11

NOTES OF LECTURES DELIVERED AT THE SALISBURY REFORMED SEMINARY:

13 September, 2018, and 8 January, 2019

THE COVENANT OF WORKS (*Malcolm H. Watts*)

A covenant is a bond or commitment, involving some kind of stipulation or condition and a statement of promise. According to Reformed theology, God entered into a covenant with Adam (before the Fall), wherein, on the basis of perfect obedience, He promised life in all its fulness and blessedness. This is commonly referred to as the Covenant of Works and the details of it are set down in Genesis 2:16,17.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, in answer to Question 12, states; "When God had created men, he entered into a covenant of life with him upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil upon the pain of death."

In support of this statement and the doctrine based upon it, we note that:

1. In this arrangement with Adam, the essential parts of a covenant are all present, making it what a covenant is – a conditional promise. There are parties, a condition, and a promise.

2. Certainly something was established in the garden: the Lord God "commanded" or, more literally, "commanded upon" man, the Hebrew word containing the idea of "setting up" something, or "constituting" it; and, in Psalm

111:9, there is an example of it being used with reference to a covenant – “he hath commanded his covenant...”

3. God appeared in this transaction no longer as a mere law-giver, issuing a command to one who was a subject, but rather as One promising a benefit and giving a reward (cf. “covenant of promise” Eph. 2:12).

4. As in other covenant transactions, this arrangement affected Adam’s posterity (or his descendants), making clear that he was now being regarded as a covenant-head and representative (Rom. 5:12 ff.; 1 Cor. 15:22 cf. Gen. 6:18; 17:1,2).

5. There were sacraments or tokens appended to the promise (the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), as the bow in the sky in the Noahic covenant, and circumcision in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 9;17).

6. When, later, this law of obedience was reissued at Sinai, along with a promise, it is specifically called a “covenant” Deut. 4:13; 5:2; Gal.4:24).

7. One scripture in the prophecy of Hosea appears to refer to the transaction in the Garden of Eden as a real “covenant”: “they like men (or “like Adam”) have transgressed the covenant” (Hosea 6:7). The original word here is elsewhere translated “as Adam” (see: Job 31:33).

Thereafter, we observed that there were two parties: God and Adam (who represented mankind); a condition or obligation: obedience to divine Law, tested by a positive or special law concerning a tree; a promise, implied in the threatening: namely, the promise of life – life for the body, life for the soul, and life for body and soul for ever; and the sacraments of seals were the two named trees. Tragically, as a result of Satan’s subtilty, Adam sinned, forfeiting life physical, spiritual, and eternal not only for himself but also for all men and women.

“All mankind sinned in him (Adam), and fell with him, in his first Transgression.” (Shorter Catechism, Answer to Question 16) “The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.” (S.C. Answer to Question 17).

Adam’s failure and transgression are called his “fall”, suggesting that, as a result of his sin, he did not remain where he was, but he plummeted from the high pinnacle of holiness and happiness, into the woeful state of sin, wretchedness, and ruination.

Since Adam was constituted our head and representative, when he sinned, *we all sinned in him*, and so *sin entered into the world* (Rom. 5:12 mg., 15-18). The sinfulness of man’s state consists in his bearing the guilt of Adam’s sin (Rom. 5:18), his lack of original righteousness (Isa. 64:6; Rom. 3:10), the corruption of his whole nature (Gen. 5:3; 6:5; Ps. 51:5) and all actual transgressions proceeding from this corrupt nature (Matt. 15:19,20). This is what theologians call Original Sin and it is the spring and source of great Misery.

First of all, consideration was given to *The Privative Aspect of Misery* (what we have lost): the precious and blessed company of God, any claim on God as our God, God’s favour and friendship, spiritual intimacy and communion with God, sharing the secrets of the heart, satisfaction and blessedness in God, and hope of eternal well-being with God (Gen. 3:8; Ps. 5:4,5; 58:3; Isa. 59:2; Eph. 2:12; 4:18)

Then, our thoughts were turned to *The Positive Aspect of Misery* (what we have gained): in brief, this is the wrath and curse of God, or God’s sore displeasure, condemning us to great evil in this life and in the next (Deut. 32:21; Ps. 7:11; 9:11; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 2:3; Heb. 10:31; Rev. 6:15-17; 14:19. Deut. 27:26; 29:21,32; Matt. 25:41; Rom. 5:16, 18a; Gal. 3:10.

Attention was then given to *Miseries in Life*: both outward and inward (Job 14:1; Rom. 2:14,15); *Miseries at the End of Life* (Job 18:18; 1 Cor. 15:56); and *Miseries which follow after this Life* (Lk. 16:22,24; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Men and women are in desperate need of a Saviour; and there is only one appointed and available – the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE COVENANT OF GRACE (*Malcolm H. Watts*)

God, in eternity past, held a Trinitarian council concerning the salvation of elect men and women: hence the references to His “counsels of old”, the Son as “counsellor” (Isa. 9:6; cf. Prov. 8:14), and the Holy Spirit as “the spirit of counsel” and “the Spirit of wisdom” (Isa. 11:2; Eph.1:11).

In this divine “council”, the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity agreed on the way of man’s recovery (Eph. 1:9; 3:11; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Jn. 5:7) and this agreement is represented to us, in Scripture, as an “everlasting covenant” (Heb. 13:20).

What is a covenant? The Hebrew word (berith) may have its origin in a word meaning “bond” or “fetter.” The Greek word (diatheke) means “an arrangement” or “a transaction”, leading to “a binding settlement.”

A covenant has been variously defined, but essentially it is “a conditional promise.”

There are sound biblical reasons for believing that, before the foundation of the world, there was an inter-Trinitarian arrangement respecting the salvation of God’s elect people – “the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Rom.16:25); “the mystery of his will...which he hath purposed in himself” (Eph. 1:9); “his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9). And this arrangement was covenantal, involving the three divine Persons, but particularly the Father and the Son.

“With whom was the covenant of grace made? The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed.” (The Larger Catechism, Question & Answer 31)

The teaching of Scripture was considered:

1. The Son of God is called “the last Adam”, intimating that, like Adam, He was a covenant head and representative (1 Cor. 15:45).

2. God has said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen” (Ps. 89:3) As Samuel Eyles Pierce has rightly observed, “Messiah is God’s chosen one, he is God’s elect.”

3. In prophecy, the Son of God is represented as “given for a covenant” (Isa. 42:6; 49:8). Ralph Erskine declares, “Christ is the covenant of the people radically and fundamentally, being the root, basis, and foundation upon which the covenant of grace stands.”

4. In His birth, life, and death, it is predicted that “he shall confirm the covenant with many”: that is, by fulfilling the agreed conditions, “He shall cause the covenant to prevail”, securing the promised blessings for God’s people (Dan. 9:27).

5. Christ is addressed thus, “As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water” (Zech 9:11). It is “his” covenant, seeing it was made with Him; and by Him the condition was to be kept and to Him the promise was to be fulfilled.

6. He “visited and redeemed his people” in accordance with this covenant, “to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant.” (Lk. 1:68,72)

7. While on earth, He spoke of a kingdom “appointed” to Him, and the word in the original (*diatithemi*) means “disposed by covenant” (Lk. 22:29). In other

words, Christ says that by virtue of a covenant, He obtains a kingdom, and we do so too.

8. The covenant, the apostle says is “of God” and “in Christ” and it has been “confirmed” unto men (Gal. 3:17). John Brown of Haddington paraphrases, “Now this covenant being made with and relating to Christ, to be fulfilled and confirmed in his incarnation, obedience, and death, and being confirmed by the repeated promise and oath of an unchangeable God, and by the seal of circumcision, – the law of Moses...cannot...make void or disannul.”

9. Christ is called “the mediator” or this “covenant” (Heb. 8:6; 12:24), because God has not made the covenant with us directly but He has made it with Him, our Saviour and Lord.

10. There is mention made of “the blood of the everlasting (*aionios*, eternal) covenant”, showing that a covenant was “eternally made” and that Christ’s death was included in the condition of that covenant (Heb.13:20).

Bearing in mind the definition of a “covenant”, namely, “a conditioned promise”, it was pointed out that the “condition” of the Covenant of Grace was Christ’s surety righteousness, the meeting of all the Law’s demands in our place and for our benefit: obeying the Law’s precepts and bearing the Law’s penalty on our behalf (Ps. 40:7,8; Matt. 5:17; 20:28; Rom. 5:18,19; 10:4). As for the “promise”, it contained for Christ, exaltation and dominion (Isa.53:10-12; Lk. 24:25,26; 1 Pet. 1:1,11); and for His people, it contains eternal life (Titus 1:2; 1 Jn. 2:24).

Faith in Christ brings sinners into the blessing of the covenant promise (Jn. 3:16; Heb. 8:8-12).

CALVARY

Years ago, a party of emigrants were trekking the vast prairies of what are now the Middle Western states of America. These prairies were covered with tall, dry grass. The party had passed a river the day before and were going on with their cattle and covered wagons, when suddenly they were horrified to see a thin red line across the western horizon.

They cried out, "The prairie is on fire!" What shall we do?" There was dry grass almost up to the horses' head, the prairie on fire, the river a day's journey behind them, and they knew of no barrier in front that might hold flames back.

One of their number was more used to pioneer life in the West, and he said, "Clear a space and set fire to the grass behind you." They did this, and the wind carried the flame away toward the river. "Now", he said, "come here on the charred ground and you will be safe."

And so they took their stand there. They could already feel the fire on their cheeks, and one frightened little girl cried, "Oh, are you sure we won't be burned up?" "My child," the pioneer said, "the flames can never reach us here; *we are standing where the fire has been.*"

When you take your stand by faith at Calvary's cross, you are standing where the fire has been. Judgement cannot ever reach you there. The law put my Substitute to death on that cross, and, therefore, it has nothing to say to me. My relationship towards it has been changed by death. Can you say, "There is now no condemnation" for me?

NO NEED TO DIE

It is the custom in the Yoruba country (the west coast of Africa) that when a native ruler, or Alafin, dies, for his wives and certain other of his attendants to take lethal poison.

One morning, someone came to one of the missionaries working in that country, and she said: "There goes one of the wives of the late Alafin. She is on her way to take the poison."

The missionary immediately went to the new Alafin about the matter. He, it seemed, had no desire that the widow of his predecessor should feel compelled to end her existence just because it was the custom of her country that this should be done.

"Then may I go at once and tell the poor woman that it is not your wish that she should die?", asked the missionary.

"By all means, go!" replied the Alafin. The custom was to give such poor women a spade with which they are to dig their own graves. They then put on their best clothes, lie down in the grave, take the poison, and die a terrible death. The missionary was only just in time. In this particular case the grave had been dug, the best clothes put on, and the poison was at hand, ready to take.

The woman gladly received the message from the Alafin, and leaving the open grave, with the spade lying beside it, she thankfully returned once again to her home.

Tragically, it was otherwise with one of the horsemen of the late Alafin. To him also came a message that the new ruler did not desire his death, and, in fact, he was commanded not to commit suicide. "I care not what the order may be," exclaimed he. "Nothing shall induce me to forsake my old master." Accordingly, he took poison and died an agonizing death.

One received the message gratefully; one accepted the gift of life that was offered her, one went upon her way rejoicing that she did not need to die. The other, shutting eyes and ears to the message, deliberately chose death, and, in truth, he destroyed himself.

To-day, a message comes to us. "Why will ye die?... I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord; wherefore turn ye, and live ye." (Ezekiel 18. 31, 32.)

My dear friends, let us gladly accept the gift of life from our King – a gift of life everlasting. It is granted by the King to all who are ready to perish. He sends word of His willingness to save men and women. Believe His word! Trust in His mercy! Choose life, that you may live!

MY STRONG BOX

A Christian, full of years, lay on his death-bed. He said to a friend: "Will you please bring me my Strong Box? I am a rich man and I want to look again at some of my important Documents." The friend thought he was wandering in his mind, but the man said, "There it is on the table, bound in leather." It was at once given to the poor man and, with evident pleasure, he turned over the documents, reading each one carefully, but as he did so, his thoughts seemed to turn from these papers to spiritual truths and eternal realities.

These were the documents in the box:

The First Document was his birth certificate, reminding him that he was "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:23)

The Second Document was his bank account, detailing his great wealth, and he knew for sure that he had been "enriched by him", Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:5)

The Third Document was the deed of his house, and this made him think of his dwelling in a better, heavenly country, "and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Psalm 23:6)

The Fourth Document was his comprehensive insurance policy, and, as a believer, his comfort was, “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

The Fifth Document was his passport which gave him the right to travel, under the government’s protection, to a foreign land and, through grace, he had in his heart “a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better. (Philippians 1:2)

The Sixth Document was a promissory note, to the effect that a stated and substantial sum would be paid to the bearer of this note at a specified time; and God’s promise to him was “in the world to come life everlasting.” (Luke 18:30)

The Seventh and last Document was his marriage certificate; and he had evidence in God’s Word and in his own experience that he was united to another, even to the Lord Jesus Christ, from whose love and presence he would never, ever, be separated; and so he could say, “for I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life,...shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.” (Romans 8:38,39)

After carefully examining these papers once again, the old man smiled, and then said: “All is well. Everything is in safe-keeping!”

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Samuel Chadwick

Pentecost is the crowing miracle and abiding mystery of grace. It marks the beginning of the Christian dispensation. The tongues of fire “sat” upon each one of them. The word “sat” in Scripture marks an end and a beginning. The process of preparation is ended, and the established order has begun.

It marks the end of creation, and the beginning of normal forces. “In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and *rested* the seventh day” (Exodus 20:11; cf. Genesis 2:1-3). There is no weariness in God. He did not rest from fatigue. What it means is that all creative work was accomplished.

The same figure of speech is used of the Redeemer. Of Him it is said, “When he had by himself purged our sins, (he) *sat down* on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3; cf. 10:11,12) No other priest sat down. The priests of the temple ministered standing, because their ministry was provisional and preparatory, a parable and a prophecy. Christ’s own ministry was part of the preparation for the coming of the Spirit. Until He sat down in glory, there could be no dispensation of the Spirit.

John says of our Lord’s promise in the temple: “This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him were to receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:39). The descent of the One waited for the ascent of the Other. When the work of redemption was complete, the Spirit was given, and when He came, He “sat.” “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it *sat* upon each of them” (Acts 22,3). He reigns in the Church, as Christ reigns in the Heavens. This is the dispensation of the Spirit.

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

A Day of Heaven upon Earth – John Flavel (1627-1691)

I have with good assurance this account of a minister (who appears to be John Flavel himself), “who being alone in a journey, and willing to make the best improvement he could off that day’s solitude, set himself to a close examination of his soul, and then of the life to come, and the manner of its being and living

in heaven, in the views of all those things which are now pure objects of faith and hope. After a while he perceived his thoughts began to fix and come closer to these great and astonishing things than was usual; and as his mind settled upon them, his affections began to rise with answerable liveliness and vigour. He therefore (whilst he was yet master of his own thoughts) lifted up his heart to God in a short ejaculation that God would so order it in his providence, that he might meet with no interruption from company, or any other accident in that journey; which was granted him: for, in all that day's journey, he neither met, overtook, or was overtaken by any.

Thus, going on his way his thoughts began to swell, and rise higher and higher, like the waters in Ezekiel's vision, until at last they became an overflowing flood. Such was the intention of his mind, such the ravishing tastes of heavenly joys, and such the full assurance of his interest therein, that he utterly lost a sight and sense of this world, and all the concerns thereof; and for some hours, knew no more where he was, than if he had been in a deep sleep upon his bed. At last he began to perceive himself very faint...He found himself almost spent, and nature (ready) to faint under the pressure of joy unspeakable and insupportable; and at last, perceiving a spring of water in his way, he, with some difficulty, alighted to cleanse and cool his face and hands...

By that spring he sat down and washed, earnestly desiring, if it were the pleasure of God, that it might be his parting place from this world: he said, death hath the most amiable face in his eye, that ever he beheld, except the face of Jesus Christ, which made it so; and he could not remember (though he believed he should die there) that he had one thought of his dear wife, or children, or any other earthly concernment.

But having drunk of that spring, his spirits revived...and he mounted his horse again; and on he went in the same frame of spirit, till he had finished a journey of near thirty miles, and came at night to his inn...Being alighted, the innkeeper came to him, with some astonishment (being acquainted with him formerly). "O Sir", said he, "what is the matter with you? You look like a dead man."

“Friend”, replied he, “I was never better in my life”...All this night passed without one wink of sleep, though he never had a sweeter night’s rest in all his life, Still, still the joy of the Lord overflowed him, and he seemed to be an inhabitant of the other world...He many years after called that day “one of the days of heaven”, and professed he understood more of the light of heaven by it, than by all the books he ever read, or discourses he ever had entertained about it. This was indeed an extraordinary fore-taste of heaven for degree, but it came in the ordinary way and method of faith and meditation.

[*The Works of John Flavel*, volume 3, pages 57-58]

A Signal Pledge of Special Divine Favour - John Howe (1630-1705)

Mr. John Howe...wrote the following paragraphs in the blank leaf of his own Bible:

“December 26, 1689, After that I had long, seriously, and repeatedly thought with myself, that, besides a full and undoubted assent to the objects of faith, a vivifying savoury taste and relish of them was also necessary, that with stronger force, and more powerful energy, they might penetrate into the most inward centre of my heart, and there being most deeply fixed and rooted, govern my life; and that there could be no other sure ground whereon to conclude and pass a sound judgment, on my good estate Godward.

After I had, in my course of preaching, been largely insisting on 2 Corinthians 1:12 – “This is my rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience...”, this very morning I awoke out of a most ravishing and delightful dream, that a wonderful and copious stream of celestial rays, from the lofty throne of the divine Majesty did seem to dart into my open and expanded breast. I have often since, with great complacency, reflected on that signal pledge of special divine favour, vouchsafed to me on that noted memorable day, and have, with repeated fresh pleasure, tasted the delights thereof.

But what of the same kind I (later) sensibly felt through the admirable bounty of my God, and the most pleasant comforting influence of the Holy Spirit, on October 22, 1704, far surpassed the most expressive words my thoughts can suggest. I then experienced an inexpressibly pleasant melting of heart, tears gushing out of mine eyes for joy that God should “shed abroad his love” abundantly through the hearts of men: and that for this purpose mine own heart should be so signally possessed of and by his blessed Spirit (Romans 5:5).”

[Quoted in *The Works of Isaac Watts*, volume 2. page 103]

A View of the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ - Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

I have sometimes had a sense of the excellent fulness of Christ, and His meetness and suitableness as a Saviour; whereby He has appeared to me, far above all, the chief of ten thousands. His blood and atonement have appeared sweet, and His righteousness sweet; which was always accompanied with ardency of spirit; and inward strugglings and breathings, and groanings that cannot be uttered, to be emptied of myself, and swallowed up in Christ.

Once as I rode out into the woods for my health, in 1737, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, as my manner commonly has been, to walk for divine contemplation and prayer, I had a view, that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God, as Mediator between God and man, and His wonderful, great, full, pure, and sweet grace and love, and meek, gentle condescension. This grace that appeared so calm and sweet, appeared also great above the heavens.

The person of Christ appeared also ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception – which continued as near as I can judge about an hour, which kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears and weeping aloud. I felt an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated, to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone; to love Him with a holy and pure love; to trust in Him;

to live upon Him; to serve and follow Him; and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity. I have several other times had views very much of the same nature, and which have had the same effects.

[*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, volume 1, page xlvii]

William M. Tennent (1705-1777) preached in the morning, and in the intermission had walked into the woods for meditation, the weather being warm. He was reflecting on the infinite wisdom of God, as manifested in all his works, and particularly in the wonderful method of salvation, through the death and sufferings of his beloved Son. The subject opened on his mind with such a flood of light, that his views of the glory and the infinite majesty of Jehovah were so inexpressibly great as entirely to overwhelm him, and he fell almost lifeless to the ground. When he had revived a little, all he could do was to raise a fervent prayer that God would withdraw himself from him, or that he must perish under a view of his ineffable glory.

At certain times, God does deal wonderfully and familiarly with His people.

EPILOGUE

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” Psalm 19 v 14

This Psalm of David begins by turning the reader’s attention to the marvels of creation. These thoughts should make us glorify the God who made all things by the power of His word from nothing. However, all the knowledge we obtain from observing the wonders of the natural world is totally unable to save us. We need to turn to divine revelation. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.” Psalm 19 v 7. It is in the Word of God that we learn about God’s holiness, justice, grace, mercy and the only way of salvation.

The study of God’s Word led David to understand that he was a sinner and in need of forgiveness daily. Everything he did throughout every day was subject to and corrupted by his sinful nature. As Paul says in Romans 7 ‘the good that I would I do not but the evil that I would not that I do.’ This is the daily experience and cause of sorrow to every serious Christian.

However here David is specifically thinking not of deeds but of words and thoughts. In the final verse of this lovely psalm he is praying, aware of sin inwardly affecting his very words and even his meditations. He knows that the words of his mouth and the secret thoughts of his heart need to be suitable to be offered up in worship to God. He prays negatively, that his speech and meditation will never be sinful. We can never expect God to bless us or our Christian service if we do not seek to mortify our sins and to be sanctified by His word. But also, positively, he prays that his speech and his very thoughts should always be God honouring.

Our devotion to God, who is here called our ‘Lord’ our ‘strength’ and our ‘redeemer’ should be grounded upon His attributes and His mercy and His grace towards us and so should consume our actions and even our words and thoughts.

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