

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

33. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST

"Unto you who believe, he is precious." 1 Pet. 2:7

Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, has taught us what is truly precious.

"You were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ."

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious."

"Unto you therefore who believe, he is precious."

O! that Christ may ever be precious to my soul in all his offices, characters, and relations, which he bears in the covenant of grace to his believing people. Faith, which receives Christ into the heart, is also a precious gift of God. Thus writes the Apostle, "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ." "You greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who has called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

The experience of God's children is the same in every age. David, in the overflowings of his love, sang- "How precious is your loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings." "How precious are your thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!"

If we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, we shall daily feel him to be precious. His righteousness is our garment of salvation. His Truth our shield and buckler. All this blessedness we freely enjoy, without money and without price. O what can be more transporting than the assurance that Christ is mine, and I am his. What would we be without Christ? Miserable and undone! To make us value the Savior, the Spirit makes us feel our ruined state. He shows us our wretchedness, and causes us to feel it, that we may long for deliverance.

Were we not sinners there would be no need of a Savior, for the whole need not a physician, but only those who are sick. Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He came to seek and to save that which is lost. Hence we find, that to feel our malady, to feel our need of Jesus, is requisite to our believing application of Him, and our believing dependence upon Him. "Unto you therefore who believe, he is precious."

Some people are apt to think that something must be done, in order to render them fit to receive grace; that something like a price must be brought in their hand. This is the leaven of Popery, the leaven of self-righteousness. This is the barrier which prevents many from coming to Christ. Oh! the deep-rooted legality of our fallen nature! They cannot conceive that Jesus will receive the vilest who come unto him. Hence they try to remove their 'leopard spots', their 'Ethiopian blackness', by outward reformation, while the corruption lies deep within. Wearied with the vain attempt to keep the innate evil from ripening into outward acts of wickedness, they are led through grace, to throw themselves in self-despair at the feet of Jesus, crying- "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Lord save me, or I perish."

And are they repulsed? Oh! no! The loving heart of the Savior receives them; the loving arms of the Savior embrace them, as the father did the returning prodigal; they obtain a full forgiveness, through faith in his blood; they are clothed with the robe of his righteousness; they receive the ring of reconciliation; a feast of fat things is provided for them; and they are filled with peace, and purity, and joy.

Thus, while nature is always moving in a circle, and never reaching the center of happiness, grace, by a direct line, leads the sinner at once to Christ. "As many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The Spirit always leads the sinner to the Cross, where we are admitted into the family of God; for, says Paul, "You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

How invaluable is a childlike spirit; to feel our will acquiescing in the will of God. This spiritual feeling is the work of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to guide us into all truth. No power of reason, no stretch of intellect, no determination of the will, left to its natural action, can raise us above the effects of the Fall. As water, by its own power cannot rise above its own level, no more can we.

To receive Christ into the heart by faith is the sole operation of the Spirit; for John declares that "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Christ is the author and source of all blessedness. Where can rest be found but in Him whose precious name is Emmanuel, God with us? None who trust in him shall ever be confounded. To suppose such a thing, would be to contradict his own word. It is the natural unbelief of our hearts which keeps us away from Christ, and consequently from holiness and happiness.

Did all the world truly believe, all the world would assuredly be saved; for the command of Christ to his disciples was, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved." If all had believed the word of his grace, all would have been saved, to whom the Apostles declared the unsearchable riches of Christ.

There are many shades in the moral character of mankind, some lighter, some darker, but all, without exception, are naturally unbelievers in heart, and while remaining in this awful state, they exclude themselves from those blessings which a merciful God has provided for us through the gift of his Son. How precious is faith, and because precious, how rare a thing it is! The boasted virtues of worldly morality are as common as the pebbles in the brook; while the graces of the Spirit, like precious stones, are only here and there to be seen.

O! that my heart were overflowing with love to Jesus, and ardently longing for his salvation. He is precious to those who believe. Do I esteem Christ as the pearl of great price? Am I willing to part with all that the world and the flesh hold dear, to obtain this inestimable treasure? Lord impart Yourself to me. Dwell in my heart, as in a temple consecrated to your glory. May the fire of holy love ever burn on the altar of my heart, and never go out.

What daily need we have to watch against spiritual lukewarmness. This evil state of heart will creep insensibly upon us without much watchfulness and prayer. A daily humbling sense of our sinfulness, a daily feeling of our need of Jesus, a constant looking unto him, and a believing application of his precious blood and righteousness, can alone keep us in a lively, dependent, loving, obedient frame of mind. O that we may be in earnest about salvation, then will our peace flow as a river.

The God whom we serve is a God of love. How marvelously has he manifested forth the glory of his grace in the redemption of the world. But, alas! we have heard so long, and so often, about the dying love of Jesus, that it ceases to affect our hearts with that intensity which those feel who are first awakened to a sense of their danger and deliverance. Should it be thus with us? Is not this leaving our first love? Must it not be grievous to an infinitely loving, and precious Savior? Oh! that I may hourly mourn over this lamented, this hated coldness, at the foot of the Cross, until I become like the burning seraphim, a flame of love.

What a wonderful provision has a God of mercy made for our present and future happiness. He wills our good. We, strange to say, seem to will our own misery, for thus said our Lord, "You will not come to me, that you might have life." Oh! how much we forsake our own mercies, when we forsake the Fountain of living waters, and hew out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

The reason why people in general are so averse to true religion, must be from their wrong apprehensions of it. They look upon it as a system of restraints, a withholding from them the beloved enjoyments of the world. But, what can be so consonant with right reason, as to devote ourselves to the service of that God from whom we receive our being, and every other good thing connected with our existence? It is in Him we live, and move, and have our being; and it is to Him we are indebted for all our comforts as traveling pilgrims. But, how immensely is our obligation to live to his glory increased, when we consider, that we are not our own, being bought with a price, and that price no less than the precious blood of his own dear Son. Nothing but the blinding, hardening, deceiving nature of sin, and the influence of Satan on our minds and hearts, can keep us from this most reasonable devotedness of ourselves to God. Herein lies our guilt. From hence, arises our misery.

O that I may now be like my Savior in holiness; live near to him in daily fellowship; and when released from the body, dwell forever with him in glory.