

**~Other Speakers S-Z: James Smith:**

It is sometimes profitable to look back , and see what we were , and what we were likely to be " if the Lord had left us alone. Nor is it less profitable at times to look around and within , and dwell awhile upon what the Lord has done for us. It is also very pleasant to look forward , and anticipate what we shall be, when the Lord has fulfilled in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and crowned his work of grace with glory. Let this then be our employment for a few minutes, and may the Holy Spirit make our meditations beneficial. We will ask three questions:

First, What WAS I by NATURE? This is a dark and dreary subject, for I was in a sad state , and had acquired a sad character .

My heart was fearfully depraved " my nature was totally fallen.

All within was spiritually dead " and all without was unholy.

The creature was loved and served " and the Creator was neglected and despised.

Sin was my element .

Satan was my master .

The world was my heaven .

I had no good desires " no holy aspirations " no redeeming qualities.

I was a rebel against God's government " and a traitor against God's crown!

I would have destroyed God if I could " and have blotted His name out of creation! The language of my heart and life was, "No God for me!" My heart was filled and fired with enmity against Him, and at times I could have cursed Him to His face!

I hated His law .

I despised His gospel .

I abhorred His people .

If I could " I would have crushed His cause!

How astonishing that such a wretch was allowed to live!

How astonishing that God had not crushed me by His power, and sentenced me to Hell!

But, O the longsuffering, the patience, and the sovereign grace of God! He bore with me. He loaded me with his benefits. He determined to win me with His love. Nevertheless I sinned yet the more, and provoked Him with my ungodly conduct. O how surprising that I am not in Hell! Surely there are many already in Hell " who were never such great sinners as I have been!

But, the Lord is good, ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all those who call upon Him. He put a cry into my heart, He listened to that cry, and made me a new creature in Christ Jesus. He unveiled my enormous wickedness before the eyes of my mind, which filled me with confusion, despondency, and shame. He laid me in the dust, and seemed to doom me to despair. He . . .

crushed my proud spirit,  
destroyed my infernal enmity against Him,  
and melted me into contrition with His love.

He pardoned all my aggravated transgressions.

He spoke peace to my soul.

He filled me with joy and gladness.

He fired me with a desire to honor and glorify Him, and then bade me go and "Tell to sinners round " what a dear Savior I had found!"

What AM I by GRACE? For all I now am " I once was not. Everything which is in any sense good in me " must be ascribed to the free grace of God. Yes, with the holy Apostle I must say, "By the grace of God, I am what I am!" By grace " I am a new creature , created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained, that I should walk in them. By grace " I am pardoned , justified, and accepted of God. By grace " I am united to Christ's person, and constituted a joint heir with him. By grace " I am God's child, the Holy Spirit's temple, and a part of the Savior's purchase.

Grace called me, and grace made me willing to obey the call. Grace washed away my sins in the blood of the Lamb, and washed my person in the laver of the Word. All that has been wrought within me, all that has been conferred upon me, and all the good that has been done by me " must be traced to the free and invincible grace of God! Who can tell what I would have been by this time " but for the grace of God? Who can say where I would have been this morning " but for the grace of God? Most probably, I would have been in Hell " where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched! O what a debtor to grace I am! If anyone ought to speak well of grace " I am the man. If anyone should magnify sovereign grace " surely I should. For to God's sovereign grace " I owe everything!

I am not now " what I once was . Why? Because God had a purpose of grace toward me.

I am not now " what I soon shall be. Why? Because grace is always crowned with glory!

Thirdly, What SHALL I be in GLORY?

Perhaps the less I say on this point the better " for who can tell what the redeemed shall be? But this we do know, that when Jesus comes " we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is! However, this is clear, that in glory I shall be free from sin , from care , and from pain . I shall be free from the conflict within, the doubts and the fears that so often distress me; and the assaults of Satan that disturb my peace, and hinder me in my way. In glory, there is no darkness or gloom, no depression or sadness, no sorrow or distress, no wants or wishing, no weariness or woe, no complaints or groaning. And there, I shall see God, and enjoy him! I shall be like Christ, and be with him; and glorify and honor my Triune God forever.

Glory! What is glory? We must die to know! And blessed be God, when we die " we shall know. Absent from the body " we shall be present with the Lord. Departing from these scenes of sorrow and sadness " we shall be with Christ, which is far better. In glory, our knowledge will be perfect, our education will be completed, our joy will be full.

"Then shall we see, and hear, and know,  
All we desired, and wished below;  
And flesh and sin no more control,  
The sacred pleasures of the soul."

How different I now am " to what I once was!

And how different I shall be in Heaven " to what I now am! What a change has already been effected " but what a change yet awaits me!

I am no more God's enemy " but his friend! I am no longer alienated from God " but his beloved child! But what " O what shall I soon be? "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9

Reader, have you been able to follow me in these remarks? Are you still in the state nature " or are you a new creature by grace? Are you what you always were " or have you passed from death unto life? If you are not in grace " you are still in nature ; and if in nature, you are God's enemy. If you are not in grace on earth " you can never be in glory in Heaven . Be sure then, that you are delivered from the power of darkness, and be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son!