

Preciousness

F. A. Hughes.

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In a previous article we have noticed the way in which "Precious Things" are spoken of in the Old Testament. That which is "Precious" has a large place in the typical Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit would make the charm and power of these things a very present reality to our hearts. In searching out from the inspired writings this thought of "precious things" it would appear that much more than enjoyment, great as that is, is involved. As our minds and affections become accustomed to value things as God values them, to account as precious that which he so speaks of, spiritual education and adjustment is acquired, and we find ourselves with ability to distinguish and identify that which is valuable in the sight of God. Our whole outlook and conversation would be in line with heaven; we would not be influenced by the false values of earth, and hence, according to Jeremiah 15: 19 as separating the precious from the vile our testimony would be in power — "Thou shalt be as My mouth." In these days of declension, when failure to value the preciousness of first love (Rev. 2: 4) has culminated in mistaking poverty for riches (Rev. 3: 17), how blessed to be found with those who, in any little measure, value the preciousness of His name and His word (Rev. 3: 8).

We often speak of "the testimony," but is it not significant that this is first mentioned at the moment when the Manna, a precious suggestion of Christ, is brought forward. Something so precious in the sight of God that He will have it deposited before Him and kept for generations, (Ex. 16: 33). Three wonderful words are brought forward for the first time in Exodus 16. The Sabbath (already of course in mind in Gen. 2: 3), the Manna and the Testimony. Would it not appear that the unique preciousness of and in the Person of Christ, undiscerned and unappreciated by man, is at once the blessed source of God's own rest and satisfaction and also the subject of His testimony to men?

Hence, beloved, in the New Testament we see preciousness embodied in a *Person*, the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as this preciousness in the power of the Holy Spirit engages our hearts and minds there is joy and delight for our God.

"His deep perfections gladly sing
And tell them forth to Thee."

In the contemplation of the same precious Person there is a testimony in power to men,

"We confess thee, Lord of glory,
Fruits of victory Thou hast won."

In our previous paper we saw in Malachi the wonderful collection of "precious things" which were in the mind of God for His earthly people. Is it not blessed to see in the beginning of Luke the same moral features which marked the remnant in Malachi? Anna who "spake of Him" (Luke 2: 38; Mal. 3: 16) and Simeon, just and devout, fearing the Lord (Luke 2: 25; Mal, 3: 16). As Simeon takes the Babe into his arms he embraces in that blessed Person *all* the preciousness which had been shown in type and promise, the Antitype of every type, the Yea of every promise. Think of the preciousness suggested in the very first verse of the New Testament, "Jesus Christ, the son of David" — every precious thought connected with the Throne and rights of God is established in a blessed Person. "Son of Abraham," every precious promise conceived in the heart of God for man alike established in Him. (Note the historical alteration, David first, for what is due to God must have pre-eminence).

As we study the gospels the unique preciousness and glories of Christ fill the heart and mind; His sayings in Matthew, His works in Mark, His holy compassions in Luke, and the charm, dignity and preciousness of His Person in John. Do we wonder that the first mention of "preciousness" in the New Testament relates to the movements of a heart so filled with the sense of His beauty and worth, that she pours out upon His blessed head "very precious ointment" (Matt. 26: 7). Soon that head was to bear a cruel crown of thorns, but that was anticipated by the fragrance of affectionate appreciation and devotion. The savour of such appreciation has permeated the testimony to Christ in the gospel throughout the centuries, a living testimony from hearts that value Him and His love above all that the world places value on. Let us in a spirit of holy adoration thus read the four gospels, listening to the preciousness of His word; seeing with quickened vision the beauty and power of His works; allowing the eternal blessedness of His precious love to fill our souls; and above all to be adoringly occupied with the glory and majesty of His Person, the Son of God, eternally precious to His Father (John 17: 24).

The preciousness embodied in that blessed Person has lighted up the awful darkness of death and the grave,

"Precious Name of Him who suffered

On that shameful tree."

but that same precious Person has broken the power of death and as we read the book of the Acts we see the opened heavens and Jesus the centre of the glory of God.

"Precious Name! enthroned in heaven,

Still that Name He bears,

On His brow the crown of glory

Now He wears."

Henceforth the testimony of the Holy Spirit, sent down from heaven, is to the glory and preciousness and worth of Christ, and the whole substance of the teaching and doctrine in the Epistles enhances that preciousness to our hearts.

As drawn to Him we know Him as the One, refused by men, but "chosen of God, and precious." (1 Peter 2: 4). "A chief corner stone, elect, precious" (1 Peter 2: 6). He has become the very strength and beauty of all that God is fashioning for His own praise and glory, and this unique preciousness is our present enjoyed portion. "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness" (1 Peter 2: 7, N.T.). Through infinite mercy we are numbered amongst those redeemed with "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1: 19) and to whom are given "great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1: 4). Everything centres in Him, every promise is secured through Him. We soon shall see the manifestation of His glory but in the meantime we are called as having "obtained like precious faith" (2 Peter 1: 1) to be loyal and true to Himself. This will involve testing and trial but has in view "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold . . . might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," (1 Peter 1: 7).

Whilst we await that day the Holy Spirit would not only engage us with precious features of Christ, but would form those traits in us morally. A glorious moment of consummation is in mind, when Christ in all His precious perfection shall be seen, He Who is refused now and by His side shall be His cherished bride. She will be the reflection of His precious worth, "Having the glory of God; and her light was like unto a stone most precious" (Rev. 21: 11). How like Himself!

"For ever Thy delight,
Clothed with Thy worth"

As that moment of enjoyed and satisfied affections draws near, when the preciousness of that blessed Person, our Lord Jesus Christ, shall fill the universe, may He Himself be more and more the Object of our affections.

"In Thy presence we behold Him
Object of Thy heart's deep love;
Boundless theme of adoration
In that scene of joy above.
In Thy grace Thou now hast called us
Sharers of Thy joy to be,
And to know the blessed secret
Of His preciousness to Thee."