

The New Order of Manhood

Gal. 1: 13, 14; Eph. 3: 8-11; 2 Tim. 4: 13.

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MARCH 1960

The change of dispensation which has been so much before us involves a change of manhood, and in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ we see an order of manhood which was never before manifested. The glory of Christ as Man transcends anything ever seen in men before, and yields unique pleasure for the heart of God.

The Lord Jesus said of John the Baptist that "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater," (Luke 7: 28). But there was an incident in the life of John, recorded for us in each of the four gospels and again in the Acts of the Apostles, in which John confesses his complete unworthiness in the presence of this glorious Man, even to the extent of being unfitted to unloose the sandals of Jesus. In referring to this utterance five times the Holy Spirit would appear to be emphasizing the greatness of Christ as Man. John further said "He must increase, but I must decrease," (John 3: 30). Of necessity all must make way for the glory of Christ.

When Jesus was born at Bethlehem an entirely new condition of things was present. It would be impossible in a short word to refer to all that was involved for God and for man in the glorious incarnation of Christ. We may refer to two outstanding things.

First, at the birth of Jesus the heavenly host exclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure (or, the delight of God) in men," Luke 2: 14 (New Trans.). These are three tremendously great and blessed matters, the full results of which are not yet seen, but all *will be secured*, and they will be secured in this blessed Man — the Lord Jesus Christ. God's good pleasure is centred in Him, and in Him God will accomplish all His glorious purpose, involving that wonderful moment when He, the blessed God, will "tabernacle with men."

Secondly, we read in Hebrews 1, that "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake *in time past* unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by (or, in) the Son." How great this blessed Person is, for every communication which God now makes is in Him, and He is able fully to express every thought of God. The mystery of His Person is involved in this, for though Man, He is Himself God.

We do well to meditate upon the greatness of Christ, and allow the Holy Spirit full liberty to show to us the preciousness of those things which, standing in relation to Christ, have been revealed to us in His, the Spirit's, day.

The apostle Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, speaks of himself as having "advanced in Judaism beyond many (my) contemporaries in my nation," (Galatians 1: 14, New Trans.). In that system of things, the old dispensation, room was made for man to exalt himself. Many utterances of the Pharisees in the gospels show how their minds were set upon self-exaltation. Saul outshone many of them; he held a place at the top. but on the way to Damascus he came into contact with the Man whom *God* had exalted; and the glory of that blessed Man blinded Saul's eyes as to his own greatness, but illuminated his heart with the pre-eminence and greatness of Christ. Completely ignorant as to who this glorious Person was he asks "Who are Thou, Lord?" But not many days afterwards he is declaring in his preaching, "that He is the Son of God," (Acts 9: 20). So in the synagogues themselves the testimony to

this glorious Man was announced.

Saul, the great man in Judaism, became Paul (little) in Christianity, and seems to have quickly imbibed the spirit of his Master. In the words and movements of Christ as recorded in the gospels we see how consistently He looked away from the greatness of man towards that which was small. He took a "little child," first to Himself, and then putting it in the midst of the disciples as an example to them, When He sought that of which He, the Lord, had need, it was to a *village* (not a *city*) that He sent. It was a little *lad* with barley loaves and *small* fishes whom He used in one of His wonderful works of compassion and power. And many of His sayings to His own are epitomized in the word, "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," (Luke 14: 11)

Hence we find Paul in the spirit of this when he speaks of himself in Christianity as "less than the least of all saints." What a great moral revolution had taken place within him; he is now expressing the features of manhood so blessedly seen in Christ Himself. This erstwhile Pharisee of the Pharisees now says, "As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, (Philippians 1: 20, 21).

To this self-abased man, this one who speaks of himself as, "less than the least of all," is committed, along with the grace needed for it, the unfolding of the deep truths of God, the "manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," (Eph. 3: 10, 11). For this cause he had been apprehended, and was held the "prisoner of Jesus Christ," and his ministry is replete with the glory and greatness of "the Second Man . . . the Lord from heaven," (1 Cor. 15: 47). There is no teaching which sets aside the first man, and exalts the Second Man, like that of the Apostle Paul. The glory of Christ had made such an impression upon him that, declaring on the one hand that he had but one Object before him — an exalted Christ, and on the other hand several times exhorting the saints to follow him in his desires after this blessed Person, he would, through his ministry, engage our hearts with the blessed Man who fills the heart and the thoughts of God Himself.

At the close of his pathway Paul, in writing to Timothy, his son in the faith, calls attention to the declension which had set in amongst the saints. In more than one of his epistles we learn that some were engaged with the *first* man; pride and self-exaltation were apparent, with a consequent lack of appreciation of the glories of Christ. All this tended to barrenness and lack of growth, in a word "winter" conditions. So in writing to Timothy, he asks him to bring, with other things, the "cloak that I left at Troas."

If we refer to Acts 20 we see what took place at Troas when Paul was there. Apparently there was no lack of gift, but conditions of failure and death came in. Eutychus "*sunk down*" with sleep and then "fell down;" but Paul "*went down*", exhibiting thus the features of the Man Christ Jesus so blessedly seen in the second chapter of Philippians.

It is the cloak of one who showed the "spirit of Jesus Christ" which is needed in the Sardis and Laodicean conditions around us; the cloak of a man who was "little in his own eyes." In Joshua 7, Achan saw a "goodly Babylonish garment," a garment of Shinar, the place where man sought his own renown and greatness in opposition to God (Genesis 11), and as bringing this garment in amongst the people of God, sorrow, failure and death ensued.

Let us seek grace, brethren, to exhibit the features of "smallness" which the cloak of Paul would suggest. *He* brought in living conditions at Troas; and as we are marked by similar features, the graces of the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, we in our day will be found contributing amongst His people that which, whilst making nothing of us, will magnify Christ in the hearts of the saints.