

Worship

Revelation 1: 5-8.

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PART THIRD. EARLIER MINISTRY, CONTINUED.

There is one remark which I would make about this portion, which will commend itself to the mind of a simple reader — that it comes in in the way of a *parenthesis*. If I may be allowed the expression, it comes in *intrusively*. It is an expression of the feeling of the heart of him to whom the message came — an expression of the worship of his heart. It is a common thing in Scripture, to find the course of the thoughts of the speaker interrupted by some burst of praise which could not be restrained. You have a similar thing in Romans 11: 33: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" when the apostle feels the subject too large for his heart to contain, or for his ability to explain.

If any one knows God, or Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, there will be assent to this, that the heart of a saint never finds itself in the presence of God or of the Lord Jesus without worship. With a poor sinner who does not know grace, it is something beside worship. A saint finds something beautiful before him, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

This book is not like the gospel of John, though written by the same person. The gospel of John in a peculiar way gives the history of the Lord Jesus as Son of God, and of the saints as sons of God. But in the Revelation, connected with the throne, the titles are not such as lead to Abba, Father: saints here are "kings and priests."

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, which was, and which is to come, and from the *seven Spirits* which are *before His throne*." Even the Spirit is seen in another character. Again, the Lord Jesus is not seen as the Saviour, but the "Prince of the kings of the earth." Directly the apostle John finds before whom he is, worship must come. There were affections in the heart of the apostle, and directly the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is presented to his soul, "Oh," he says, "that is the One who has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!"

One remark I would make on this portion, the circle of which comes before the mind. I would look at the picture as a whole. The apostle had the sense of such a fulness connected with the works and offices of the blessed Lord so laid upon his heart that he must give back to God. One of the most remarkable things in redemption is that we are enabled *to live to God*, of whom and to whom are all things. No one can say, "I serve God," who does not know redemption accomplished, salvation finished. If you do not know salvation as completed, you never can find yourselves in the presence of God but some horrid sin will start into your remembrance, and make you wish to get out. The saint can say, "I am here, and God is waiting to hear me." There is nothing in the presence of God to daunt him. He knows the eye of God and the ear of God are waiting for him. If you have not been washed you cannot think of getting into God's presence without fear.

To produce worship in us is the highest thing the love of God does. It is not what He makes us for others. He may take the Church up, and make her the habitation of God through the Spirit, but that is not making the Church something for God, for Christ. Now when we get into worship — that is what we get — it is all of God, of Christ. God will have His people in His presence to express their delight in what God has made them for His Son. God sought such to worship Him. God in heaven was desiring to hear the praises of John in banishment at Patmos.

"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory," etc. (Rev. 1: 6.) Not like the brazen censer — it was a *senseless* censer; but the praise goes up from us with affections warm, and we know the position in which God stands in to us. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." He is the receiver, and we the giver of worship. This is not merely the blessedness of a man able to praise; but in this picture we have the Person worshipped, and the one worshipping.

I would ask those who are not Christians, "Have you ever had a thought of the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who desires to have your praise?" I do not think nature takes up that thought — the graciousness of the Lord Jesus in standing, desiring to hear free, spontaneous praise.

To us who are Christians there is many a sweet thought in this little song of adoration. First, observe the way in which the apostle singles himself out. When Luther was once pressed as to justification by faith, Gen. 4 came into his mind as a reply, "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering." The person of Abel was accepted, and therefore it was simply of grace. There was only one place for Noah's dove to rest — the ark, and there is only one place for us to rest — the person of the blessed Lord. This song does not begin with, "To Him be glory and dominion," etc., but it marks out the person of the blessed Lord as its object. In glory we shall be able to express as we cannot now. There He is before us, and there our souls find perfect repose.

After that he proceeds in a beautiful divine order: "He has loved us." Who loved? The Lord Jesus. "He washed us;" and behind that, to an intelligent mind, comes in a volume. He loved us. It is a very different thing to say, "Yes, in Him there is love." He loved us. There was this real affection in Him — a personal love; that is the reason why praise comes out. The Church knows she is loved by Christ. We can turn to the Man in glory, and say, "He loved us." How shall I know He loved us, and not praise? There we get beautiful consistency in the continuance of the praise, "Washed us in His own blood." We had got sins, and He washed us from our sins in His own blood.

The only thing spoken of in connection with these people, is *their sins*. If you stand in God's presence with the sense of what the Lord Jesus has done, you know He has put away your sins. It is sweet to look at this point. The poor sinner has sins, and they are met by the Lamb's blood. The remedy for sin is pointed out, and we have known the use of this blood for ourselves. He that provided the blood has applied the blood. Most divinely perfect — the remedy is sufficient for the need.

Look at that word, "washed us." connected with the Lord Jesus Himself. Many have no rest in their hearts because they think they must do something themselves. The answer is, Christ first and Christ last. *He* washed. No heart is set free for praise which does not see that the Lord Jesus is the One who washed. Christ began the work, and Christ went on with the work. That word "sins" meets everything in my conscience, for nothing could escape his eye. Do you suppose that in any of those the Lord Jesus has washed He has left any sin behind? There was the love of the blessed Lord, and then comes, "He washed us from our sins."

He was the Lamb, and the blood was presented by Him as Priest. If you take up the details of office, connected with the, shedding and presenting the blood, you will find many of His offices. displayed. There is something very blessed when you think of the blood of the Lord Jesus as connected

with conscience. It was the Spirit speaking to John, God's thoughts about the blood; and when the mind comes to look at the thing, peace is found through the blood of the Lamb. This without controversy.

There is great beauty if we look at the order of the song. "That washed us from our sins," comes in as meeting the want of a soul in the presence of God always. But he does not stop there: He goes on to enlarge and prepare the blessing, and show what it is. "And hath made us kings and priests;" not sons with the Father — that we are, but this is not presented here. Christ may be presented in any character, and the eye of faith says, "That is the One that washed me." It is surely the expression of the wonderful love of God with regard to the Church. No measure in the human mind can ever comprehend divine love. He was forming something for His Son — giving glory to His Son; and in desiring to give glory to His Son, "He made us kings and priests." What is the thing which always occupies the mind of the blessed lord? The glory of God. If there is a kingdom and a temple to be opened, He must bring the Church there. (John 17: 24.) What sort of love must His be, that in the presence of God *He must* have His Church there? It is the sense of this love that makes the heart turn and render back, "To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

We want to search ourselves about this question of praise and worship. If your hearts are not full of praise and worship, there is not the savour of Christ. I beseech you to see whether or not you are holding your proper place as worshippers. Do you know what this praise is, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."