

## Some Marks of Wisdom's Children

Luke 7: 29-35, 47-50.

From an Address

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I desire to follow the line of the grace of God which has been before us. In doing so we cannot fail to draw attention to the vessel of grace, our Lord Jesus Christ. We are aware that the four Gospels each bring Him before us in some particular way.

In MATTHEW, the Gospel of the King, He is the Vessel of Administration. Not only does He enunciate the principles of the kingdom, but He demonstrates the power of it.

In MARK He is the Vessel of testimony.

In LUKE He is the Vessel of grace.

In JOHN He is the Vessel of Glory, for He both declared and manifested the Father's Name.

How much has been said and written on the inexhaustible theme of the Christ of the Gospels. As was earlier presented to us in ministry from the 5th chapter of Luke, Christianity is neither a modification of Judaism nor an appendix to it. It is not a patch on an old garment, nor is it new wine in old bottles. It is *entirely new*, and superseded the old. Let us emphasise that it is what it is because Christ is *Who and What He is*. He is the centre of gathering; His work, in redemption at the cross, has laid the foundation for all. I would say to my younger brethren, steep your souls in the truth of Christ's Person and Work and do it while you are young. Thank God for the grace which was brought to us by the Man of Luke's Gospel, He is the focal point of all the Scriptures (Luke 24: 27). He is the true Joseph — see Genesis 49: 22, "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall."

The law system could not contain the grace of God. Judaism is too small, but grace is so large and it reaches over the wall to bring us all, Gentiles and Jews, into richest blessing. "The grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has appeared" (Titus 2: 11, N.T.). That grace appeared in the Person of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of it we are here in this gathering tonight — saved. We are numbered with those who are styled — "wisdom's children." God has acted in just the right way to reach and bless those who otherwise would perish for ever. We have read Luke 7: 29 — "And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptised with the baptism of John."

They *justified* God! What does this mean? If we speak of God justifying the sinner — well, he is made right with God, he is declared to be righteous before God. If we justify God we do not make Him right, but declare that the way that He has taken to reach and bless us is just the right way. He drew near to where we were in the Person of the Son. He did not rend the heavens, emblazoning them with some miraculous phenomenon. Isaiah cried in his day — "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down . . ." (Isaiah 64: 1).

But He came down in lowly and attracting grace — Bethlehem's manger and Golgotha's cross unitedly tell us how He came — and what He has done that we might be brought from the distance and darkness; indeed, that we might be reconciled to God! Those who were then baptised were saying practically, "All that God says about us is absolutely true." They, unlike the proud Pharisees and

lawyers, accepted the counsel of God against themselves and found the grace that met all to God's satisfaction and their salvation. The self righteous would not lower themselves to confess the truth — they "rejected the counsel of God against themselves," but they missed the blessing and though our Lord was taunted that He was "a friend of publicans and sinners" yet, "Wisdom is justified of all her children." He who was the Friend of the friendless was justified in the way that grace had taken, by all who had "tasted that the Lord is gracious."

There is a new generation in the world, product of sovereign grace, and we seek to draw attention to some of their marks.

*Number 1* — surely is that they have come under the attraction of the Christ of God.

*Number 2* — as they have been drawn to Him — for they proved that He was able to "Draw and win and fill completely, till the cup o'erflow the brim" — they justify God. Let the hypocritical cavil and carp as they will, but wisdom is justified of *all* her children. Do we all declare that the resources of God have been rightly employed and directed? Had the Saviour not come as He has done, meeting "the claims of glory and the need of ruined men," we never could have been blessed at all. Are we then amongst this new generation — "Wisdom's children"? Three passages in the gospel come to mind in connection with this new generation. Here, Luke 7: 35, and in Luke 8: 21 — "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the Word of God, and do it." Again, Luke 10: 21 — ". . . Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;" thus a spiritual generation has been brought into being by the grace of God. Every sin that could have been charged against those who belong to it has been forgiven. In Luke 7: 48, the Saviour said to the "woman in the city, which was a sinner . . . thy sins are forgiven."

*Mark Number 3* is — they stand before God in the grace of forgiveness. Our Lord spoke those words of forgiveness in the house of an austere Pharisee who had denied Him the common courtesies of hospitality. The Lord Jesus said to him, verse 47 — "her sins which are MANY, are forgiven." In tender, charming grace He said to her, "Thy sins." No need to emphasise to her her guilt — she had wept it out at His blessed feet. The grace resident in Himself had drawn her into the uncomfortable atmosphere of the Pharisee's house, hence He said to the arrogant religionist, "her sins which are MANY are forgiven." The grace that had drawn her irresistibly to Christ loosed her from her sins, and His word gave her the assurance that all were forgiven, and *as forgiven* she "loved much." Do we wonder that those who sat at meat with Him said, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" The answer to the unspoken question was implicit in His final word to the woman — "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." thus Forgiveness, Salvation, and Peace, are the possession of Wisdom's children!

*Number 4* is Obedience. Wisdom's children are "obedient children" (1 Peter 1: 14) In Luke 8: 19-21, already alluded to, He owned, as in moral relationship with Himself, those who "hear the Word of God, and do it." This tests us always and everywhere. If I am young it tests me at school; it tests me in my home; as I grow older it tests me at my work; it tests me in the company of the brethren; it tests me in the path of service to the Lord. I am tested everywhere. Forgiveness is the fruit of sovereign grace — it is of Himself entirely. Obedience is a matter of responsibility — of my response in practical everyday living to the One who has blessed me. May we have grace to be true, to be real. How worthy is His that we should be so. May we by our conduct everywhere and at all times give plain witness to Whose we are and Whom we serve. In this same chapter (verse 35) was one who had been delivered from demon possession. Bound with chains and in fetters nothing could restrain him. It was not restraint but *freedom* that he needed. Whilst men could not bind him, the devil had bound him fast. Then he met the stronger than the strong man — Jesus — *He* set him free!

*Mark number 5* is that they are delivered from the power of Satan. We speak of three freedoms; from sin, the world, and Satan. "If the Son therefore shall make you free ye shall be free indeed." Yet the grace that freed this man enslaved him, for he besought the Lord that "he might be with Him." Are we equally and thankfully Christ's bondmen? What a blessed change of masters! And how changed the conditions of service. Those who went out to see what was done found the erstwhile demoniac, out of whom the demons had been cast, sitting — tranquil now — at the feet of his Deliverer. He was clothed and in his right mind. He had before been unfit for human society, but now he is in the true sense "made meet" for the presence of his Lord. Those who saw him were afraid! The mighty power of God had been operating and here was its evidence. Our Lord said to the man — "Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee." This is what commends witness to the saving grace of God, the evidence of a changed life! In Luke 9: 20 the Lord asked His disciples — "But Whom say ye that I am?"

*Mark number 6* is that Wisdom's children appreciate and confess the glory of their Lord. Many and varied were the expressed opinions of men but faith gladly owns the Person of the Christ. They know the answer to such queries as — "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?," and, "What manner of Man is this! for He commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey Him." Creation's Lord, the Master of the elements was there, yet in lowly and accessible grace. He is the pivot of our faith.

"What think ye of Christ is the test  
To try both your state and your scheme;  
You cannot be right in the rest,  
Unless you think rightly of Him."

John Newton, whose words are quoted, went on to say, "I dare not confide in His blood, nor on His protection rely, unless I were sure He is God."

*Mark 7* is in verse 23 — "If any man will come after Me, let him *deny himself*, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Wisdom's children take up their stand with and for a rejected Christ. It is comparatively easy to be a Christian in the company of fellow believers, in the gatherings and in the home where His precious Name is honoured. But we must face the world in one form or another. Am I prepared there to deny myself? At whatever cost to myself will I *take my* stand for my Saviour who was crucified for me? Do I make the *cross* mine? Am I so affected by this truth as to put the cross between myself and anything which would weaken my testimony as belonging to Him? In Luke 10: 20 the Lord exhorts His own to rejoice, not in the spectacular exercises of divine power, but that their names are written in heaven. "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3: 20). Let us never forget that before our names could be enrolled in heaven our precious Saviour was numbered with the transgressors! We can say then that the

*Eighth Mark* is that we are heavenly by the divine calling of grace. We are heavenly in origin, heavenly in destiny, and now have the privilege through grace supplied, to be heavenly in character (see 1 Corinthians 15: 47-52).

*Mark 9.* In Luke 10: 22, we have the light that the Father is so complacent in the Son that He has delivered all things to Him.

*Number 10,* they are brought to the heart of the faith system, for they have the Son's revelation of the Father. In verses 38-42, these members of the new generation learn that at the feet of Jesus is their place if they would be discipled in His Word.

*Number 11* is to listen under His Word. In the next chapter, verses 1-9, another feature, *Number 12* is dependent and persevering prayer.

As to Luke 11: 13, the Holy Spirit *has* been given to everyone who believes the gospel of their salvation. They are *sealed* with the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 1: 13). Reception of the Spirit, He who is the power for learning, practice, and worship, is mark

*Number 13.*

Luke 11: 34-36 speaks of the single eye — to be fixed upon its Object. Wisdom's children would be occupied with Christ. What a blessed occupation! This will make us true light-bearers in this dark world during His absence.

Philippians 2: 15, lights in the world, "irreproachable children of God" indeed, pleasurable to Him, and thus useful for Him. This is mark *Number 14.*

The crowning mark is given us in Luke 12: 31-40. Our treasure is with our Lord in heaven. We look for Him as Saviour, "Who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working of the power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself" (Philippians 3: 21).

Fitting indeed that we should close this simple survey of the marks of Wisdom's children with *Number 15*, the hope of His return. May we all be "like man that wait for their Lord."