

Christ: and the fulness there is in Him

Matthew 4: 18-23, Romans 8: 34.

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The office of the Spirit of God is to bring home to us the infinite fulness that there is in Christ, to make us satisfied with Him, and to produce in our lives an actual response to Himself.

Most of the controversies that we hear of today must, I think, be very wearying to hearts that love the Lord. To those who have real affection for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, to hear all these endless discussions about church functions or church rubrics is utterly wearying; and I am convinced that in Christendom there are hearts that are aching for a personal knowledge of Christ that will fill them to overflowing, and that they may be in full response to all that they learn of Him. The object of these meetings to-day is that we may help one another — God grant that we may recognize that all help comes from Him — but surely it is our desire to help one another in the pursuit of Christ in these very difficult days of formality and attention to externals, for this state of things does not satisfy hearts in whom the Spirit of God has produced longings after Christ.

There are in Newcastle itself a great number of people, I feel persuaded, who would discover if it be possible how to make everything of Christ. Feeling this I make reference to the Gospel of Matthew. In the Gospel of Matthew we begin with a very small apprehension of the Lord Jesus, even as a Babe. Turn to the first chapter for a moment, and you will see what I mean. The second half of Matthew 1: 21 says: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Now in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus this must be the beginning, but it is after all a very small beginning by comparison with what we may know of Him. If we read through the Gospel of Matthew, the One who is seen in all this condition of a Babe just born, grows upon us chapter after chapter, until, at the end of the Gospel (Matt. 28: 18) we find that He is great enough to fill heaven and earth. But I propose to just take up one or two details in the early chapters in order to suggest to you that in the Lord Jesus Christ is the answer to your every craving, and to your every desire.

Now the first presentation of Him is in the first chapter, and then under a *very simple name* — the name of JESUS. It may be remarked it is spelt in capital letters. Everyone who is beginning the Christian life, who has learned the grace of God to him, may rightly and joyfully say in his heart, "Well, I like that, because the Spirit of God has written the name of JESUS in capital letters on my heart."

Then the form in which He is presented is that of a little child — *the very smallest form* in which He can be observed in the Gospel, and in connection with *the very simplest service* — "He shall save His people from their sins."

This being a meeting for Christians, I take it for granted that those who are present have already learned the Lord Jesus in this simple way. Our sins would have sunk us down into eternal punishment, for our sins we should have been banished forever from the presence of God. But the Lord Jesus has become more than a name to us — He has become to us an indispensable Saviour. We have learned that through His sacrificial work our sins which are many have been atoned for, and in believing on Him they are all forgiven. "He will save His people from their sins."

But still our knowledge of the person of Christ may not be great when we only know Him as a

Saviour. It is therefore interesting to notice that in that very chapter we get suggestions of greater glory. Look at the 23rd verse. The birth of the Lord is in fulfilment of the Scripture spoken by the prophet saying, "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is 'God with us.'" Beloved fellow Christians, however small our apprehension may be to begin with, are we not conscious by the grace of God that there are vast, infinite glories in this Person who is our Saviour?

Matthew 2 shows Him in another light. "When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" Now although their apprehension of Him was but small at that time, these wise men were able to recognize in this One of whom they knew but little, the King of the Jews. Therefore they came, guided by the Word of God and the star, and we read, "When they were come into the house they saw the young Child with Mary His mother."

Now at this time, to speak after the manner of men, the Child was relatively small, and Mary the mother was relatively great, to sight. But these men were taught and led by God, by His providence, by His Word, and no doubt by His Spirit. Therefore when they saw the young Child with Mary His mother they fell down and worshipped HIM. Let us remember this, for we are surrounded by a very great change in the appearance of things from 300 years ago. Today we see a great religious system spreading its baneful influence through the whole of this land, and again and again insisting that attention must be paid to the mother. But when these wise men saw Him they fell down and worshipped one of the two — and that one was not the mother. They worshipped HIM.

We can recognize the great favour that God has given to the Virgin Mary, described as "Blessed among women," but, dear friends, when we come to the person of Christ there is no one that can be put alongside of Him. He stands out in distinct glory, even though our apprehension of Him must be but small to begin with. There can be no possible mistake in the true Christian's heart that, whatever honour be paid to the mother as a human vessel, the one who is the Object of our reverence, our faith, our worship, must be the Son.

Then you will notice that they first put themselves at His feet, and then they put all that they had at His feet. This surely is the result of a growing apprehension of the Lord Jesus that the young convert puts himself at the Lord's feet, and is glad to put all that he has at the Lord's feet as well. Indeed, when we read in the second chapter that He is enquired of and sought after as the one that is born King, are we not reminded of that passage in Peter where it speaks of the king as *supreme*? We are to render honour to those that are in authority - to the king as supreme. I challenge your hearts this evening. With the little knowledge that you have of the Lord Jesus to begin with, has He become to your affection the Supreme One whose glory makes you put yourself and all that you have at His feet?

Now look on to the end of Matthew 3. We find how very quickly we may grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. I pass over the first fifteen verses, urgent and important as they are, for in the Lord Jesus we find the One who fulfilled all righteousness. Others were brought to the banks of Jordan and baptized of John confessing their sins; the Lord came to the same place, and was baptized by the same servant, but on what a different line He came. They confessed their sins. They had lost everything and forfeited everything because of their sins; but here was One who came and submitted to the same baptism who came on this other line of fulfilling all righteousness.

The young Christian has this to learn — that there is perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ. There never was in any detail either within or without any flaw, anything that could cause the heart to have a sense of disappointment in the Lord Jesus. He is not a disappointment. We may find in Him a Friend

whose virtue commands our honour, our worship, our adoration. We are delighted with Him, the more we know Him. The more time we spend in His company the more do His perfections open out before us. These four Gospels are given to us to open out what He is in all His blessed ways on earth.

Now come to the end of the chapter, verse 16 — "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him. And lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Now you notice that in the presence of those standing on the banks of Jordan as He came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and the Holy Ghost distinguishes Jesus. John the Baptist was there — eminent servant, successful preacher; there were crowds of converts, the people who had come under the power and influence of John's ministry; but the Spirit of God signalizes the Lord Jesus Christ before all our eyes, distinguishes Him, puts honour upon Him. Then at the same time there is heard this communication out of heaven for the delight of our hearts, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Thus by the time we have reached the third chapter we find that the one who was the object of our faith in the first chapter has grown so rapidly upon us that we have discovered Him to be the adequate Object of the love of God, and the Man in whom God has found His good pleasure. Why, dear friends, a whole world of interest opens up to us, we can see that there is a glory and fulness in Christ we had never dreamed of before.

Now come to Matthew 4. Tested by the devil He answers by the Word of God. I pass that over, but will you look at verses 13, 14, 15 and 16? "Leaving Nazareth He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast in the borders of Zebulon and Nephtholim; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulon and the land of Nephtholim by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw *great light* and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death *light is sprung up.*"

I do not think I can convey to you the wonderful picture that this gives to one's soul of the condition of things up against which we find ourselves today. You find in the picture the nation of Israel in great darkness. You find religion certainly, you find synagogues, you find the great Cathedral of the Jewish Faith at Jerusalem, you find all the services carried on in their splendour and regularity, the feasts, the sacrifices morning and evening, the choral services, the Psalms of David regularly sung, and all this great organization of religion centring upon Jerusalem, and carried on by the ordained clergy of those days. The whole system, imposing, magnificent, was one that appealed in every way to the eye and the mind. All the record of antiquity lent glamour to the practice of this religion — songs beautiful, sweet, grand, and true, sung continually, incense floating on the air. But you find the whole system — EMPTY! Because there was no glory there — there was no glory in it. There was the great organized religion of that day, but I repeat no glory in it. The glory had left as long ago as the days of Ezekiel, and had never returned.

Now down there in Galilee mark this Person whom you and I know. He was humble in His walk in life, nothing striking in His appearance, had never been recognized by the ecclesiastical authorities of the day, a Person living for a long while in a village of which it was said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" going down then to Capernaum, a small fishing village. But this Person, strange to say, is the missing glory — this Person is the one in whom we see the great light — the light of God.

If we take these pictures from God's Word and study them, do they not help us in the midst of the difficulties by which we find ourselves surrounded in these days of ever-growing apostasy? From the highest to the least, in some form or other, the emptiness of it perplexes us, our hearts are sore because

of it. Oh! dear friends, let us remember that in Christ there is still preserved for us all the light of God. The great thing is to know how we may get into contact with Christ.

Then, the second thing is in that chapter in the 18th verse: "Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers," and in verse 21 — two more; and they immediately left the ship and their father and followed Him because He called them. This is to me a very wonderful thing. I think that we ought to take it to heart, seeing that all that organized religion, although originally inaugurated and instituted by God, was but an empty show, as the Lord Himself said of them, "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." That being so, you find God present among His people in the Person of Jesus, for His name is Emmanuel, "God with us," apart from it all, and calling individuals around Himself.

Do you not see the position? In Him there was all the Resource of God, in Him you find the one who was great enough to be the object of the Father's love and the Man of God's good pleasure. There He was in God's behalf calling people round Himself, in separation from the decayed religiousness of that day. Evidently it was a very small beginning — one Person and two followers to begin with, then two others. Just four gathered round and following the Lord Jesus.

A very simple beginning — but I would like to ask you, if you had been as earnest in those days as you are tonight to find out something about God and God's way for you, what would you have done in the circumstances? I know that the pull would have been very great to go back to Jerusalem, to go on with things there. All the Old Testament Scriptures if read in the letter only would point you to it, and all the order and splendour of the services. The fact that it had been the divine centre would have appealed to you, and it would have been a decidedly strong pull. When you saw the crowds going up to Jerusalem, as was often the case, I feel sure that it would have required a very great enlightenment from God for you to have said "No" to all that, and to have taken up the peculiar position and pathway of this lowly Jesus. But now come! Supposing you had been there, and with a real desire to know God and to be in the light of God, would you not have seen, being taught by the Holy Spirit, that there was now a new Centre round whom God was gathering souls? All the religion was going on as before, but now God had commenced this new work of drawing souls out of it all to the Person of Christ, and they were to find in Him the great Resource of God.

The next thing is in the end of the chapter. It says in verse 23 that "Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

Not only is the light of God — the whole Truth that God had to present to man — presented in Jesus, but the power of God was there; the power of God that could meet all the need of this distracted and diseased and sorrowing people. There was the power of God in Him to meet every single case.

Now these things are pictorial. If you read on in the Gospel you will see in the Sermon on the Mount there is not only light and power, but wisdom too. There is the ability to legislate in the kingdom. Then in the eighth chapter (verses 16, 17) you have a wonderful record of His sympathy. That really led me to Romans 8, because in view of the extraordinary position of things today I am going to indicate to you what will be a comfort to you.

It is this. That this particular Person who was then the divine Son, and was gathering people round Himself, in whom were the light of God, and the power and wisdom of God, — this very one, having made atonement by the sacrifice of the cross, has now been raised from the dead and is seated in glory. "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again."

I would like to assure you of this, that on the throne of God sits this glorious Person — one in whom God is made known to us, and who is for God, a Man perfectly according to His own heart. That Person is there, and actively engaged for you. He knows the difficulty you are under. He knows the position you find so difficult. He knows the exercise of your heart, and there He is praying for you.

And not only that, but He is rolling down for us the light and grace that we need, and the guidance — sending out the light and guidance that we need in order that we may discover Him to be our one unfailing Resource. Oh! that God might direct your hearts thus in the midst of every exercise to the wonderful Resource that there is in the Person of Christ.

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