

1 Corinthians 15:46 (R) 67927

Bible Treasury: Volume 12, Heavenly and His Heavenly Ones, The: 1 Cor. 15:46 (15:46)

Two efforts of the enemy are characteristic of the present day, and go along together with the humanizing Christ, and the giving a worldly character to Christianity, leading in result to multifarious forms of human religiousness and of earthly organization, having little or nothing in common but this, that they exhibit practical departure from heavenly principles and grievous independence of the divine persons.

It is therefore of no little moment that we should recognize that Christianity in its very essence is as heavenly as He who inspired it. Many are they who accept its divine authorship, who have never adequately apprehended it to be an absolutely heavenly thing, though in an earthly locale. But practically we find that the less it is apprehended as heavenly, the less also will its divine aspect be before the soul. And this we may safely predicate, that it is impossible to understand its character and its scope, unless in its origin, in its essence, in its operation and in its end, it is seen to be altogether a heavenly product for a heavenly purpose. Outside a very small circle, how rarely do we meet a Christian who understands his parentage, and occupies according to God, his present portion! How contracted and how erroneous are the commonly-prevailing thoughts of what Christianity is. How little is it accepted as the reflection of a heavenly Christ in a heavenly people redeemed from the earth, who are here only for Himself and looking for translation at His coming!

"The first man of the earth, earthy," had been running his carnal and material course for forty centuries here below, before "the second man" paid a visit of three and thirty years to the same scene, having been sent into it in grace to "the first." As man, He was, He is, "the heavenly," and by this title is contrasted with "the earthy." In God's reckoning He was "second man," for all before God counts as one; and He was "last Adam," for there could be no more after. But more than this He was "from (or out of) heaven" as the first was, "out of the earth, made of dust." Refused and cut off from the earth, having nothing, He is now the risen Man in the glory of God, and alike in incarnation and in resurrection is He "the heavenly" —there, now and eternally!

Further, as is He, "the heavenly, such also the heavenly (ones)." There is, it is admitted, another aspect of Christianity in which birth and profession give status, and wherein are certain privileges and answering responsibilities; but what is now before us is a matter of race, and as to this we are born of God, are partakers of the divine nature, and just as truly as the angels, are we one of the heavenly families. The One "who lived, who died, who lives again," has redeemed unto Himself a chosen race of which, as the risen Man He is the glorified federal head, and this word— "As the Heavenly, such also the heavenly (ones)" —so constitutes Christianity in its very essence, that every bit of it which is a genuine thing before God, expresses in word or in deed, the cardinal truth that man is in the glory of God, and God is glorified thereby. One who was once visible upon earth, "in likeness of flesh of sin" (Rom. 8:8), sits now in a glorified, but no less real, positive human body in the Father's throne. From the glory of God; from the throne of the Father; and in the risen, exalted Man who fills all heaven with His peerless presence. Christianity has its origin; and in the power of the Holy Ghost alone, witness from thence of His exalted majesty and glory, it has its activities in so far as they are according to God. "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high" —marks its starting-point, both as to time and place. It is thus "the heavenly" gone back to heaven—man in the glory of God—in whom it takes its rise; and it is this fact—the parent truth of Christianity—which imparts to it its distinctive character. It is a divine thing as He is divine; it is heavenly as He is heavenly: He is its sure foundation, its tried corner-stone, its immovable key-stone, its crowning top-stone! It is all and altogether for His glory, and therefore its operation is progressive assimilation day by day of His heavenly ones to Him, "the heavenly," by the action of the Spirit of God, and this alone constitutes practical Christianity of the highest, the true type. And as He and they look along the vista of earthly trial and testimony to the consummation of blessedness beyond, they contemplate the issue and end in the many sons brought to glory, when that unsullied scene of untold joy, which has ever been the true home and habitat of Christianity, shall be reached for aye.

When He was here in the days of His flesh, "knowing he came from God and went to God," He took a towel and girded Himself, and washed the feet of His heavenly ones elect, and in principle that word applies (in a lower sense, of course) to us, for we too may say we have come from God and are going to God, and when He who is coming returns in the air, we shall be eternally with God, and in the likeness of the bosom—Son of the Father. Meanwhile we blessedly experience His tender solicitude in removing with a practiced hand every defilement that we contract in passing along an earthly scene, nor will He cease this heavenly service of His faithful love and unwearied grace, until we assume "the image of the heavenly" at His return.

If we look at the origin of Christianity, we see that it sprang from the heart of the Father) as it takes its title from Him who adorns His throne, and it is most interesting to trace how in every step of its delineation in the word, the Spirit of God indicates its wonderful and varied relations to the Father. It was the Father sent His Son to be Savior of the world. (1 John 4:14.) In Him the glory of the only-begotten of the Father was beheld. (John 1:14.) His ever-enjoyed place in the bosom of the Father made Him competent to declare Him. (Ver. 18.) Here was He about His Father's business. (Luke 2:49. What He saw the Father do He did. (Ver. 19.) The will of the Father alone was what He sought to fulfill. (Ver. 30.) The Father's works were given Him to finish. (Ver. 36.) The Father's name it was in which He was Come. (Ver. 43.) The Father gave to us the true bread from heaven (chap. 6:32), and gave us to Him. (Ver. 37, 39, and also chap. 18: 6, 11, 12, 24.) It is learning of the Father brings us to the Son. (Chap. 6: 46, 65.) The life everlasting is the Father's commandment. (Chap. 12: 50.) The words, also, the Son affirms to be the Father's (chap. 14:10-24), and when He goes away it is to prepare a place for us in the Father's house. (Chap. 14: 2.) The Father holds the sheep in His hand (chap.10: 29) is the husbandman who purges the fruit-bearing branches of the vine (chap. 15: 1, 2), that He (the Father) may be glorified in our "much fruit." (Ver. 8.) The Father is to be asked in the Son's name, and that which we ask, the Father will give, for He Himself loves us. (Chap. 16: 23, 27.) The glorified Son shows us plainly of the Father (ver. 25), and is now glorifying Him. (Chap. 18: 1.) The eternal life is the knowledge of the Father and the Son (ver. 3), and those who have it are kept in the Holy Father's own name (ver. 11), are sanctified through the Father's word which is truth (ver. 17-19); have the Father's name declared unto them and are loved of the Father's

heart, even as He is loved. (Ver. 26.) By the glory of the Father has he been raised up (Rom. 6:4); to the Father's throne has He been taken (Rev. 3:21); and from thence has He sent down "the promise of the Father" —the Holy Ghost. (Acts 1:4; iii. 33.)

These are a few only of the scripture marks of the Father's relations to that of which we speak, all of which are of incalculable value as forming an essentially divine bulwark to Satan's present efforts terrestrialize Christianity, and to humanize its Author, clearly the Father is neither earthly nor human. Christianity then is the revelation of the Father, by the person and work of the Lord Jesus, His Eternal Son, in the presence and power of the Holy Ghost as "the promise of the Father." Coming forth from His blessed heart according to eternal purpose and counsels, it is based upon the atoning work and acquired glories of the eternal Son, and has its unfolding by the living energy of the Spirit of God dwelling in us. By Him is its heavenly character wrought out, through and in "the heavenly ones" whom grace has reached for this precious character of blessing, as the associates; in eternal glory, and in heaven of Him who is emphatically, "the Heavenly."

Two questions naturally arise here. (1) Have we truly accepted the fact that generically we are as heavenly as He who adorns the Father's throne? (Compare John 17:16 with Heb. 2:11.) (2) How far does the character and order of our lives make patent that our former earthly standing has been eternally abrogated to make room for the new and indissoluble relations we hold to the Man whom God has gratified His own heart in exalting to highest glory? Could believers answer these inquiries satisfactorily it would be utterly impossible that they should go on in practical fellowship with the course and current of this world; governed by its principles, giving utterance to its maxims, aiding its objects, adopting its practices, and accepting its patronage, the fruit of which is as the apples of Sodom, and whose reaping shall ever be leanness and poverty and wretchedness of soul.

May He, "THE HEAVENLY," so blessedly connect with Himself the hearts of those who have accepted His heavenly call, and who know that what they have been brought into is as intrinsically of heaven as it is radically of God, that our Christianity may not comport with that of "this poor, faithless world," but may, through grace upon grace, be ever acquiring in an increasing degree a character suited to its divine origin, expressive of its celestial destiny and redolent with the graces and the virtues of a glorified Christ!

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