Colossians - Commentaries by Andrew Miller

Meditations on the Grace and Glory of the Blessed God, Meetness for Heaven

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MAN in his lost condition is the object of the grace of God. But where does that grace find him? how does it deliver him? what does it do for him? and where does it set him? As the slave of Satan and of darkness it finds him, out of this condition it delivers him, from all his guilt it cleanses him, and sets him in the light and liberty of the free-born children of God. The soul's blessing is complete: not by a rule given him to obey, not by long watchings, fastings, prayers, individual or concerted-good as these things may be-but by the grace of God acting in power, and setting him in an entirely new relationship with Himself.

So far does this operation of grace transcend all human thought, that it can only be understood in the simplicity of faith, and by setting aside all present experience as a guide. The word of God reveals it, faith receives it, and maintains it to be true beyond a question. Experience we shall have, but it will be the experience of a joy and a happiness answering to the truth believed, and to the grace of God in which we stand. To look within for evidences of our pardon and acceptance is to be filled with darkness and uncertainty.

The believer in his new place-this wondrous place of measureless blessedness-can only worship. He has nothing to ask for as regards the blessing of his soul, he is complete in Christ, though in everything by prayer and supplication he is to let his requests be made known unto God, as to his whole path here below. But his prayers are full of praise; so perfectly at rest, so assured of the changeless favor of God, his heart, like David's cup, overflows. How can it be otherwise? Hear what the apostle says:-

Verse 12. Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Here we are arrested, overwhelmed, by the greatness of the grace. No human pen can add to the fullness and blessedness of these words. We do well to pause, and meditate on the vast but gracious thought—made meet to share the portion of the saints in light. Not merely to share the inheritance of saints, or of saints in heaven, but of saints " in light"-in the light of our Father's immediate presence. How absolute is the effect of the work of Christ on the soul! Whiter than snow, we stand in the light where holiness and righteousness dwell, and find that we are made meet to enjoy the children's portion there.

But the saints here referred to, some may suppose, must be advanced saints, those who have reached great attainment in the Christian life. No, not so; what is said here is said of all who believe in the Lord Jesus, in every period in life, and in all ages and in all countries. The youngest as well as the oldest, the most ignorant and the most learned, who believe, are made meet by the Father for the light in which He dwells-it is the work of God in Christ Jesus, and can never fail. The Christian, from the day of his conversion, is in the light as God is in the light. Practically, we know, both young and old in 'the divine life may forget this, may not always walk according to the light, may indeed be sometimes in a dark state and unhappy. Still, he is always in the light, as to his place and acceptance in Christ; that is now his native place, and can never know any change, but this makes the failure of Christians all the more serious. The grace of God, however can never fail, and, blessed be His name, we stand in grace.

The penitent thief on the cross, we are assured, was as fit for Paradise the moment he believed as if he had lived fifty years the most devoted saint on earth. His crown would have been different, but he himself would not have been better fitted for the realms of light and glory. He had Christ and His acceptance in heaven. The prodigal son is another instance of the same kind, a blessed picture, an example-ever fresh, ever refreshing-of every case of conversion. Met by a Father's love, reconciled with a Father's kiss, sealed with a Father's ring; the best of everything in heaven is his. He leaves the husks for the fatted calf-that was his last meal in the old country, this his first in the new. But could he ever have better- Christ in resurrection? And could he ever lose his robe, his ring, with all his new treasures, in his Father's house? Impossible! The once lost sheep, safely within the gates of glory, no harm can ever reach it there; no evil can ever disturb that scene of love; no enemy can ever invade those peaceful shores-that happy land of pure, unmingled, eternal, changeless blessedness!

All this is true to faith now; ours is always a present meetness. Oh, what rest there is to the heart in grace! We can think and speak of those who have finished their course, not according to the variableness of early piety, but according to the true, unvarying, grace of our God. We read of their fitness, their welcome, their home, their companions, in light, in the words of eternal truth. The shadow of a doubt can never cross the mind as to our dear departed. The messenger of peace may have come at an earlier hour than he was expected, but he could never find him unprepared. No matter where he was, or what the circumstances may have been, his last moments were the happiest in his existence. To depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better, closes the pilgrim's weary way, and begins his new eternal song, with the saints that have gone before, in the presence of their Lord. Dear and loved ones may surround and smooth the pillow on which the Weary lead reclines.; or he may be alone, far away from a well-known voice, tossed on life's roughest wave; but our God is there, and has ordered everything. We can always trust in Him.

" My bark is wafted from the strand

By breath divine,

And on the helm there rests a hand

Other than mine.

One who has known in storms to sail,

I have on board;

Above the raging of the gale

I have my Lord.

He holds me when the billows smite:

I shall not fall.

If sharp, 'tis short; if long, 'tis light:

He tempers all.

.Safe to the land!-Safe to the land!

The end is His,

And then with Him-go hand in hand

Far into bliss."

But however sure and certain that the separation is only for " a-little while," and that good is the will of the Lord, the poor human heart is bowed down beneath the weight of a sorrow that has cast its dark shade over everything around, and deepens by the tender recollections of a thousand associations day by day. It is not unbelief, it is not murmuring, it is the agony of a bereaved affection. 'Oh, mysterious agony! Thy voice is groans and sighs; thy repast is tears, yet we would not be withdrawn from thee, we love to feed upon thee, we love to dwell with thee alone. It changes everything here below, but more to some than to others. The paths of the wilderness may be dark and lonely, the poor body may be feeble, the spirit may be crushed, the heart may lie bleeding, the shadows of death may so thicken around us in the valley, that we are unable to proceed, and can only say, " Father, take my hand, and through the gloom lead safely home thy child."

Time alone restores. After a while the sorrow sleeps, but never dies; or it may ebb like the -tide, but flows again as deep as ever. Communion with the Lord is the only healing balm for the wounded spirit, and communion with His word the true means for recovering power for service. And nothing will so naturally and sweetly take a sorrowing heart off itself as being interested in the salvation of others for the Lord's glory.

We can only just glance at the next two verses, though they are of such rare beauty and importance.

Verses 13, 14. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Here we have the character of the work which sets us in the light. This great blessing-made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light-depends upon two things-Deliverance and Forgiveness. Complete deliverance from the power of darkness, from the whole realm and region of the enemy; and not only so, " we are translated into the kingdom of his dear Son." Both are absolutely complete now in the reckoning of faith. " Who hath "-not who may, or will, but " who hath delivered us." Redemption and the forgiveness of sins sum up the Father's blessing to His children, in happy association with the Son of His love, throughout the eternal ages. See also Eph. 1:3-6; 2:4-7.

The Lord grant that all who read these lines may be led to inquire, "Am I ready, should the summons come to-night? or am I still the slave of Satan, and in the realm of darkness?" There is no middle place. Every one who reads this paper is either made meet by the Father for the inheritance of the saints in light, or he is still under the power of darkness. But, oh, how great the difference! The bright inheritance on high, or the dark regions of hell below! Which is it to be, my dear reader? Make thy choice now; let thy heart be decided for Jesus now: rest not, sleep not, until thou hast surrendered thy whole heart to Jesus. One look to Him in faith changes everything-changes thy position, changes thy present state of mind, and changes thy destinies forever. He has died for sinners-He has died for thee; what hast thou done for Him? He has paid the ransom price adequate for the redemption of ail.

" I gave My life for thee,My precious blood I shed,That thou might'st ransomed be,And quickened from the dead,I gave My life for thee;What hast thou given for Me?"

The blessed Lord still waits to receive all who come to Him, and welcomes them as He welcomed the penitent thief and the prodigal son; surely that is encouragement enough. Oh, be at once decided for the Lord; own His claims, bow to His word, believe in His love, and rejoice in all the grace which is thine in Him. And then should the Lord come for His saints before death comes for thee, thou wilt be ready to ascend with them to meet thy Lord in the air. Come, oh come, happy morning, come! Then shall all tears be dried, and all shadows shall flee away. It is the morning without clouds; it is the morning when our loved departed shall rise again; when we shall be reunited in our bodies of glory, all perfectly conformed to the image of the Lord, and dwell together, an unbroken circle, in the bright, bright beams of His unchanging love, throughout the countless ages of eternity.

" 0 happy morn! the Lord will come,

And take His waiting people home

Beyond the reach of care;

Where guilt and sin are all unknown:

The Lord will come and claim His own,

And place them with Him on His throne,

Thy glory bright to share.

The resurrection-morn will break,

And every sleeping saint awake

Brought forth in light again;

0 morn, too bright for mortal eyes!

When all the ransomed church shall rise,

And wing their way to yonder skies-

Called up with Christ to reign.

O Lord my pilgrim-spirit longs

To sing the everlasting songs

Of glory, honor, power:

When heaven and earth, and all things yield,

My Savior will be still my shield,

For He has to my soul revealed

Himself my strength and tower."

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