

“Without Faith it is impossible to please God”

My beloved brethren and sisters,

One of the principles which run throughout Scripture is the necessity for our faith to be tried. The Apostle Paul wrote:

“Without faith, it is impossible to please God”.

Silver and gold has to be assayed or tested, to prove whether it is genuine or not. Peter uses this figure in 1 Peter 1:5-9. So with us. Unless our character is tested it is of no value - so we read, “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”. Brother Thomas wrote this of the trial or testing of our characters:

“Probation is a refining process. It purges out a man’s dross, and brings out the image of Christ in his character; and prepares him for exaltation to his throne” (“Elpis Israel”, p.75).

It was necessary for Adam and Eve to be tried in the beginning. It was necessary for Job, of whom we are reading at the moment, to be tried - and above all it was necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ to be tried. So it is necessary for our characters to be tried if we would attain to the kingdom of God.

Genesis chapter 22 showed us how Abraham’s faith was sorely tried, in that he was asked to sacrifice his beloved son. When the genuineness of his faith was proved, the angel stayed his hand and he did not have to sacrifice his son. But the offering up Isaac as recorded in Scripture powerfully points forward in detail to the sacrifice of God’s beloved Son.

We see this again in our readings from Job. Job’s name means *hated*, and the word “enmity” in Genesis 3:15, where God put enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman; this word enmity is from the same root. Job was the seed of the woman and was a type of Christ. He was opposed by Satan, an adversary present at the meeting recorded in Job 1, and then when his three friends came, supposedly to comfort him, they instead verbally attacked him and also became his adversaries. So he said to them in chapter 19:5:

“If indeed ye will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me my reproach (or in the RSV, “and make my affliction an argument against me”)

God had afflicted Job and now his three friends afflicted him whom God had afflicted. This was the same with the Lord Jesus Christ as we see from Psalm 69:26:

“For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded”.

But also we see from Chapter 33 how Job saw the need for a mediator - and this points forward to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But let us note with regard to the Lord Jesus that in order to become a Mediator, he had to be tried and afflicted as Job was tried. We read therefore of him in Hebrews 4:15;

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”

And in chapter 5:7-10:

“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec”.

Because of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, as Job suffered, he has been highly exalted and called of God a high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Being a high priest, he is also a mediator.

Let us now turn to Job. Job’s three friends had now ceased to answer him. However during the discourse, there was a young man sitting, listening to them in complete silence. Let us note his words in chapter 32:6-14:

“And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgement. (v.12) Yes, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words: Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom: God thrusteth him down, not man. Now he hath not directed his words against me: neither will I answer him with your speeches”.

Now, let us turn to Job 33. Let us note Elihu’s words in verses 3-6:

“My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly. The Spirit of El hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. . . (v.6) Behold, I am according to thy wish in God’s stead: I also am formed out of the clay”.

In these words Elihu sees himself as a mediator for Job, one according to his wish in God’s stead, who is also formed out of the clay.

Then in verses 19-24, he describes Job’s situation:

“He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. (reading from RSV) If there be for him, an angel, a mediator, one of a thousand to declare to man what is right for him: Then he (God) is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom”.

Elihu now defines a mediator. He is one of a thousand and he declares to man what is right for him. The word *ransom* in verse 24 is the Hebrew *kopher* which means a *covering or redemption price* and it derives from the word rendered frequently as atonement in the Old Testament. Both these things have been fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ. He is both the Mediator and the one who has provided a covering for our sins. Job needed to know what was right for him and the Lord Jesus Christ has showed what is right for us.

Let us turn to Romans 3:21-26:

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his (God’s) righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus”.

Truly all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Not only do we sin but we come short of the glory of God. From the beginning a mediator was needed who was made of the clay as we are and moreover, although tempted in all points as we are was righteous. One was needed, remember the words in Job, “to declare to man what is right for him”. God has provided this in his beloved Son. Jesus declared the righteousness of God. How did the Lord Jesus show this? Through his death, as we have just read, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness. . . “. The word *propitiation* is the word for *the mercy seat*. Moreover it was a blood sprinkled mercy seat. It was therefore the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement; the day of coverings, for this was the only day in the year when it was sprinkled with blood. Let us turn to Leviticus 16:15:

“Then shall he (Aaron) kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins”.

Let us note; the mercy seat was sprinkled with the blood of the sin offering. The mercy seat pointed forward to Christ. So the Lord Jesus Christ was symbolically sprinkled with his own blood, showing that it was necessary for him to offer for himself as well as for us.

Brother Carter comments on these words in Romans 3:25 in his “Letter to the Romans”. I shall summarise some of what he has said.

“God’s righteousness did not, and could not, ignore sin. . . Hence there must be this declaration of God’s righteousness as the basis for forgiveness. . . To understand the subject, it becomes essential to find out in what way Jesus showed that God was righteous in all His appointments, in order that sins might be forgiven”.

We begin to see it at Jesus’s baptism;

When John demurred to the request of Jesus for baptism, Jesus answered, “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness”. . . We see Jesus, a member of Adam’s race, voluntarily submit to a rite which symbolises burial, and therefore death. . . God was well pleased with his Son. . . We see Jesus on the night of his arrest. . . knowing that it was his Father’s will that he should go forward to suffering and death, he addresses the Father. . . “O Righteous Father”. We see him in the cross. . . Was it right he should be there? . . . It was right that he was there because he was a member of a race that was mortal, dying because of sin. His submission to it was a voluntary declaration that God was righteous in involving all in death” (*“The Letter to the Romans”, p.45-46*).

The Lord Jesus Christ has shown then what is right for us. As he died, so we must die to our old way of life and this we do in baptism. Thereby God’s righteousness is manifested and he justifies or accounts righteous those who believe in the Lord Jesus. The Master’s willing obedience to his heavenly Father is an example to us to willingly obey his word, whatever the consequences.

These things are brought before us in our readings in Zechariah 9:9:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass”.

These words are quoted in the New Testament and applied to the Master riding into Jerusalem prior to his crucifixion. Note, “he is just”, i.e. he is righteous. He was about to declare the righteousness of God in his crucifixion. Thereby he brought salvation. He was able to save us, i.e. to justify us. We then read in Zechariah 9:11:

“As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water”.

Let us compare this with Job 33: 28:

“He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see light”.

Through Christ’s sacrifice in which he shed the blood of the new covenant, we who were once prisoners, in bondage to sin and death, can be delivered from the grave or the pit.

The outcome of that great work of salvation which the Father wrought through his beloved Son is brought before us in our reading in Revelation 7. In this chapter there is a multitude spoken of and we read of them in verses 9-10:

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb”.

This great multitude represents those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover they have been sealed as we see from verse 3:

“Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads”.

How are we sealed in our foreheads. Sealing is instruction and this we see from our chapter in Job- 33:16:

“Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction”.

We are sealed by our minds being instructed in the word of God. In the days of the Apostles they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The only way we can be sealed now is by the Spirit word, this word which we have in our hands. Hence the importance of daily reading of the word so that it is impressed in our minds, so that we have the mind of Christ. So the Apostle Paul exhorted in Ephesians 3:17-21:

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ..”

This great multitude, who will have been raised from the dead will be there in the kingdom standing before the Lamb because of what the Lamb has done for them as we see from Revelation 7: 13-17:

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them”.

We hope brethren and sisters to be among this number. To be among this number we must come out of great tribulation, so that the genuineness of our faith is proved. We have the example in Job and above all in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must also have washed our robes in the blood of Christ. We do this, this afternoon in the partaking of the emblems. Let us conclude with the words of Peter in 1 Peter 1:18-23:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you. Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might stand in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever”.

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