

19/5/13

Exhortation

Reading: 1st Thessalonians 5: 9 - 11

Once more we find our selves gathered together around these emblems of our Heavenly Father's love. Once more we are reminded of the Love of our God, shown too us through the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who we are to shortly remember in the partaking together of bread and wine, in memory of his sacrifice, but also importantly for us, the promise of his imminent return.

1st Thessalonians 5 and verses 1 - 2

“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night”.

That day is fast approaching, everything in our world is screaming for the intervention of our Heavenly Father, as our society disintegrates under the weight of the sinful folly of men and women. Because (*as Romans declares*) they do not like to retain God in their knowledge, our Heavenly Father has given them up and over too:

- Uncleaness through the lusts of their own hearts
- Unto vile affections
- Unto a reprobate mind

For because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Who through their hard and impenitent hearts treasurest up unto them selves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Who will render to every man according to his deeds, unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath?

Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 3 – 7

*“Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. **But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,** Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”.*

1st Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 9

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ”.

Our Heavenly Father has not appointed or destined each one of us to be recipients of his wrath. For we have responded to his love in the gospel message and we have not despised his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering brethren and sisters. We are here today once more in response to his loving mercy, as shown in the emblems before us.

Yes we are no better than those without in that we bare the same defiled nature, which is constantly dragging us down to death. Yet despite our weakness and our continual waywardness, we cling in faith to his promises, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Philippians chapter 3 and verses 20 – 21

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself”.

The Apostle John states in 1st John that, every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. So brethren and sisters, as we read elsewhere, having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

No our Heavenly Father hath not appointed us to wrath! Please note brethren and sisters, that the word “*not*” there in verse nine is the absolute negative. In other words, this is not and never has been his intention towards us, who are in Christ Jesus.

No matter how we each may personally feel about our own weaknesses, our own sinfulness and our own inherent unworthiness of our high calling in Christ Jesus. Let us never make the mistake of those Israelites during the wilderness wanderings, who thought repeatedly that their God had only brought them out of Egypt to destroy them in the desert.

Exodus chapter 16 and verse 3

“And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of Yahweh in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when

we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger”.

Equally brethren and sisters never let us be complacent either that we can never suffer such a fate if we turn from obeying the truth, back to unrighteousness. Rather let us each personally heed the warning given through Jude to - keep our selves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

No our Heavenly Father hath not appointed us to wrath, **but** to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. Take note of the conjunction “*but*” here it is an especially strong contrast emphasising the positive element of salvation in prospect for the faithful. Interestingly the word “*obtain*” carries with it a sense of taking to one’s self, to purchase something in this case salvation.

Now we know that we cannot earn salvation brethren and sisters, we can add nothing to the sacrifice we have each come to remember to make it more effective. Rather the sense here is of us identifying with the redemptive work of our Lord and thereby proving that this truly means something to us, because it requires from us effort. The effort of living our lives, in the light of having been redeemed by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Living our lives brethren and sisters, as witnesses to the power of his sacrifice, like the Apostle Paul.

Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”.

The Apostle counted everything in his life, before he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ, as worthless in comparison to being in Christ and in living out the example and power of his death and resurrection. We are to be witnesses to others that there is another way, a better way to live, to live as Almighty God intends for his creation.

As 1st Corinthians also declares “*we do shew the Lord’s death till he come*”. The word for “*show*” in that verse is speaking of a public declaration by a messenger, the word is translated elsewhere as “*declare, preach and teach*”. This is exactly what we are doing firstly to one another. Then secondly to those in the locality, who see the building in use, others who know us and know where we go week by week?

So we might ask brethren and sisters, just how good then is our personal witness to these truths? Who knows were you go each week? Who knows what we do here?

We are witnessing to our hope of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ by being here brethren and sisters. This act of remembrance is focused upon the future and upon the positive impact the Master's return will have upon the earth with the establishment of the kingdom of God.

1st Thessalonians chapter 5 and verses 9 - 10

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him”.

Another reason the Apostle makes clear, why we brethren have not been appointed unto wrath is because of the one who has died for us, even the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Heavenly Father did not allow his own son to die upon that Roman stake, just so he could destroy us in the day's of our probation and preparation. Just as with the Israelites in the wilderness, there is no sense in such thoughts.

But brethren and sisters we often if we are honest entertain such ideas, because of the hardness of the journey, because of the loneliness of our walk? Sometimes our God seems so far away and our lives appear to have no real significance or meaning, beyond the humdrum of our day to day existence. Yet as Zechariah exhorts us not to despise the day of small things, nothing is insignificant, for our God is able to work all things together for the eternal good of those that love him.

Romans chapter 8 and verses 31 – 35

*“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? **He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?** Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. **Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”*

In his providential care our God brethren and sisters is working out his sovereign will in our lives, so that we might be justified by him in the day of our Lord's return. And as Romans eight also makes abundantly clear, those whom he justified, them he also glorified, because they have been conformed to the image of his son.

It is this process of being conformed, of each one of us being uniquely fashioned into a facet of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the word “*image*” in verse twenty-nine of Romans chapter eight is speaking of the mental and moral likeness to that of the Master we are shortly to remember.

Each one of us brethren and sisters are being called upon and being challenged to rise up and be conformed to his character, in order to reflect the divine glory and to refract that glory uniquely in our own way.

Like precious stones we are each being shaped and cut through the seemingly insignificant circumstances day by day to present a facet of the divine glory, like a precious jewel. Now a “*facet*” brethren and sisters, as I am sure you are aware is one of the many sides of a cut gemstone. Each one of us are an aspect, a facet of the character and glory of our God in our Lord Jesus Christ. Then collectively we shall all together manifest the fullness of the divine glory in Christ. For the Master of course is that gemstone, he is that tried stone, a precious corner stone, and a sure foundation, lain in Zion.

Malachi chapter 3 and verse 17

“And they shall be mine, saith Yahweh of armies, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him”.

As the Apostle Paul earlier exhorted us brethren and sisters for us to obtain salvation in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, then we must become conformable unto his death. Christ died for all, that they, which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Romans chapter 6 and verses 6 – 7

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin”.

Thus the death of the Master is to be played out in a very real sense in our lives, as they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. The Greek for the word “*crucified*” here indicates that this is an ongoing daily activity of mortifying our members.

This must be seen in our daily lives in the manner of our reactions and responses to circumstances, to events and to people.

Can people truly see that we are different, that we do not react the usual way when things go wrong and trying situations arise?

1st Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 10

“Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him”.

In this section of Thessalonians the first century brethren and sisters were anxious about the state of the dead and of those living at the return of our Lord. So starting in chapter four verse thirteen to verse eleven of chapter five, he puts their anxiety at ease. No matter then that we find ourselves alive at his return or indeed having been asleep in the dust of the earth. Our Heavenly Father’s goal is in that day we each gathered here **might live together with him**.

Note how these verses are pointed us forward in hope, this was exactly what these 1st century Thessalonian brethren and sisters needed as they intense persecution. Equally it is exactly what we need as we see that day approaching?

1st John chapter 4 and verse 9

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him”.

Just as with our baptism we symbolically went down into the water to act out the end to our old way of life, associating ourselves with the death of the Master. So too as we came up out of the water, it symbolises our resurrection to a newness of life in Christ. 1st Peter records this same truth, when it states; *“who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness”.*

That we might live unto our Heavenly Father and unto righteousness, which is his standard.

Romans chapter 6 and verses 11 – 13, & 22

*“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: **but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of***

righteousness unto God. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life”.

So although, the life with the Lord Jesus Christ is cast in Thessalonians and Romans as our future hope, there is also a sense in which we have to live with Christ now. Witnesses not now to the power of his death to overcome sin, but now to his righteous life and the power of his resurrection.

Galatians chapter 2 and verses 20

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”.

The Master’s loving faithfulness towards Paul motivated his life to so witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed this is what you and I brethren and sisters have been called and challenged too. We have seen that we are to live, as he lived soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

1st Thessalonians five and verse ten continues and ends with our great hope that we are to *“live together with him”*. The sense of the last part of this verse is truly wonderful, as the word *“together”* indicates, *in the same place and at the same time* with the Lord Jesus Christ. Added to this is the little word *“with”*, which emphasises the point, as it denotes *proximity or nearness* to Christ Jesus our Lord.

2nd Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 4

“For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you”.

Brethren and sisters let us never forget that the power of our Heavenly Father, which was used to raise his son from the dead and set him as head of the ecclesia, far above all principality and power. Is exactly the same power of God, which is daily at work in our lives, so that we might obtain salvation and live together eternally with him.

1st Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 11

“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do”.

The Apostle’s message to these 1st century brethren and sisters who were greatly struggling with life, was one of hope and of great comfort.

That message has not diminished with the years that have passed brethren and sisters, for we too are our selves comforted and edified by these same words, even Christ formed in us the hope of glory.

If we are brethren and sisters are to *comfort and edify one another*, as we are commanded to do here, for in the Greek both exhortations are in the imperative form. Then we must **live together with one another**. Not just twice a week at our meetings, where we only have a few minutes before and after to share pleasantries and other thoughts, mainly around the weather.

The Diaglott translation of this eleventh verse emphasises for us the individual responsibility we each have in applying these commands in that it reads, “*therefore, console each other, and edify one the other, as also you do*”. We are to comfort, console and exhort, where necessary and then to establish and build up, as they were doing mutually and reciprocally one to another.

Notice it’s a two step process here of exhortation and then edifying, we must apply both parts to ensure those that are weary can be built up. For in doing so we will strengthen the things, which remain and we will cause one another to endure unto the end.

Isaiah chapter 50 and verse 4

“The Adonai Yahweh hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned”.

Brethren and sisters are we listening morning by morning? Are we being taught by the word to speak into one another’s lives for good, after the example of our Lord? Who might you give comfort too or attempt to edify in this coming week?

For this is exactly what it means for us to live for Christ, in the sense of following in his footsteps and applying his character into our lives, that our Heavenly Father might be glorified.

As we come now to break bread and to drink wine brethren and sisters. May it be that these words to the first century Thessalonians will speak into our hearts and minds this day, filling us personally with the comfort of Christ?

Exhorting each one of us to live together in greater proximity and unity, exhorting one another: and so much the more, as we see the day approaching.

May it be that these words and the hope we have considered of being with our Lord at his return and then throughout the ages of eternity? Will build us up in order to face another week in this present evil world, witnessing to a better way to live.

Let us see in this bread the symbol of the word of life, which instructs us how to live like the one we remember now. Let us see also in the wine, the shedding of his blood poured forth in sacrifice, that we might come to know the love of God and to reciprocate it one towards another.

But ye, beloved, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

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