

The GRACE That Has Come Unto You

I Peter 1:10-11, Christmas Eve

December 24, 2009

Beloved of the Lord.....As long as this earth stands, it has always been, and always will be God's earnest desire that all men be saved from their sins, through the merits of our Christ whose birth we celebrate this evening. When the Baby Jesus was born, it was as if God Almighty from heaven had reached down His hand to the earth below, and cradled therein lay the Baby Jesus, the GRACE that should come unto you! Tonight like the angels let us worship and adore Him with all our heart, "for unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." God gave Him to you dear sinner, for your salvation, for true spiritual peace of heart, the forgiveness of sins. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

It is sad but true, often enough our hearts are very troubled and afraid. Why? Because of the guilt of our sin. This week I read a very true statement by Edward Koehler. He writes, "We must distinguish between the act of sin and the guilt of sin; the act of sin may be committed in a moment, but the guilt continues forever." Our hearts are often troubled and afraid because we know we are guilty of sin in God's sight and we fear His punishment. As our first parents, all men by nature run away from God because of their sin. It is our own guilt that makes us run. Sadly, some people run from God their entire life, avoiding church, ignoring their conscience, even hiding their sin. Jesus said, "This is the condemnation, that Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

But tonight in the birth of Christ, we have every reason to rejoice, for Jesus IS that Light that came into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved! Why else did the Lord of heavens so humble Himself, veiling His blinding divinity in the flesh and blood of a little harmless Child? Thus when Jesus was born, as He lay in the manger, we must understand His heart was filled only with love and mercy toward fallen sinners - you and me. Here was God's Peace on earth, His

good will to men. There in the manger lay the GRACE of God that should come unto you, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is why in our text this evening the prophets enquired and searched diligently of that SALVATION, the grace "that should come unto you." Before He was born they were anxious for Him to be born! As we heard from the children tonight, He was the SALVATION the Old Testament saints were waiting for. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Just like us, many saints in Peter's day had never seen Jesus, yet they loved Him, believed on Him, and were filled with joy unspeakable concerning Him.

Indeed remember the Old Testament saint, the aged Simeon in the Temple who held the baby Jesus in his arms! He said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation!" Having seen the baby Jesus, Simeon could now die in peace, namely die with the peace of Jesus in His soul. This then is how we dear Christians have a peaceful conscience. Though we are guilty our entire life by way of sin, Jesus took all our guilt upon Himself, making it His own. In the Gospel of Jesus Christ then, God is saying and declaring to the whole world, "Dear world, through My Son I declare you NOT GUILTY, even innocent and righteous in My sight!" That is why we who believe call Jesus our Prince of Peace. He heals our wounded conscience declaring us NOT GUILTY. Jesus is the "Lord OUR Righteousness." Thus Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

That is why the saints of the Old Testament loved Christ so and earnestly searched the Scriptures to learn more about Him. They were searching for and studying primarily three things: 1) when exactly He would come 2) what suffering He would endure, and 3) the glory that

should follow! When the Spirit of Christ moved them to write the inspired words, they would AFTERWARD have to study what they just wrote about Christ! The Holy Spirit in them wrote things beyond their understanding, and so they did as we still do today, they searched the Scriptures. Jesus has the words of eternal life!

What exactly did the Old Testament saints know? They knew their Savior would be the Seed of a woman, born of a Virgin, True Man. They also knew He would be True God, for his name “Immanuel” means “God with us.” They knew He would be a Nazarene, but born in Bethlehem and that He as a Light would shine like a star into this world of darkness. A star over Bethlehem would mark His birth. As a Good Shepherd He would lead His people like a flock. He would be the Prince of Peace, yet they would lead Him like a Lamb to the slaughter. Christ would suffer many things, even be in the earth three days and nights, but great glory would follow! Namely Christ would accomplish His work of redeeming the whole world from sin, rise again in triumph, ascend into heaven!

Thus dear believer, from generation to generation, God has continually given fallen sinners the Gospel promise of Jesus Christ. Let us receive the Gospel message of forgiveness by faith and rejoice in our hearts that Jesus is our Peace, that this GRACE of God has come unto us! Though He suffered many things, Jesus even now in heaven does not want to be sad, but happy in the knowledge all sins are forgiven! This is why Jesus says, “Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.” May the white blanket of snow we have just received, be yet another reminder of just why this Christ-child came. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men!” Amen.