

God Has Used His Almighty Power To Save Us

John 8:46-59, Passion Sunday

March 9, 2008

Beloved of the Lord.....It must be admitted, and it cannot be denied, that the one and only True God, is All-powerful. This means that God has and holds all power, and He can do absolutely whatever He pleases. It is His right. He is God. And only a fool would oppose Him. If we as Christians at times forget how powerful and almighty God is, we ought to read the book of Numbers. Consider the fiery serpents in our Old Testament reading this morning. Since the children of Israel complained about their manna, their lack of water, their difficult journey, God sent thousands of poisonous snakes into their camp which bit the people so they died. Likewise there was the time when Korah and many princes of Israel challenged the authority of Moses to rule the people. God told all the people to stand back and separate themselves from Korah and his family. Then "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They..... went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them." Num. 16 Another example of God's power and wrath against sin is found in Numbers 25. Thousands of Israelites committed fornication with certain ungodly women and took part in worshipping idols. As punishment for their sin, God commanded that the guilty leaders of Israel be publicly hanged, "that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel." These lessons in the Holy Scriptures are written for our learning. God does not take sin lightly, and it is well within His power to punish sin with death and eternal damnation.

But the power of God is a two-edged sword. For those who look to Christ for forgiveness, there is great comfort in this almighty power of God. For God uses His power to guard and protect His believing children from all evil. For example, God used His almighty power to preserve the life of Noah and his family through the flood. They were saved by water. Likewise God later used His power to deliver the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, even bringing them through the midst of the Red Sea on dry ground, so that the waters of the sea were like a high wall to the right and left of them. God's power was evident when David defeated Goliath. God's power was also evident when He shut the mouths of the lions so that Daniel was protected. But all of these miracles are really very small examples of God's power compared to the great work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. For there God used His almighty power to conquer the great power of the devil, and sin. Then and there on the cross, Christ conquered Satan under His heel, so that the devil now has no claim over us. "Before Abraham was", Jesus said "I AM." And thanks be to God, our blessed I AM, Jesus Christ, has used His Almighty power to conquer sin, death, and the power of the devil. Let us therefore find comfort this morning in the knowledge that God has used His Almighty power, to save us from our sin, and given us the gift of eternal life in heaven.

I. The Jews would not hear God's Word, because they were not of God. In our lesson today we see Jesus time and time again speaking the truth to the Jews who would not listen. Jesus said, "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's Word, ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." The Jews could not hear God's Word, because they were blind to the salvation of Jesus. They trusted in their own god who they thought was the Father. But in truth they did not follow God the Father at all, nor was their god the same God that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshipped. This is because the Jews, as a rule, trusted in their own holy life to save them rather than the grace of God through Christ. Taking pride in their Jewish ancestry, and their zealous keeping of the law, they were blind to the truth. And the truth was they were the same as every other man, miserable sinners worthy of only death and damnation.

So Jesus told them straight out, that they really weren't worshipping the Father at all. Had they truly worshipped the Father, they would also worship the Son whom the Father had sent. Since they did not worship the Son then, they likewise were in truth not worshipping the Father. Jesus said, "Ye are of your father, the devil" and it was true, Jesus didn't lie. This truth angered the Jews so much they resorted to calling Jesus names. They said He was a Samaritan, a mixed breed of Jewish and pagan parents. They said He was possessed with a devil. In like manner we should remember that if we follow Christ by faith, and rightly speak the truth of God's Word to others, those who do not know the truth will likely call us names. Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

In our lesson today when we see the Jews fighting against the truth of Jesus' words, we should see the great sin in resisting God's Word. God's Word is resisted in two ways, first by the law, then by the Gospel. And so first when God's Word tells us the truth, that we are miserable sinners worthy of both death and damnation, we ought to believe it and not deny it. The first part of repentance is confession of sin. But then likewise when the Holy Ghost through the Gospel Word tells us that God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved..... we ought to believe this as well: for the Holy Ghost Himself is working through the Gospel to convince our heart that Jesus is indeed our Savior! Truly, nothing makes God more happy than when a person looks to Jesus for forgiveness! Trusting in His forgiveness is the second part of repentance! Even the angels in heaven rejoice! And so from all this we can see how greatly God is grieved at heart when people resist the Holy Spirit, as the Jews did in our lesson today. For God in the Word comes bringing His gifts of grace, and what a crime it is to refuse this wonderful gift and essentially spit in God's face saying, "I have no need of what you offer!" That's really what the Jews did to Jesus. Though Jesus came as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and though the

Holy Spirit earnestly worked to bring the forgiveness of Jesus to the hearts of the Jews, they stubbornly and willfully pushed back, they resisted the Holy Spirit who was only trying to save them! That is what's most tragic about unbelief. It keeps Christ and His wonderful forgiveness, and His free grace out of the heart. And so in Hosea 13:9. God says, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help."

II. God has used His almighty power to save us. And so beloved of the Lord, I wish I could impress upon you the single solitary reason Christ came to this earth, namely to save each and every sinner from sin, Jew and Gentile alike. When Jesus stood before the Jews, He was not their enemy, He was their friend, a friend of sinners. Sadly they hardened their hearts against Him. When Jesus said, "If a man keep my saying he shall never see death", they could only think of their great father Abraham who kept God's sayings yet tasted death. They entirely missed Jesus meaning, namely that by faith in Christ we escape the second death, which is hell. Though Abraham died, he did not perish in hell, but went straight to heaven, as all believers do. Yet God took Abraham to heaven, not because of Abraham's righteous life, but rather because Abraham trusted in the salvation of Christ by faith. Remember Jesus said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see MY DAY: and he saw it and was glad." This does not mean that Abraham saw when Christ was born from heaven, rather it means that when Abraham lived on earth, by faith he saw the day when Christ would come! Indeed all the believers of the Old Testament likewise saw the day of Christ by faith! This means they trusted in the promise of the Messiah. They knew the day would come when the Messiah would make His grand entrance into the world, in the flesh! Truly the only difference between the believers of the Old Testament and the believers of the New is a matter of time, not substance. We and they are justified by the same thing, Christ Jesus, His blood, His righteousness. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Galatians 3:7 says, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." And so if you have the faith of Jesus Christ, you have the same faith Abraham had and you are more a spiritual child and descendant of Abraham, then even the Jews of Jesus day! (Rom. 2:29)

When Jesus spoke these words of Abraham to the Jews, they understood none of it because they had no faith in Christ. Without faith, they could not understand Abraham rejoicing to see the day of Christ! They were spiritually blind. Just as it is impossible for a blind man to speak about colors, so it was impossible for the Jews to believe that Abraham knew Christ long ago by faith. So they said to Jesus "You've never seen Abraham or known Him!" Jesus then answered, "Before Abraham was, I AM!" And here the die was cast! With these words Jesus was saying to the Jews: I am the very God Abraham believed in! I am the very God Abraham trusted in and prayed to! I AM THAT I AM! I am the God that Moses spoke to in the

burning bush! I am the God that in the beginning said, Let there be light! I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I am eternal God with no beginning and no end! I AM THAT I AM! With these words the Jews were so angered they took up stones to kill Jesus. But He walked through the midst of them, probably making them blind. It was not yet His time. His hour had not yet come!

Dear child of God, there is great comfort in these words of Jesus who says, I AM THAT I AM! For Jesus is your eternal God, with no beginning and no end. The apostle John writes, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." As He is eternal, so is His love eternal and everlasting for you. Your eternal and almighty God offered Himself as the sinless sacrifice for the sins of the world. Therefore when you find sin and weakness in your body, you ought to remember that your God is Almighty, He is all-powerful, and He can do anything He pleases! And what pleases Him is to save you from your sin. Thus when you think of God's almighty power, think of how God used His almighty power to take your place upon the cross, to suffer and die in your place. Then by that same almighty power, having conquered death itself, God rose from the dead! And if your God is that almighty, if indeed He is that all-powerful, isn't it fair to say He will use that same power to protect you, to defend you, to keep you from harm and danger? Indeed He will! But what matters most dear Christian, is that God has used His almighty power to save you from your mighty sins. Therefore fear not, only believe. Your God is strong to save and He has saved, and He will save you! "Verily, verily I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." Amen.

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