

**"For Thy Word's Sake,
According to Thine Own Heart"**

II Samuel 7:17-29, Trinity Sunday XII
August 30, 2009

Beloved of the Lord..... When God promises us something in His Word, not only do we know His promise is true, but we bank on that promise. We rely upon it, trust in it, and know His promises will never fail us. If God gives us good days, as He did David, or evil, as He did David, weather our days be good or evil God's promises hold true. Thus when it comes to prayer and thankfulness, we have every reason to thank God in prayer whether we have days of sorrow or days of laughter. This morning let us rejoice and once again be reminded that all of God's promises are true. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." I John 5:20

Our lesson begins today with David going into the tabernacle to pray. This was that same portable tabernacle which contained the Ark of the Covenant which had the two angels stretching their wings over the "mercy seat". Since David had just heard many wonderful promises from God through the prophet Nathan, David wanted to meditate and think about what he had just heard. David "sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" One of the many treasures in our Bible, are the many prayers of the saints recorded for our benefit. It is good to read these prayers for we often do not know how we should pray and in times of weakness we may wonder if God is listening. In David's prayer we first see great humility. Sinners are humble not proud. Who am I Lord that you should promise me such wonderful blessings? Who am I Lord but a sinful creature of flesh and blood? There are certain times in life when we see just how richly God has blessed us, and all we can do is say "Lord you are too good to me"...."I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant"....yet you heap your blessings upon me daily. Psalm 68:19 says, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation."

When it comes to prayer, my childhood pastor taught me long ago "the three ingredients for prayer": 1) Thy will be done, 2) in Jesus' name, 3) with a believing heart. I John 5:14 says, "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." We should believe He will give us those things we truly need according to His good and gracious will. As for praying "in Jesus' name", this doesn't mean we must end every prayer with those words,

it only means Jesus alone is the true Mediator between God and man. If we do not believe Jesus is True God and True Man at the same time, who has reconciled holy God with sinful man by way of the cross, God will not hear nor receive our prayer for "without faith it is impossible to please Him." But if we do believe as the Ethiopian Eunuch who confessed, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God", God will readily hear and answer our prayer according to His good and gracious will. Our catechism says, "We should pray A) In the name of Jesus, that is with faith in Him as our Redeemer, B) With confidence, that is with firm trust that for Jesus' sake our prayer will be answered."

In David's case, it was the many wonderful promises of God which moved David to thank the Lord of Mercy. "Therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." In like manner we ought to see God's blessings daily in our life and thank God daily for "clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods." These are given "purely out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true." David prayed, "thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant."

God's goodness, His gracious promises proceed from God's gracious heart, not by any merit or worthiness of our own. David prayed, "For Thy word's sake, and according to Thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them." The heart of the Gospel is the heart of God. On the one hand it is curious that David speaks of God's heart, for Jesus said "God is a Spirit" and properly speaking God has no physical heart. Nevertheless the Bible does teach when Christ the Son of God offered up His own life as a sacrifice and payment for all, God was in His own heart inwardly reconciled with all men. His heart was turned from wrath to favor. II Corinthians 5:19 says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Thus when David speaks of God's heart, David is speaking of God's grace, "God's gracious disposition, which for Christ's sake He cherishes in Himself toward sinful mankind and by which He in His heart does not charge men with their sins, but forgives them" (Pieper). This gracious disposition in God's heart is sometimes called "love" in the Bible. I John 4:9 says, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world."

When we speak then properly of God's grace we must at the same time rule out any goodness or merit in man. In other words there was nothing good in us which moved God to save us nor are we saved because God foresaw our faith. We must always remember faith is a

gift of God not a work of man. The moment sinners such as ourselves attach or invent any goodness of our own, we cancel out the true meaning of God's grace. The Bible says if we are saved "by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." We can't have it both ways. Salvation by grace and salvation by works are mutually exclusive. A sinner either stands in the Sunlight of God's grace, knowing Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, or the sinner stands in the darkness of unbelief, yet a servant to sin and the devil, yet under the delusion that he can climb his own ladder to heaven. If we cherish in our heart the thought that we must have a little goodness within, perhaps only a spark, and that is why God came and saved us, we are yet unconverted for Jesus alone is the Light. Children then of THAT Light confess, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him, But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel." The Gospel calls us out of darkness INTO the Light. Even in David's prayer we see he understood it was God alone who had opened his eyes. "For Thy word's sake, and according to Thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them."

In like manner it is the Lord alone who has revealed unto us His gracious heart today, through the promises of His Word which reveal the sending of His Son. God's promises to us cause, create, and kindle the faith of our own heart so that we repent of our sins and turn away from them toward Christ our Savior from sin! That is why we praise Him and that is why David said, "Let Thy name be magnified forever!" Like David we see that God has done all "these great things", and that He has caused us, His servants to know them. "Wherefore Thou art great, O Lord God, for there is none like Thee, neither is there any God beside thee." These words still hold true today. You can search the world over, every tribe and nation, search every religion of every shade under the sun and you will find that though they worship many different gods who command many different things, these gods all sing the same tune. They tell sinners they must earn their way to heaven by good works. They must climb their own ladder. This is why they wear special hats, kneel on special mats, pray special prayers, eat special foods, and do special works. The list goes on and on. But our God alone is the one and only God who was moved within Himself to send and give Himself into death for the life of His own enemies on the cross. What a Friend we have in Jesus! There is no God like our God dear Christian! "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." That is why Philip "preached unto him Jesus."

What are God's promises to you? "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." All God wants and desires of us is faith in Him who loved us. Faith turns away from sin and places all trust and confidence in Him who tells us forgiveness is free. God's promises of forgiveness and salvation through Christ not only create faith, but sustain our faith when times are bad. Faith clings to the promises of God and faith will not let go! Those who trust in Him shall not be confounded!

Faith is begun in our heart the moment we desire or long for the forgiveness of sins which Christ freely gives. Faith knows it is there, even if we cling to it so weakly at times. "Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!" While the strength of faith varies from person to person (some have a spark and others a roaring fire), what we rejoice in most is that we are not justified by the strength of our faith, but we are justified by what our faith apprehends, that Christ Jesus IS the Savior of ALL men, especially of them that believe. "Therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." You then dear believer are indeed a precious and holy people, the apple of His eye. You are His Israel! So David prays, "What one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself and to make Him a name, and to do for you great things."

This is why we thank and praise God in prayer. This is why we magnified God daily in our hearts, and with song, for He has revealed His gracious heart to us. "Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love" God says. Thus whatever our trials and tribulations in life, again and again turn to, trust in, and ponder within the many gracious promises of God. If God has promised you that His Son has set you free, "ye shall be free indeed." "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." I John 5:20

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