

June 15, 2010

...Praise Him with the timbrel and dance. (Psalm 105:4)

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## How Can Ye Hope, Deluded Souls?

How can ye hope, deluded souls,  
To see what none e'er saw  
Salvation by the works obtained  
Of Sinai's fiery law?

There ye may toil, and weep, and fast,  
And vex your heart with pain;  
And, when you've ended, find at last  
That all your toil was vain.

That law but makes your guilt abound;  
Sad help! and (what is worst)  
All souls that under that are found,  
By God himself are curs'd. ...

Fly, then, awakened sinners, fly;  
Your case admits no stay;  
The fountain's opened now for sin;  
Come, wash your guilt away.

Only by faith in Jesus' wounds  
The sinner finds release;  
No other sacrifice for sin  
Will God accept but this.

Joseph Hart (1712 – 1768) ● t&dw

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## Quote of the Week. *from Charles Spurgeon*

“Commentators are good in their way, but give me the teaching of the Holy Ghost. He makes the passage clear. How often we have found our utter inability to understand some part of divine truth. We asked some of God's people, and they helped us a little. But after all, we were not satisfied till we took it to the throne of heavenly grace and implored the teachings of the blessed Spirit. Then how sweetly it was opened to us; we could eat of it spiritually. It was no longer husk and shell, hard to be understood. It was as bread to us, and we could eat to the full.”

*from Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Volume 11 p286.*

Feature Article:

## The Utilitarian Christ?

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. Colossians 1:15-17*

*For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell... Colossians 1:19*

*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing! Rev 5:12*

The *smallness* with which many of us view the person of Christ betrays a lack of a *Spirit-wrought Christology*. It is difficult to imagine that anyone who truly knows Him would have *little* ideas of anything about Him. But fallen humanity is insatiably self-centric. Every precept, concept, purpose, and endeavor is chained behind the bars of self-interest. Often, the highest expressed estimations of Christ seem to differ little from our childhood admiration of super-heroes, who always show up just in time to “save the day”... *for us*. He is the utilitarian Christ who exists, or is made known, solely for man's salvation and blessing. We *use* His name as a “get out of hell free” card. Man-centered “faith” turns the humble entreaty of prayer into the brash invoking of Jesus' name, as a charm that is guaranteed to get what we want from God. It is even considered “sinful doubt” to pray, “*Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done.*” “Jesus” is the magic elixir which will cause *my* plans to succeed, and *my* will to prevail. His name on a tee-shirt is the essence of holiness and witness.

Many Christians may be less overt in their utilitarian treatment of the Savior, yet such an attitude creeps in effortlessly to transform the Lord's glorious *preeminence* into the *servant* of our own importance. It is said that He created us *because he needed* someone to love. He “foresaw” mankind's fall into sin and *had* to “come up with” a plan of salvation. He is powerless to accomplish His will without *our* willingness. He is a *reactive* God who merely responds to man's needs (and His own!). Such a God - such a Savior - will never evoke true worship from His creatures.

A utilitarian view of the Son must be deeply repugnant to the Father, who, in His decretive will, purposed to exalt the Son *in, through, and above all things*. From the unfurling of the first element of creation by divine

fiat, to the destructive entrance of sin, to the rise and fall of nations, to the incarnation and the work of redemption, to the reconciling of all things to Himself, and on into eternity, **the overarching purpose of all things is the glory of Christ, to the glory of the Father.** He is given a name above all names, that at the name of Jesus all things in heaven, earth, and under the earth (all creation) should bow in reverence before His glory (Phil 2:9-11).

Even as the Son became the humble Servant, obedient unto death, it was not because we had any claim to such an unspeakable grace, nor would we ever have desired it. Rather, the Father purposed in our redemption, first and foremost, the highest manifestation of the attributes and glories of Christ. He chose us *in Christ* before time, and we are brought forth *in time*, through faith, that we should exist to the praise of *His* glory: a totally *unmerited* and exceedingly privileged role.

Please do not misunderstand. That Christ loved the church and died for her, that he *is* ravished by the vision of her consummate beauty, that he is delighted to be preparing an eternal dwelling for her - these are not to be doubted or trivialized. But the richness of these unspeakable treasures is turned into the mere exaltation of our *own* importance and significance if they are not held in the light of the infinite supremacy, beauty, and sovereignty of Christ, Himself.

*By Him and for Him all things exist.* He, in no sense, *exists* for us. We exist entirely according to the good pleasure of His will. Our greatest joy and blessing is found only as we, by His grace, fulfill our purpose according to *His* purpose. (ref. John Piper's "*He is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.*")

Again, I would never seek to diminish the reality of Christ's *personal love* for each of his people. In fact, I *insist* that it is only through our intimate communion with Him in that love that we can bear *any* fruit to His glory. The Bride-Bridegroom motif is, to me, the preeminent view of all creation and history. But the Bride's *only* significance is found in the supreme glory, majesty, and beauty of the Bridegroom.

The great irony is, that the more intimately we know Him and experience His love - the more humbly we stand in adoration of Him, and the more reverently we esteem His holy name. Jesus is our Savior, our Lord, and even our Lover - but He is never our *employee*.

In all our needs, and in the desires of our hearts, let

us come before Him with humble entreaty, with pleading tears, and even with joyful anticipation; but never come with the strong-arm of a pseudo-faith that seeks to press His will into ours. Our petitions are wrapped in the confidence that He always answers his children with the love of a Father, who with perfect wisdom knows the absolute best for His children. Praying in Christ, in Jesus' name, is not about attaching His "authorized signature" to the end of our prayers. Being *in Him*, knowing that we exist by Him and for Him, we must always pray with an eye to His glory, and address all our own needs and desires in that light.

Are your *primary* thoughts about Jesus, and about God, wrapped up in your own needs, desires, and plans? Is He primarily a means to your own ends? Have you tried to make Him a utilitarian Christ? Pray that the Holy Spirit through the Word of God will unveil to you the true Christ. You will never again be prone to *use* Him as your "personal assistant." ●ejr3

*Devotional Minute:*

### **For Glory and Beauty.**

*And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. ...you shall make tunics, and you shall make sashes for them. And you shall make hats for them, for glory and beauty. Exodus 28: 2; 40*

How fitting that the priests should be arrayed with glory and beauty. As the eyes of the worshippers fell upon those who stood as "*shadows of the true*" (Colos 2:17; Heb 8:4-5; 10:1) it was to invoke a response of wonder and admiration. In the full context of that Old Covenant, there emerged through the shadows the ever-brightening image of the One who is the very essence of Glory and Beauty - the Altogether Lovely One (Song 5:16), whose beauty *is* the splendor of His holiness (2Chron 20:21). Beneath the harsh rigors of the Law, beneath its condemnation and bloody sacrifices, beneath its performance-based blessings and cursing, the eye of faith beheld, not the fiery threatenings of Sinai, but the irresistible glory and beauty of *Lamb slain from the foundations of the world* (Rev 13:8). May our own sanctification be just this: *let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us* (Ps 90:17). ●ejr3

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