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"He Who Glories Let Him Glory in the Lord"

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Reading: 1 Cor. 1:31, Jer. 9:23,24.

Let us go to this chapter in Corinthians and pick up fragments as we go through.

1 Cor. 1:2: "to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus... with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord".

v.4 "The grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus" (NASB).

v.5 "In everything ye were enriched in Him"(NASB).

v.6 "The testimony of Christ".

v.7 "Waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ".

v.9 "The fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord".

v.10 "The name of our Lord Jesus Christ".

v.23 "We preach Christ crucified."

v.24 "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God".

v.30 "Of Him you are in Christ Jesus."

v.31 "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

1 Cor. 2:2: "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

You see by just passing over the chapter in that way and picking up those fragments that you have a fairly full explanation of what it means to glory in the Lord. You notice that the whole object here is bringing the Lord Jesus into view. That is the first thing. He is brought very clearly before our eyes; there is constant repetition of emphasis upon Him, Himself. He is set up there as the one predominant object. And then in relation to Him as so set forth, everything that we have that is for us of God, is seen to be in Him. You just gather up the number of things mentioned there that are in Christ - and we only take this chapter out of the whole of the Scriptures by way of introducing the one thing which is in all the Word of God: the complete pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus. That is the ultimate throughout, and that is the key to everything that the Scriptures contain. I would suggest to you that in all your contemplation of, and meditation of, and study in the Word of God, you should seek to recognise the Holy Spirit's one secret, and that is to make Christ the key to everything, and that we must not study themes and subjects, and doctrine and truth and prophecy and all these things in themselves, but see that everything is bound up with the Lord Jesus Himself, and that we shall only be able to rightly and profitably apprehend the meaning of the divine revelation as we see the Lord Jesus in His place as connected thereto.

Now, I do feel, and am growingly convinced, that you and I have much yet to know, to learn, to enjoy concerning the Lord Jesus, and that the Lord would have us far more occupied with Him. The wonder, the mystery of His person, Who is the Mystery of God, has depths and fulnesses which we have hardly approached yet; we are barely on the fringe of that great fulness that Christ is. And I have only in my thought to put my finger upon one aspect in this message of that fulness, and it is that we should see how God brings together in Christ everything that was ever in His intention for man, and locks it all up in the Lord Jesus.

God did make man with a purpose. Humanity is of tremendous significance to God. There was a vastness of intention back of that creative activity of God in bringing man, as man, into being. You may say that God had set His heart upon man as the instrument, the sphere, the vessel, the medium of His self-manifestation, and of the realization of a great purpose in relation to Himself. It was not for man that man was created, for his own good, his benefit, and blessing: it was for God. God made man for Himself. Not just to have something that He had made for the pleasure of having made something, marvellous as man is - and the more we know about ourselves, mind and body, the more we marvel at the mind back of the creation. Yet not just for the satisfaction or gratification of Himself along the line of what He could produce, what a clever piece of work He could perform, but that throughout endless ages He might be expressing Himself, revealing Himself, manifesting Himself, fulfilling Himself in and through man.

He made us for Himself in that vast and that eternal sense. But all that could only possibly be realised and done in union with Him; it could only be done in the Lord, and the thing which on man's side destroyed forever, and robbed that humanity forever of all the Divine intention, was that man lost that. And on the Divine side, God lost what His heart was set upon so far as that race was concerned; God was deprived of His object, God's heart lost that cherished thing in man. The thing which brought about that two-sided loss and wreckage was just this, that man put his hand upon that to have it in and for himself instead of having it in the Lord. Do you get that? That is your key to everything; that man sought to have it in and for himself, to possess it for himself: possessiveness, a very, very strong trait in the race, especially in the fallen race; and it was that. It was the thing which Satan introduced. He in that possessiveness had sought to take a place and now man fell to Satan

along that line, that suggestion, and it was possessiveness to have, to have the thing that God had intended; that is the subtlety of it.

God intended it, but He bound it up with Himself, but man essayed to have it in himself and for himself. And that has been the history of the ages from man's side, always taking possession of God's things for himself, to have them for himself, to have what is the Lord's out of relation to the Lord, apart from the Lord. That was the first sin and it has been expressed all along. That was Babel. Babel foreshadowed Babylon, and Babylon is simply expressed in the words of Nebuchadnezzar: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built...?" Possessiveness, and glorying in his own work, his own power, his own position and not holding things in relation to God. The book of Daniel is just that whole setting, that Babylon represents possessing the glory of this world and the power of this world in man, of man, and over and above that, is constantly showing through that book that God ruleth in the kingdoms of men, the heavens do rule, but man has taken possession. You get that strange contradiction in Daniel of the recognition on the part of man - Nebuchadnezzar for instance - of God, and then going and violating that very recognition by acting in self-possession; but that is man all over. Having God's things out of relation to God, in himself instead of in the Lord. Well, it is that which has made the loss on both sides.

Now in the Lord Jesus you see what you have. You have all God's fulness on the one side, all the fulness of God in Christ: "In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"; all the fulness of God is in Him, on the one side. On the other side all the fulness of man is in Him, all the fulness of humanity. The whole of God's thought concerning humanity is comprehended in the Person of Christ on the side of man, and in one Person, not a dual Person, in one Person God and man united. All the fulness of God is made to dwell in man, and man comes into all the fulness of God in that Person, but the two are so vitally related that you cannot separate between them now. The Man cannot have anything outside of God. The very Person of Christ - as you cannot divide that Person, now you cannot divide between God and man, the one Person unites them both. That is the mystery of God, which is Christ. The mystery of God and man brought together in one Person; you cannot now divide and have anything outside of God if you are in Christ. You have all things in Christ, and God has all things in Christ, but never again is it possible to have anything of God outside of Himself. You must have Christ who brings these two together in inseparable oneness, to have the fulness of God. Christ is the fulness.

You see that that carries you from A to Z in the believer's life. It says that right at the very commencement, the very first fraction, the very first drop of what is of God can only be had in Christ and never given to us in ourselves apart from Christ. God does not give us salvation in ourselves. God never does give us strength in ourselves. He never gives us anything in ourselves. It is Christ in us who is the fulness of God, and Christ in us is salvation. It is Christ in us who is our strength. We are strengthened in the Lord. It is Christ in us who is our wisdom. "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (AV). You see, it is what He is, and not an object apart from Him. God comes in Christ in fulness into us, and we never have anything apart from Christ; so that we can never presume upon anything, we can never take anything for granted. That is why immediately our life in fellowship with the Lord Jesus drops on to a lower ebb, we lose strength; we have not got it in ourselves. We lose our way, the light is not in us at all, it is in Him. And that is what He meant when He spoke about the vine and the branches, and in that connection constantly reiterated this: "Abide in Me." "You have nothing in yourself." "Yes, you may be joined to Me in one spirit, there may be that vital link now between us but even then you have nothing in yourself; your whole life in every detail depends upon your continuous relationship with Me." Abiding in Christ.

God has brought all His fulness into humanity, but that humanity is not our humanity, not the fallen humanity; it was never given to that. So that the first requirement of life in relation to God is the repudiation of the old humanity, setting it aside and recognising that God has a new humanity in His Son Risen, and into that new humanity He has put His fulness, because that humanity in the person of Christ is wholly according to God, and God has linked Himself with that humanity, making one person. Therefore it is God now in Christ and Christ in God, and He is God. He is not a man needing God: He is God. The mystery is: how can you separate these two? You cannot. It is as one personality: you cannot separate personality.

Now, this is where you are saved from error. There is no such thing as the deifying of our humanity. God in His deity, in His Godhead does not join Himself with our humanity. We can never become deified, we can never come into the Godhead; it is in Christ, and all that we shall ever have we shall have in Him. Now go through Corinthians, and any other letter with this before you again, and you see what that means to us on two sides.

The end of the first chapter introduces us to what we are in ourselves: "You see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called". Yes, still that, though in Christ, in ourselves still that. There is no condemnation whatever in our being united with Christ and still being as foolish and weak as ever. Yes, joined to the Lord, the Infinite One, the glorified, exalted, I Am; joined to Him and still as foolish and weak and empty as anything can be. That is a necessary condition - and the way of the Lord's dealings with us. Only those who come to the uttermost emptying of themselves come to enjoy the greatest fulness of Christ.

There is the other side in which we rejoice. God is fulfilled, filled full in Christ: all that eternal thought, all that vast range of intention which lay behind His creating man, has now been made to dwell in Christ. God has reached it all in His Son, has it all in the humanity of His Son. He has got it all, and Christ, God and Man, is the seal unto us of all that fulness as Christ is in us and we in Christ. That is, our union with Christ means that God is going eventually to conform our humanity to the humanity of His Son, and realise in Christ, through a race which will ever still remain linked with Christ, realise all that great thought of His.

But for practical purposes it is just this: learning Christ every day. Living on Christ, drawing everything from Christ, appropriating Christ, apprehending Christ. He is the Christian life, He is the Christian service. Service is not giving out things that we have studied up. Service is giving out what Christ is in our hearts. That does not mean there is no reading or studying to be done, but if it never gets beyond that, it will be mechanical and cold. It has to come with the joy of Christ in our hearts to be effectual service. Yes, our life is Christ; Christ moving out through us, speaking through us, working through us, and we can neither do anything nor be anything only in so far as our fellowship with God's Son is on the closest, most intimate terms: abiding in Christ. As the branch abides in the vine the one life flows through the vine and the branches. That is the nature of our fellowship, but it is Himself: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."