

# The Beauty of Holiness

*"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" —Phil. 4:7*

IF we follow the system of Bible reading as presented to us in the *Bible Companion*, it will bring us into the company of Jesus eight times each year. These, of course, are extended times, and make a total of 158 days in each year that we read and meditate upon the things pertaining to his ministry. It was a momentous period in the world's history. But it is not merely history: it is much more than that, for in a little over 3 years he accomplished more than any other man who ever lived. So great was his work that, completing his gospel record, John says (21:25)—

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

This may sound like the hyperbole of a rapt admirer, but is it not rather the expression of the depth of comprehension that John had of the infinite implications of every moment of Christ's life? When we stop to consider his work, and its significance as the linchpin of mankind's eternity, the magnitude of it rises before us to such great height that it is impossible to evaluate it.

As we look abroad throughout the world, we see his mark everywhere, and we come to realize that the influence of his teaching and example (though now dreadfully blurred) has penetrated almost every form of national life. Every church—Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant—is a reminder of the man who gave his life for those who should believe into him, and keep his commandments. For, said Jesus (John 15:13-14)—

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, IF ye do *whatsoever I command you*."

It is our duty, therefore, not only to *read* what is written concerning Jesus, but also to *give attention* to what we read, and keep it in mind, and DO it, so that we will be properly instructed and developed in the Way of Salvation. In doing this, we must be extremely careful to read what is in the Bible with a humble, prayerful and searching mind; for many have made shipwreck of themselves by first forming ideas concerning Jesus, and then attempting to twist the Scripture to fit these ideas.

The ministry of Jesus began at his baptism, and ended in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he was arrested and taken into custody by an armed mob that 'knew not what they were doing.' That same night he was brought before the Council, which was presided over by the High Priest, and listened as they tried to justify their evil actions.

The mental suffering that Jesus endured must have been acute beyond description. These were 'his own,' to whom he came in love, with the glorious gift of salvation. The mock trial was ended by the sentence of death, and he was led out to be crucified. Oh, what that word conveys! The terrible suffering and agony on the cross—still maintaining his absolute perfection of character and action unto the end—and then at last merciful death, and burial.

But it was for the joy that was set before him that he endured all these things, the joy of bringing into being through terrible travail God's glorious New Creation, and giving life and divine fellowship to the vast multitude of the rejoicing Redeemed. And there is a similar joy set before us, if we faithfully walk in his footsteps.

When we follow Jesus through his ministry, step by step, and day by day, we are deeply impressed by the *simplicity* of his teaching, and captivated by his wisdom and *depth of meaning*,

whatever the occasion may be. (This seems paradoxical, but it is true). As we reflect upon these things, we thank God with overflowing hearts for His marvellous mercy, and for our hallowed relationship to His Son Jesus through belief and obedience of the Gospel. Paul vividly sets forth our exalted position—

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have PEACE WITH GOD *through our Lord Jesus Christ*: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2).

'Peace with God'—*what a joyful, transporting thought!* To the unbeliever, there is no peace. But when in the mercy of God we become 'justified by faith' as a result of our belief and obedience, we become spiritually-minded, totally devoted, drawing near, and that brings peace with God. In all Paul's letters, he speaks of this peace in such terms as:

*"Follow the things that make for peace."  
"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace."  
"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts."*

But there is no greater example than these words to the Philippians—

"In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the Peace of God, *which passeth all understanding*, shall keep your hearts and minds thru Christ Jesus" (4:7).

It is entirely 'through Christ Jesus', and through him alone, that we have access by faith into this glorious grace, wherein we stand related to that exalted fellowship with God which brings peace. However, as God 'will be sanctified in them that come nigh Him,' that relationship can be retained only by *continued living faith AND obedience*. Faith and obedience do not cease at baptism: they only begin there. When the believer goes down into the water in baptism, he dies to his old form of living in which he 'walked according to the flesh,' and he rises to walk in a completely new way of living: a way that is well-pleasing to God. Paul leaves no doubt in our minds on this subject—

"Be ye not conformed to this world, but BE YE TRANSFORMED by the renewing of your mind"  
(Rom. 12:2).

This transformation of heart and mind *must* be accomplished in each of us, or we shall *never* see the Kingdom of God. Do we comprehend fully what Paul is saying, or have we become so accustomed to reading these words that they have lost their force and meaning for us? It is not just a vague, far-off ideal: it is a vital, concrete reality facing us.

It *must* be done! If ever a man was transformed, it was Paul, as the divine record shows, and he could truly say (Galatians 2:20)—

"I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

These words are simple, but glowing. They are sublime and gracious. And we are thrilled as we read them, because they reflect the true character of one who could say at last, with noble sincerity (2 Tim.4:7)—

*"I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith."*

Have we the courage to face this teaching of Paul? Think of what it would do for us from day to day, if we could only keep Paul's glorious and joyful concept of 'newness of life' firmly fixed in the permanent forefront of our hearts and minds.

Looking unto Jesus, *let us earnestly strive to attain to the high standard he has set for us*. If we devote ourselves to this consistently, our minds will become a Holy Place, overlaid with the glorious gold of the Word of God, and in which the perfect sacrifice of Christ would burn as a continual offering, and from which our prayers would ascend to the Great Eternal Father. We would then become, more and more, a pure, holy community, adorned with the spiritual Beauty of Holiness; a community without spot or wrinkle, wholly dedicated to the worship and service of God. What is our position? Peter says—

"Ye are a Chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a Peculiar People, that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous Light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

Our keynote must be that on the golden High Priestly crown: *'Holiness unto the Lord.'* The God we serve is unchangeable. His holiness and His holy requirements are unchangeable, however the world may change. What He was in the days of Moses, He is today. Then it was—

*"I WILL be sanctified in them that come nigh Me!"*

That is the standard set before: high and holy. Let us, therefore, in all seriousness, humbleness and reverence, set ourselves to strive unto this divine level, and do all in our power to be at all times a *joyful, thankful and praise-giving people*, that we may develop among ourselves an ever more exalted fellowship, and prove ourselves to be worthy of the holy Name we bear.

—G.A.G. Taken from August 1980 Berean

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