

## THE STUDENT OF SCRIPTURE



### The Suitability of the Gospel. A Display of its Heavenly Glory.

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#### Foreword

God has been pleased to bless these thoughts very much to the writer, and he believes that, as here expressed they may be very *definitely* used of God. If it removes any difficulties, and glorifies God, as in personal experience, unto Him be *ALL* the praise.

#### INTRODUCTION

There are many "views" in the world, but there is one gospel of the grace of God, and this gospel is the joy and rejoicing of our heart, for we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and have proved the preciousness of a personal Saviour. And now we are lifted up above mere argument: we do not "compare" the gospel with "other religions," or seek to encourage a mere "mentality" of heart and attitude: our lives belong unto the Lord, and having been convinced by a love and power, which pass natural understanding, that "Christ died for our sins," and, knowing that we have eternal life, we have the deepest "Christian evidences" which no theory of man will, or can shake. Thus, with the confidence of faith, we would declare "Christ and Him crucified," knowing that the grace in which we were snatched as brands from the burning is not exhausted, but that the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him (Rom. x. 12). Well may we lay aside every weight, and remember, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that we are not our own, but the Lord's servants, having been for ever saved by Christ. Well may our hearts rejoice in a gospel of entire suitability to meet all our needs!

#### GOD IS THE SAVIOUR

It is plain that God is the Saviour (Isa. xliii. 3, 11, xlv. 21). Are we surprised that this revelation is associated with Deity? Is it not fitting that we should love the Lord with all our hearts? But if *another* saved us, our hearts would be drawn aside to the one who did the *greatest* work of love for us, with which all other works of created beings cannot compare. Hence it is deeply important that God Himself should be

the Saviour, and thus the Deity of Christ is emphasized. Any other gospel would be unsuitable: it would necessarily take from the glory of God.†

But it is evident that law must be vindicated, and that since man is guilty, none can be delivered from the effects of Adam's sin, and from the wrath of God upon all ungodliness, apart from a complete atonement. But to remove sin apart from giving positive righteousness is impossible. Sin is failure to love God with all the heart, and unless this positive love is graciously imputed, the sin still remains. The power of atonement therefore is not simply bearing punishment, but providing righteousness (Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, Rom. iv. 6-8). Hence animal sacrifices could not and cannot meet the need: they could not give more than they possessed, *i.e.*, an acceptance of body in an earthly sanctuary (Heb. ix. 13). But what the law could not do, God has done. The finished work of the Lord Jesus, as the Perfect One, Who became under the law (Gal. iv. 4), has met the need.

#### A MAN MUST BE THE SAVIOUR

We have seen that the Deity of Christ was essential as to salvation. But likewise is His humanity: only through a man could there be the bearing of wrath substitutionarily, for only One Who became Man could render the obedience which is implied in acceptable atonement. An angel would not have been under the law: a sinful man would be quite incompetent: God, while in His heavenly glory, could not become thus subordinate. Hence the need that He Who was over all should take upon Him the form of a Servant. And thus we behold again the precious suitability of the Gospel of the Grace of God, for this is exactly what it sets forth.

#### RIGHTEOUSNESS AND WRATH

A further emphasis in connexion with God's holy law will surely be a real help to those who are heartily grateful for salvation. We have seen that the work of Christ meets both aspects of law—righteousness (Rom. viii. 4), and wrath

† A moment's consideration will clearly show in this connection that the sacrifices of bulls and goats could have been nothing more than types, else would they, as the *causes* of blessing, have attracted love unto themselves. How deeply this aspect attacks every theory of man, which looks to man, whether to the sinner himself, or to another creature. Again and again would we emphasize that any idea which verbally exalts Christ, but makes Him out to be in any degree less than One "over all, God blessed for ever" must falter, and detract from the worship which belongs unto God. Thus the Scripture unveiling of our Triune God is the *only* key to the precious mystery of salvation in which His people rejoice.

(Rom. iv. 15)—and that atonement involves both. Man might have conceived a deliverance by righteousness without punishment (but this would have been indulgently untruthful), or by punishment without righteousness (but this would have left sins, those of omission very manifestly, and thus have been impossible). Now the testimony of God in Lev. xviii. 5 is clear, and there is no “if” in the Hebrew:—“The Man (cf. Deut. viii. 3, Matt. iv. 4, a prophecy of Christ) shall do and live in them.” Hence our precious Saviour must do all first, and then live.† But Rom. vii. 1 shows continued life would mean a continuance in law, and the impossibility, in that condition, of going beyond it into righteousness! The only way out is death, but death for the Obedient One would be against law, and thus the obedience would remain unfinished and unrewarded. Hence the plan of the Gospel again sets forth a suitability which has no parallel.

#### CHRIST THE OBEDIENT ONE

The Obedient One must die for others in order to receive the fruit of His own meritorious obedience. But if He dies for others, His perfect obedience still remains undestroyed and therefore He must live. Hence the necessity of resurrection (Rom. iv. 25). But if He dies for others, their sins are taken away, and they too must live. Since He cannot give them less than His life, if He represents them, they possess His merits. Hence the suitability of the gospel, in that it guarantees the complete carrying out of the Divine plan, and a height of blessing which would have been non-existent, but for God’s overruling of the very sin. In Christ the believer is far higher than unfallen Adam was! Could any gospel be suitable for the revelation of God’s love and glory as this? The display of the full majesty of God’s infinite plan is so far-reaching that we only catch glimpses of the wondrous landscape. What could glorify Him in like manner?

#### GOD’S ATTRIBUTES IN UNISON

And this may be the background for other precious thoughts which our hearts would adoringly enjoy. The gospel manifests love and justice and wrath combined. In other words, the attributes of God are seen in wondrous unison. This test is crucial. Any gospel which fails here is of men and not from heaven. Only a message of mercy which does not attack the most seemingly distinct attributes, but intensely magnifies them all, has a value which can never be over-estimated. “Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” (Rom. xi. 33).

† If He is not seen in Lev. 18, the prophecy remains unfulfilled. Thus we note the suitability of the Gospel in that it fulfils Scripture, and thus sets the mind at rest that God has not gone back from His word. This is deeply important.

#### CHRIST THE SUBSTITUTE FOR HIS ELECT

To return. If the gospel implies that Christ, the End of the law into righteousness (Rom. x. 4), must live with all His perfect merits approved (Ps. xxiv. 5), this is also the generation of them that seek Him (Ps. xxiv. 6, xxii. 30). His acceptance is their acceptance, His welcome is theirs, His security is theirs, but His infinite eternal glory as God remains His. Thus the suitability of the gospel is seen in that though it makes us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, it causes us to own His honour aright: “He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him.” The believer is necessarily delivered from the sphere of law: law can say nothing against such: how blessed are the privileges of a child of God.

#### THE BELIEVER’S LIFE IS IN CHRIST

But if He is personally living as the One Who shall live, via obedience, my life is in Him§ . . . Hence it is not mine till in Him. This is something beyond transference. Herein is the answer to the objection that the purpose of God according to election involves salvation and righteousness apart from living faith. The work of the Holy Spirit now comes before us, and again we see that if He Who causes quickening were less than God, love would be turned aside, and the unveiling of God as Saviour would be dimmed, if not denied. When one is caused to believe, by the Holy Spirit, righteousness, life, and faith are all entwined though the consciousness of them may be at different times and in different degrees. This aspect of being “in Christ” (Rom. xvi. 7) must be distinguished from Eph. i. 3. All Scripture is in harmony when prayerfully acknowledged, and humbly pondered. It is not for us to harmonize it but to see its beauty, and to glorify the Name of our Triune God.

#### THE NEED OF THE ALARMED SINNER

And how suitable is the gospel not only to the manifestation of the perfections and truthfulness of God, and the fulfilment of all His seemingly contrasted words, but also to the condition of the alarmed sinner. It has nothing to glorify the creature as such, and this is a precious “Christian evidence” against all theories. It has nothing to attract the self-righteous, and thus nothing in it to encourage sin! This, too, is deeply important. All circumstances are gloriously met by the one gospel. If it appealed to a sinful attitude how could it be

§ If He were not personally raised, the prophecy would be broken. If I were not united to Him, His work for me would be destroyed. This is a wondrous thought. Everything else would be unsuitable.

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from God? If it terrified those for whom it was graciously intended, would there not be an inconsistency? The entire suitability of the gospel to the hopeless and helpless is its glory. The whole aspect does not contradict its particular statements, but they entirely harmonize.

### THE ANXIOUS SINNER'S NEED MET

And so we revert to the precious thought that the anxious need of the concerned sinner is adequately taken in hand. Not only the conditions but the feelings are rightly met. The troubled conscience has a reason for resting. A work which honours God, magnifies law, blots out sin, secures eternal life, and maintains every iota of Scripture, is displayed, that the purged conscience may be a background for worship (Heb. ix. 14, x. 2). An unpurged conscience would be worrying. And if I thought that God had changed one word to save me, might He not change another to lose me? If I were told that my accepted position was partly in self and not in Christ altogether, my peace would be removed, and the finished work would be unfinished, and the exceeding great and precious promises would no longer be "yea and amen." Any "gospel" which has conditions for the sinner to fulfil, however small, is law, not gospel, or, rather, neither law nor gospel, but a compromising and unavailing scheme of man, like to that of the unjust steward. But, "the Gospel of the Grace of God" by one work removes sin, and shows an everlasting safety: Anything else, we may add, would show a disappointed love of God, and either an undoing of Christ's atonement, or a suggestion that He did not die instead of His people, and therefore was not righteously caused to suffer.||

### POWER AND MOTIVE FOR HOLINESS

Happy realization that every sin is covered! The Gospel of God provides a power and motive for holiness. Any idea which left me without a new life in Christ would be too weak, and it would allow me an eternity of imperfection. Only if our old man has been condemned can there be eternal perfection. This again is crucial. The gospel is a sound basis for present godliness and future entire sinlessness. The more one feels how many parts of truth are linked, and that these all revolve around the one gospel, the more one knows that here we have God's revelation. Just as two or three prophecies might seem to apply in a "coincidence" but the agreement of twenty or thirty, yea of all, and the opposition of none, prove we are at the right centre, and that probability is changed to certainty, so is it here; though we should not

see this, were it not that the very gospel includes the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to know and enjoy the things which are freely given to us of God. Beloved brethren, rejoice in such a gospel and declare it by life as well as lip, that the God of all grace may be glorified, and your hearts will indeed delight in His salvation.

|| Any "exemplary," "heroic" or "governmental" theory of atonement which denies "instead" surely declares that the obedient One was unjustly under Divine wrath. Thus from every standpoint, every human conception falters, and indirectly attacks the attributes of God.

