

As Many as Received Him

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden, at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
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“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:12-13

I feel it is increasingly solemn to speak about the things of the infinite God. Very solemn to speak about them if we are ignorant of Him of whom we speak. ‘But as many as received Him,’ that is the Person. I was thinking as you were singing that precious hymn (957) containing those comforting promises, they are all centred in and flow from Him, this glorious HIM. ‘As many as received Him.’ So, it will be necessary, as the Spirit may help us, to consider first of all this glorious Person. In the preceding verses there is a wonderful and blessed declaration of Him in His divinity and in His humanity; humanity united to Deity, God with us, Emmanuel. But we must know these things. Paul prayed that he might know Him: “That I might know Him.” So we will just look at this blessed description of Him in the preceding verses.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The Son of God here is spoken of as the Word. It could well be said, ‘In the beginning was the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was God.’ But there is a New Testament beginning and there is an Old

Testament beginning. Moses’ beginning in the Old Testament was the creation, but the New testament beginning goes further back than Moses’ beginning, it goes back before the world was made and that is the beginning that is intended here. “In the beginning was the Word;” was the Son, the Son of God from all eternity, the only begotten of the Father, and this is important because it is by virtue of this God, the eternal Son, that the Gospel is what it is. It derives all its merit, its virtue, its power, its efficacy from His Person. I know that to speak of the comforts of the Gospel is very sweet, and there are many people, and many among us who are deeply afflicted and need the comfort of His love, but my friends there would be no comfort, no mercy, no salvation, except that the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal God, coequal with the Father.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and ‘the Word was God.’” But we must know Him. Now John in his first Epistle, tells us what it is to know this blessed Person, this divine Person, who has no beginning and what it is to know Him: “That which was from the beginning”, and this refers to this same blessed Son of God, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard.” This is how John knew Him: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.” Now each in their own measure must know what that is if we are to know the Lord Jesus Christ. We might well ask ourselves the question, whether we know Him. It is an astonishing thing to ask such a question of a congregation like this, We have been brought up to hear the truth, but sometimes a question, a solemn question, penetrating to the conscience will search our religion, and it may be just this question may abide with you if nothing else does. Do you know the Son of God? It puts a test to our religion, and this is the way John explains what it is to know Him. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life.”

Now as we go through, these verses we shall see how this is made possible by the Spirit. This same blessed Person was in the beginning with God, But He is eternal, His Person as the Son of God, One in the glorious Trinity, had no beginning; and this will make such a difference if we are taught by faith that everything concerning us in salvation, and concerning our pathway in life is controlled by this blessed Person. I know you may say, and I can understand it, what you want and what you have come for today is mercy, help, strength, deliverance; but whose mercy do you want? What strength do you seek? You will find that as you are exercised in your soul, in any direction, in your providences, in your heavy cases, with respect to your soul’s conflict, you will be brought back to this glorious source of salvation and this blessed Foundation, immovable Foundation, immovable because of Who He is.

Then John speaks of Him as the Creator, but He is called the Word because He expresses the will of His Father. He says in one place that He speaks of the things that He has heard His Father speak, and He does the work that He has seen His Father do; that is, right back in the Covenant of grace, all the decrees and purposes of the blessed Trinity, the Lord Jesus has come as the Word, to speak and to declare, and He is called the Word because in the 2nd Psalm the Father set

Him up: “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion”, and then this glorious King responds and says “I will declare the decree.” He has come as the Word to express the decrees, to declare the purposes of God in the Covenant with respect to His people’s salvation.

“All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” Now that is the first Word; that is where His voice is first heard, in creation. He speaks loudly there. “Every labour of His hands shows something worthy of a God.” Well, have we heard His voice even in creation? “All Thy works praise Thee.” “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious.” So there are His works which praise Him, but there is a work, a work of sovereign grace, which is honourable too. But He speaks in creation, and if we heard no other voice, if we had no other revelation of God than is manifest in that around us in creation, we would be without excuse for our ignorance of Him. “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead;” therefore, we are without excuse. O it is a wonderful thing to behold creation by faith! I know they are material things, but the material works of God seen by faith appear very different from how they appear to a man destitute of faith. Some of you perhaps have had your hearts touched as you have surveyed the wonderful works of God in the earth; the seasons that revolve, each season bringing its benefits, its fruits, and even in that context your heart will say: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” It is a simple statement it may appear, “In Him we live, and move, and have our being.” Naturally it is a blessed thing to realise that much, a natural man does not. Our utter dependence upon this great God will humble us if we see it in God’s light, our utter dependence as creatures. It will be impossible for pride to survive under a sense of our utter dependence upon God and our indebtedness to Him for every drop of water, for every crumb of bread; we can never keep alive our own bodies, much less our own souls, and this is the Person. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” We can almost follow on and say: “What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him?” They are two great attainments in the work of the Spirit, to know ourselves and to know God.

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” He is the source of life. Life is a mystery. He is the source of every kind of life; nobody can define what life is. There is vegetable life, not a human product, animal life, human life and all is from God. Life is a wonderful consideration. Life is experience, and when you come to the higher life, spiritual life, O my friends, it is the one thing needful, to have the life of God in the soul by the quickening operations of the Holy Spirit. “You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins.” In Him was life.” “I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.” O this blessed Person! I say in every consideration, in all your circumstances, you will constantly be gathered to the blessed Object of Faith, to this source of all good, all blessedness, all life.

What I am doing is to try to speak of Him: ‘But as many as received Him.’ “In Him was life and the life was the light of men.” Life and light enter simultaneously when the Holy Ghost quickens a soul into life. Take it naturally, when man dies he has no light, life and light go out together, Life and light come in together spiritually, and O how necessary this is as we shall see presently, in receiving Him. “And the light shineth in darkness.” This blessed coming of the Son of God, who is both light and Life - He brought it, He brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel. “Darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people.” It was the same in creation; the earth was without form and void and so was the world, and so is every person, Born in sin and shapen in iniquity, without form and void. Then comes this glorious Son of God. “And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.” The darkness of this world did not comprehend it, for later we read: “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” O the dense darkness, the ignorance of God, and there we are still unless the true light has shined, unless that glorious Person has come to us and been our light and our life.

How pathetic this is: “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” Now that is a description of our nature. He has come into the world, He has led captivity captive, He has ascended on high, but the world that lieth in wickedness is still in dense darkness, ignorant of God, and multitudes are. Who maketh thee to differ? You remember in the land of Egypt there was a plague of darkness, terrible darkness, darkness that could be felt, but the Israelites had light in their dwellings; and so it is now, “Ye are the light of the

world, a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” 0 what a great thing it is for life and light to enter into a poor dead, dark soul!

Then there is another thing, He, this same glorious Person, came to His own, came to his own nation, “And His own received Him not.” And there again are we all; naturally our language is “We will not have this Man to reign over us, we desire not a knowledge of His ways;” and in our pride and independence we say naturally, “Who is the Lord, that we should obey Him?” We say by our actions that we are our own, our time is our own, our tongues, are our own, but what a mercy - and the greatest blessing that can come to young or old, - if he Lord should step in and say, “Ye are not your own,” you belong to Me; “Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price.” 0 then see the value, the blessedness of salvation, and trace it up to this blessed Lord, trace it up to the divine Father, God so loved the world that He gave His blessed Son, gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Therefore, if you are called by grace, these things will be in your experience, you will be brought to know Him.

“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” Well, may the Lord help us to speak rightly of what it is to receive Him. “Even to them that believe on His name”, so that believing on Him is the same thing as receiving Him, and if we believe on Him we shall come to Him. The Lord explains this Himself in the 6th chapter of this Gospel, He says there, “This is the will of Him that sent Me, that whosoever seeth the Son” you see how that fits in with what John says in his Epistle, “That is He which was from the beginning, which we have heard; which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the word of life.” “And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which seeth the Son.” It is only the eye of faith that can see Him, not with our mortal eyes. A sight of the Lord Jesus by faith is very blessed, and you will have the witness in yourself, you will know that He can be tasted, handled, and felt, seen, and heard. You think of it, these statements, are they an experience in your heart? Paul, when he came to the end, he said, “I know whom I have believed,”- I know Him, not an idea, I believed in a glorious Person, believed that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, I know Him.

‘But to as many as received Him.’ Now let us consider, may the Lord help us because it is a very important matter, I would not deceive a soul, I feel too much

about my own case, so that in every statement we make I do pray that the Holy Ghost might be our Teacher. Now the point is the Person we have tried to speak about, have we received Him? I would just say this, that Christ is first. He is first in everything; therefore, if we have received Him it is because He first received us, and if ever we have loved Him it is because He first loved us, so that all real experience proceeds from the Covenant of Grace. The foreknowledge of the Father is wonderful, and that foreknowledge of His people as He recognises them, His predestination of them, predestinated unto eternal life, predestinated to be conformed to His blessed image, predestinated to the adoption of sons. That predestination must take effect and therefore, all experience proceeds from the Covenant of Grace, all according to the will of God. 'But as many as received Him.' Well then, to receive Him, we must know Him first. It is impossible to speak about receiving Him if He is unknown to us, but there may be different degrees of knowledge of Him, there are different degrees of faith.

The lowest degree of faith in a knowledge of Him, to my mind is this, to feel your need of Him. I feel persuaded of this, and I would not set you down short. If you, by the Spirit, have been brought to feel your need of Christ, it is because you have been shown and taught that there is no salvation in any other. You have been shown and taught that this world comparatively is vanity and vexation of spirit, and you have been shown and taught that there is no foundation, nothing to rest upon in this world at all; that it is sinking sand, and to realise, and that increasingly, that change and decay is in you and in everything else. But you have seen Him by the eye of faith as the eternal Son, see in Him all that your soul can need and desire. See in Him a righteousness to full perfection. See in Him an atoning, precious blood that can take out the deepest stains of sin. See in Him omnipotent power that can deliver. Seen in Him immutable love, love from which nothing can separate and therefore, He will be suitable to your needs. You might not be able to say that you have received those blessings, but you cannot do without them.

I was speaking to a dear soul last week who felt and said they had nothing at all, never had a promise, never had the forgiveness of their sins, just nothing. So I said 'Do you want anything?' They said, 'I want it all, I want it all!' What was there in that? A receiving, a reception of Him. Not to possess what they were seeking, but they knew where it was and therefore such a soul would say: "I wait for the Lord", nobody else." "My soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope." Such a soul could appeal to the Lord and say: "Now Lord, what wait I for?" Thou knowest my

heart, people are waiting for all sorts of things, some people are waiting for somebody to die so that they can have what they possess; poor affair! Some people are waiting for one thing and some for another, but David says, 'Lord, you know my heart, what I am waiting for.' And what are you waiting for? He says, "My hope is in Thee." "Everything I wait for is in Thee." There is a reception of Him. There is a way of receiving of Him in a need, like a child, it will cry to its parents, knowing that they alone can supply the need, and it is as we said lately, there is an element in desire of the thing that is desired. "When wilt Thou come unto me?" "Thou, O Christ, art all I want." There is a reception of Him by faith. 'He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.'

There is another thing: 'As many as received Him.' You will receive Him in two ways mainly; you will receive Him as you are, at first, when under divine teaching, under conviction of sin. You will be led to see only one Refuge, only one way of escape, only one source of true happiness. You will receive Him as a poor, self-destroyed, ruined sinner, that is how you will receive Him, and you will receive Him as a great Saviour, receive Him as He manifests His mercy which reacheth unto the clouds. You will receive Him as there is manifest to you His all-sufficient, saving, invincible grace, and in this reception there is a drawing. Peter speaks of it; of this blessed Person, as a living Stone, a living Foundation. "Coming as unto a living stone." Well now, this coming is receiving. Coming with emptiness to fullness. Coming under a sense of death, with the sentence of death and coming to Him who has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Coming as a poor bankrupt sinner to unsearchable riches, and you will distinctly feel sometimes, exactly what you are and all that you are, going out to Him, to receive from Him the exact opposite from what you are in yourself, and O what a blessed unity that is, what sacred communion, what an exchange! What a sweet surprise! It is a surprise that I do wish some of His waiting people could receive. Receive Him- "And in your best room, would gladly receive Him."

'But as many as received Him.' You receive Him in His Word. Have you ever received Him in reading the Word of God? "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Israel, He that formed thee, O Jacob, fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, Thou art Mine." Ah, you might say, I am very, very, very far off that, but would anything else satisfy you? If the Lord was to say that to your soul, would you receive it? To receive Him in His word is very blessed. He speaks in His word. "For the written and the incarnate Word, in all things are the same."

Here we have a description of the mind and will and purposes of God. He will never speak other than through His word. There will never be another written revelation of Him, but when it is made spirit, and life, and power in your soul, then you receive Him in His word. 'As many as received Him.'

You will receive Him too, under the preaching of the gospel. Oh it is very sacred to sit and hear the gospel when it is under the power of the Holy Spirit, and feel your heart opened: That was just what happened to Lydia. The Lord opened her heart, she attended, that is, she received the word spoken, and when He rends the heavens and opens your heart at the same time, O what a reception there is of Him! And it will satisfy the soul, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house, even of Thy Holy Temple," and that house and that Holy Temple is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. All riches are in Him, all glory, all virtue, all life, all power, all righteousness - Abundantly satisfied. 'As many as received Him.' But where there is a reception of Him, there will be faith. It is faith that receives Him, and the first intimation of life in the soul is the response of faith to the gospel. To my mind it is very important to examine ourselves as to whether we have that faith that responds to the gospel, a living faith responding to a living gospel, and that is where you get contact. The Lord Jesus, brought life to this world, and He communicates His own life by the Spirit to His people and therefore, that life becomes the life of their religion, the life of their prayers, the life of their experience and they live by faith upon the Son of God. O what is your heart experience? Do you long for His appearing?

'But as many as received Him.' Now if you have received Him, you will walk in Him. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." It is very solemn to talk about receiving the Lord Jesus and walking in the spirit of the world, very solemn. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him", and a good deal of that walking is in the prayer of faith, because if you receive Him at the first you will need to continue to receive Him and His fullness can never be diminished so you will be receiving of Him from day to day, receiving Him in His precious promises, and what a mercy if at last He receives you! Ah, sometimes now we realise that He receives us that is a nice word in Luke, "When the people knew Him, they followed Him, and He received them, and spoke to them of the Kingdom of God, and healed all those that had need of healing."

Amen.

