

“When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven ...”

The Apostle Paul invites us to “behold ... the goodness and severity of God” in the context of Israel’s fall, and the subsequent extension of the Arm of Salvation to the Gentiles who might lay hold upon it. “On them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Rom. 11:22).

Popular theology would claim that the Gospel is all about good deeds towards men, and benevolence towards man by the Almighty. But others are taught by the Apostle to know better, for whilst man may seek to minimise - and if possible exclude - the idea of coming judgments, Paul taught that we must behold the Severity of God, as well as the Goodness. Both aspects come together in the outworking of Yahweh’s Purpose, for in order for His Goodness to be established in the earth, those who despise His Ways must be excluded. There has to be the removal of the rubble of human superstition, before the Truth might be held aloft to shine brightly upon those who would walk in its light. There has to be the destruction of Man’s dominion in so that the kingdom of Yahweh and His Son be set up in its place. For the Truthholders, there can be no compromise; the day of Judgments shall surely come, “according to” the “Gospel” taught by Paul (Rom. 2:16).

These two aspects are also brought together in the second Epistle of the Spirit through Paul to the Thessalonians. Here, the Apostle speaks of the time “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels”, and “when he shall come to be glorified in his saints”. But in the same place, he also speaks of the Master “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thes. 1:7-9). So again, we have the goodness of Yahweh being displayed in a multitude of Holy Ones, and His Severity against the wilfully ignorant, who choose to disobey His Word.

Part of the allusion in this place, is to Psalm 50 where these two facets are brought together again:

“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice ...” (Psa. 50:2-5).

Notice that in this place, just as in 2 Thessalonians, we have a devouring fire before the Coming of the Lord – Severity, and the gathering together of Yahweh’s Holy Ones (cp. 2 Thes. 2:1) – Goodness. This company of saints are those who are redeemed through the blood of the Lamb, and who present themselves as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), which is their reasonable service. These make their stand upon the principles of the New Covenant, or Testament, ratified by the blood of

Messiah, by which blood he has purchased them for the glorification of Yahweh in them (1 Cor. 6:20). In these words, we have the overriding Purpose of Yahweh expressed: that out of Zion, God will “Shine”, with the light of his glory extending across the globe, dispelling every work and shadow of darkness.

Malachi also speaks of this time, describing how: “unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings ... and ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith Yahweh of hosts” (Mal. 4:2-3). Here we have the *Elohim* (God) shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Mat. 13:43) - that is, shining with the splendour of a Divine array of glorious attributes, revealed first in Yahweh’s Son, and then in a whole multitude which have been made to conform to his Image (Rom. 8:29). These have been developed through a lifetime of personal development, under the influence of the Spirit-Word, and the providential guidance of Angelic ministration, to bring forth a people that show forth the praises of He who has called them to inherit the earth. And it is these, who shall trample underfoot the ashes of those who have been consumed under the fiery judgements of the Almighty.

These two aspects which we are considering often come together in Scripture. In the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, we have the Goodness of Yahweh seen in that deliverance – yet also His Severity towards the Egyptians who perished under his judgments. Another example is the deliverance of Lot out of Sodom. Jude tells us that Sodom and Gomorrah particularly are “set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). Yet Peter informs us that “the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of trials,” and cites “Just Lot” as a case in point. These examples are worthy of our utmost attention, for just like Egypt, and Sodom, the world in which we sojourn is about to suffer under the judgments of Yahweh. This is a coming reality from which there is no escape. There is a day appointed for the earth’s judgment, and that judgment shall begin at the household of faith (1 Pet. 4:17). To minimise or exclude that reality from our preaching is not loving, merciful or kind. In fact, it is the exact opposite of these things, for it is to leave men ignorant, and unprepared for that day.

For believers in Christ, it is written that he has “delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thes. 1:10). They shall stand by grace, and not fall through disobedience in the great Day to come. Whilst it is true that the disobedient shall be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord”, for the righteous, these days will be “times of refreshing” which “shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). We need to direct our conduct and affairs with wisdom and discretion in order to prepare for that day, for how we choose to respond to the calling of Christ will, at the last, determine our fate at that time. We need to prepare now, that it might be given to us to shine with all the brightness of the Millennial Sun, rather than to be consumed with the fiery brightness of His Coming (2 Thes. 2:8).

Another example that we ought to consider in this place, is that of Cain, whose works it is testified, were “evil” (1Jno. 3:12). The passage under consideration states that those who have chosen to be disobedient shall be “punished ... *from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power*” (2 Thes. 2:9). And Cain provides an example of one whose punishment involved being forcibly removed from the Presence of Yahweh, and the glory of the Cherubim that dwelt at the east of the

garden. He was guilty of murder: the first human death to take place in the history of the world. And complaining at his punishment he said:

“Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth;
and from thy face shall I be hid ...” (Gen.4:14).

He recognised that his sin had separated between him and God (cp Isa. 59:2), that access to the Cherubic glory, and the way to the Tree of Life that they preserved was denied him by the fiery sword which turned every way. He would be hid from the face of God.

Interestingly, this latter expression appears to be picked up in Isaiah 53, speaking of our Redeemer:

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: ***and we hid as it were our faces from him;*** he was despised and we esteemed him not” (Isa. 53:3).

Notice here that rather to accept Yahweh’s judgment upon him, Cain complained that he would be driven from the Father’s Face of favour, whereas those spoken of by Isaiah hid themselves in shame. Like Adam and his wife, hiding in the shade of the trees of the garden, men hid themselves from the face of Christ, in a sense of shame and a feeling of guilt. Yet “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” As a man of sorrows, he bare our sins in his own body upon the Tree. Though, like the publican in Messiah’s parable, we might not lift up our eyes towards heaven (Lu. 18:13), for the sense of shame and guiltiness that we feel, there is forgiveness with Yahweh - who does not regard the iniquity of those who become justified through faith in His Son. Nay, there is rather forgiveness and reconciliation to those who tremble at His Word, which was “made flesh” in the person of Christ. In this hope we rejoice, longing for the day when we shall be delivered from the body of this death, and become partakers of Divine Nature: even an endless perpetuation of life devoted in every way to the doing of our Father’s Will.

The central theme of the verses under consideration is that of Glory. Verse 9 speaks of the disobedient being excluded “from the glory of his power”. Verse 10 speaks of how Messiah will come “to be glorified in his saints”, and verse 12 describes how “that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you” This is the right and proper focus of attention. Whilst the humanists see all things as being centred around Man, and what the Creator might, or might not do for him, the focus of Scripture is upon Yahweh as the Almighty, whose Name is to be exalted, and whose purpose centres around Glory to Him, that is, as manifested in a glorious immortal multitude who show forth His praises. Not creating the world to remain uninhabited (Isa. 45:18) it is his purpose to call out a people for the development and furtherance of His Name – and their salvation from death is but a means to that end, and not an end in itself.

Scripturally, the way to give glory to God, is to believe in His Promises, and to make confession of our sins. Speaking of Abraham, the Apostle describes how “he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith ***giving***

glory to God” (Rom. 4:20). And in speaking to Achan, Joshua said, “my son, ***give, I pray thee, glory*** to Yahweh Elohim of Israel, and ***make confession unto him***; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me” (Josh. 7:19).

Abraham gave glory by believing, and Achan was to give glory by confessing what he had done. Rather than to hide our sins, we must acknowledge them before He who knows the innermost thoughts and intentions of our hearts. And rather than to become despondent with our sense of weakness and failure, we, like Abraham, must believe that what Yahweh has promised He will surely perform at His appointed time.

When we come to consider the work of our Master, we behold once again, the goodness and severity of the Almighty. That is, the goodness of Yahweh in extending to us an Arm of Salvation, and the severity of condemning sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3). In Christ we see Yahweh Glorified, showing forth a glorious array of Divine attributes. We know that our God is a consuming fire against the disbeliever, but that His Countenance will shine upon the faithful (Psa. 4:6). We must, therefore, walk in the light of His Revealed Word, and continue in His Goodness, that in the great Day to come, we might be approved to be partakers of the Glory yet to be revealed.

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