

Mans Treatment of Christ.

by Edward Payson

It was reasonable to expect that Christ would be received with reverence and affection, but instead, he has been treated with neglect and ingratitude.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 7:28, Mark 12:6, John 1:14, John 3:16, John 14:6, Philippians 2:6, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22

Topics: "Christ's Divinity", "Redemption Through Faith"

Description

Edward Payson preaches on the parable of the vineyard owner who sent his son, expecting reverence, but the son was killed. He emphasizes the reasonable expectation for mankind to receive Christ with reverential affection due to His divine dignity, role as Creator and Preserver, sacrificial mission, moral excellence, and profound teachings. Payson urges listeners to reflect on their response to Christ, highlighting the importance of showing grateful affection and reverence for the Savior who came to save and redeem humanity.

Transcript

"Having yet therefore one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him also, last, unto them, saying, They will reverence my Son"

Mark 12:6

words compose part of the following parable, addressed by our Saviour to the Jews: A certain man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a wine-vat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent unto the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from them of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some, and killing some.

Having yet therefore, one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him also unto them, saying, They will reverence my Son. But the husbandmen said among themselves, this is the heir; let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. The meaning of this parable, as referring to God's dealings with the Jews, and to their abominable treatment of his messengers, and of his Son, is too obvious to require explanation. Nor with its meaning, as referring to them, have we any personal concern.

We are only concerned to inquire, how far it is applicable to ourselves; and a little reflection will convince us, that many of the truths which it illustrates, may be applied to us with no less propriety than to the Jews. We, and all other Christian nations, are now what they once were. To us, as well as to them, the prophets, and the Son of God have been sent; for we have their words in the Bible, by which, they being dead, yet speak. He that receives those words; receives Christ, but he that rejects them, rejects Christ.

But waiving a consideration of those and other truths, brought to view by this parable, I propose, at present, to confine myself exclusively to that part of it which has been read as our text. God is here represented as saying, with reference to those to whom Christ was sent, They will reverence my Son. We are not to infer from this expression, that God was ignorant of the manner in which his Son would be treated; or that he really expected men would receive him with reverence; for his sufferings and death were explicitly predicted long before his appearance in the world.

But God here speaks after the manner of men. He is merely stating what reception it might have reasonably been expected would be given to his Son, by one who did not know or who did not consider the wickedness of the human heart. Such a person, on seeing Christ sent down from heaven to assist men, would have exclaimed, Surely they will receive him with reverence and affection. Though they have persecuted and slain God's servants, yet surely they will reverence his Son. The principal truth taught by our text then, is evidently this; it was reasonable to expect that, when our Saviour visited this world, he would be received by mankind with reverential affection.

To show that it was so, is my present design. I. It was reasonable to expect this, on account of the dignity of Christ's person. We learn from the predictions which foretold his coming, that in person he was divine, and in dignity infinite. Behold, says the prophet, referring to this event, Jehovah God shall come with a strong hand; his reward is with him, and his work before him. And again, speaking in the language of prophecy, which describes future events as having already taken place, Isaiah says, Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Out of thee, Bethlehem Ephratah, shall he come, whose goings forth have been of old, even from everlasting. To the same purpose the angel who predicted his birth informed Joseph that he should be called Immanuel, God with us; God dwelling with men. Hence, when John came as his harbinger to announce his approach; he cried, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Agreeably to these predictions, we are informed that the eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, was made flesh and dwelt among us; that he is the true God and eternal life; God over all, blessed forever.

Now who that believed these predictions; who that saw them fulfilled in the coming of Christ, would not have expected that he should be received with reverence and affection? Was it not highly reasonable to expect that when God came down to visit and dwell with men, he would be received by them in this manner? Were you informed that God was again about to visit us in a similar manner, in a visible form, would not you expect him to meet with such a reception? You will recollect what preparations were made to receive the chief magistrate of these States, on his late tour?

Was it not reasonable to expect that at least equal preparations would have been made for the reception of the God and ruler of the universe? The reasonableness of such an expectation will appear still more evident, if we consider, II. The relation which subsisted between Christ and mankind previous to his

coming. He was their Creator, the Creator of the world; for by him, we are told, were all things created, and without him was not any thing made that is made. He was in the world, and the world was made by him.

He was also the preserver of men; for he supports all things by the word of his power, and by him all things subsist. As the Creator and Preserver, he was the rightful possessor of all things; for, we are told, that all things were made not only by him, but for him; that he is appointed heir of all things, and that all things are his. He had also for thousands of years, been constantly showering down temporal blessings upon mankind, giving them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness.

In coming into the world then, Immanuel came, as the apostle expresses it, to his own. He came to his own world, to his own creatures, the work of his own hands, to his own dependants, the deeply indebted pensioners of his bounty. And was it not reasonable to expect, that men should receive such a being with reverence, gratitude and affection? Every other part of creation knew and acknowledged its Creator. Plants and animals, the winds and waves, diseases and death, and even the spirits of disobedience owned his authority, and obeyed his commands.

Surely, then, it might have been expected that man, an intelligent creature, the most deeply indebted of his creatures, would receive his Creator and Benefactor with at least equal tokens of reverence and affection. It might have been expected that every habitation should have been thrown open to him; that every heart would have welcomed him, that every tongue would be loud in praises and congratulations, and that all the treasures of earth would be laid at his feet, and all its honors poured upon his head.

III. The design on which Christ came into our world, and the form in which he appeared, rendered it still more reasonable to expect that he would meet with such a reception. Had he visited us merely for his own pleasure, he ought, as our Creator and benefactor, to receive the most honorable, grateful, and affectionate welcome, which it was in the power of men to give. But he did not come to please or gratify himself. No, he came into the world to save sinners, to seek and to save those who were lost; to redeem those who had rebelled against him, grieved and insulted him, from the terrible punishment which their sins deserved.

In order to this, he came as a teacher to restore to men the lost knowledge of God, to bring life and immortality to light, to be the sun of the soul, the light of the world. He came to be not only its light, but its life; to give it life by laying down his own; and that he might for this purpose lay down his life, he appeared in our nature in the likeness of sinful flesh, and the form of a servant. That this was the design of his coming, mankind were previously informed by the predictions which foretold it.

They were told that he would come to be wounded for others transgressions, to be bruised for their iniquities, to bear the chastisement of their peace, and to heal them by his stripes. Who, then, when they saw the Lord of life and glory appear on earth for such a purpose, and in such a form, would not have thought it reasonable to expect that all who had heard these predictions, all who knew the design of his coming, would receive him with every possible demonstration of grateful affection.

Who that has seen the almost idolatrous admiration and reverence with which men have often regarded human teachers, and mere temporal deliverers, would not have expected to see this celestial Teacher, this deliverer from interminable evils welcomed with the loudest acclamations; to see men striving to make him some compensation for the glories of which he had stripped himself for their sakes, sympathizing with him in all the sufferings which their sins had brought upon him, and weeping at his feet over the sins which

occasioned them?

It has ever been allowed that there is something venerable, as well as affecting, in the sorrows of suffering greatness; and that a wise and good monarch reduced to poverty and distress is a spectacle which no man, not wholly devoid of feeling could contemplate without feeling emotions of respectful sympathy. How venerable, how grand, how dignified then, were the sorrows and sufferings of the Son of God! sorrows and sufferings brought upon him, not by his own misconduct or imprudence, but by his own boundless benevolence.

Who, then, would not have expected, that these sorrows should have been held sacred? Who does not perceive that God on the throne of the universe has, if I may so speak, less claims upon the reverence, gratitude and affection of his creatures, than God manifest in flesh in the form of a servant? Who does not see that God, appearing as Immanuel, God with us, has more numerous and more powerful claims upon mankind than God in any other form? If, then, Jehovah is worshipped and adored with rapturous affection, by angels in heaven, much more might it be expected that he should be loved and praised by men, when for their sakes he appeared as a man of sorrows on earth.

IV. The bright, unsullied excellence of Christ's moral character, and the various estimable qualities which were exemplified in his conduct, furnish another consideration which rendered it reasonable to expect that he would be received with the highest affection and esteem. That goodness ought to excite affection, will not be denied. That magnanimity, courage, and fortitude ought to be regarded with veneration and esteem, is equally obvious. Now, in the character of the man Christ Jesus, goodness of heart and greatness of mind, were combined.

He possessed in the highest possible degree every estimable, moral and intellectual quality. He was the only perfect man which the world has seen since the fall. He exhibited human nature in the highest degree of perfection to which it can be raised. In him goodness and greatness were not only personified, but, if I may so express it, concentrated and condensed. He was light and love clothed with a body. Qualities which are never seen united in men, and which seem almost incompatible with each other, were in him sweetly and harmoniously blended.

Seldom indeed do we see the qualities of the lion and the lamb, of the serpent and the dove uniting together in the same person. Those who are distinguished for benevolence, gentleness, condescension, meekness, compassion, sympathy and sweetness of temper, are usually deficient in magnanimity, courage and fortitude. And on the contrary, those who are remarkable for possessing the qualities last mentioned, are usually destitute of the mild and amiable virtues. But Christ possessed them all.

He displayed in the highest degree magnanimity, firmness, courage and fortitude; and those heroic virtues were shaded and softened by all that is mild and amiable and attractive. While he far excelled all the heroes, conquerors, and great ones of the earth in those qualities of which they boast, he rivaled the smiling infant in tenderness and sweetness of disposition. In a word, he was the lion of the tribe of Judah, and he was the lamb of God. Here then was such a character as men had never seen before; a character with which even the holy, Omniscient Judge of excellence was pleased and delighted.

Surely then, it might have been reasonably expected that, when such a character was presented to the wondering eye of mankind, they would receive him with reverence and affection; that all the praises which they had for ages lavished on far inferior excellence, would at once have been given to him. V. The interesting information which our Saviour communicated, and the excellence of the doctrines which he

taught, and of the precepts which he inculcated, rendered it still more reasonable to expect that he would meet with such a reception.

I need not tell you what respect, what honors have, in all ages and parts of the world, been given to extensive knowledge, to eminently learned men. I need not tell you what crowds of attentive, admiring disciples many philosophers have drawn after them, and with what despotic sway they have ruled the minds of men, even after they were laid in their graves. Lycurgus, Solon, Confucius, Zoroaster, Mahomet, and many others, either have been or now are admired, followed, and almost worshipped by whole nations.

Even the very Jews, who rejected the true Messiah, sacrificed their lives by thousands to every impostor who assumed his name, however absurd and groundless might be his pretensions. In addition to these facts we may remark, that mankind usually feel and display a strong degree of curiosity and interest with respect to any message or appearance that relates to the invisible world. Almost every idle tale of spectres and apparitions has power to engage the attention, for a time, even of those who disbelieve it; and should a person with whom we had been acquainted, and whom we knew to have been dead and buried, revisit our world, you can in some measure conceive with what interest he would be regarded, and how eagerly men would press to learn from him the secrets of the grave.

Now who, that was acquainted with facts, and with the purport of Christ's instructions, would not think it reasonable to expect that he should be received with every mark of eager and respectful attention. He came not merely from the grave, but from heaven, from the other world to this; came to make that world and its inhabitants known to men; came to tell them what shall be hereafter, to lift the veil which conceals eternity, to inform us what befalls the soul after its separation from the body, to describe the proceedings of the judgment day, and the future state of mortals, to reveal things which eye bath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.

In a word, he came filled with all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and willing and able to impart them to others. In comparison with him, all other teachers and legislators were but as lamps to the sun. In comparison with his instructions, all the discoveries of human wisdom were mere dreams and fables. Even his prejudiced townsmen could not but marvel at the gracious words which proceeded out of his month; and his very enemies were constrained to cry, Never man spake like this man.

Nor was this all. His instructions were delivered not as mere opinions, not as the deductions of reason, but as infallible truths; as a revelation from God, a revelation attested by numberless miracles, and thus sealed with the broad seal of heaven. Who then, would not have expected to see the world flocking around him, and all its philosophers with their disciples sitting, like Mary, at his feet, to hear his words. But, perhaps, some will think it a sufficient reply to all this to say, The world did not know Christ, did not know what he was; otherwise he would have been received in a proper manner.

The apostle himself informs us, that none of the princes of this world knew Christ. I readily acknowledge that they did not know him. But why did they not? They certainly might have known him; for the works that he did in his Father's name, bore witness of him; and they received many impostors as the Christ, without the thousandth part of the evidence which he exhibited. But not to insist on this, permit me to remark, that however strongly the excuse may be urged in favor of the Jews, it cannot be urged at all in extenuation of our conduct.

If the Jews did not know Jesus to be the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, we do. Every thing in the manner of his appearance which was dark to them, is explained to us. What was prophecy then is history now. We are clearly taught who Christ was, and for what he came and lived and died; and we are also taught, that he who taught the Jews on earth, now speaks to us from heaven; that he who receives his word receives him, and he who rejects it, rejects him. Even then if it were not reasonable to expect that the Jews should have received him with grateful reverence and affection, it may still be reasonably expected that we should receive him in this manner; that we should believe all his doctrines, obey all his precepts, trust in all his promises, and consecrate all we have and are to his service.

He is still in the world, as really as he ever was. He still comes to us by his Spirit, still stands knocking for admission at the door of our hearts, giving us an opportunity to admit him. Who then, that forgets for a moment the depravity of the human heart, would not expect to see all admit him? Who would not expect to find the Creator, Preserver and Saviour of the world regarded as all in all in his own world? Who would not expect to find him the chief subject of conversation in every house, to find him regarded as the best and dearest friend of every family, to hear his name lisped by children as the first word which they were taught to utter; to see all knees bowing to him, to hear every tongue confessing him, and all ages and classes uniting to cry, Hosanna to the Son of David! blessed is he who came in the name of the Lord, to seek and save our lost and ruined race?

In short, who that should hear Christian nations professing to believe that Christ died for all, would not expect to hear them add, with the apostle, this love constrains us to live, not to ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again? My friends, I need not tell you how wretchedly one who should expect this would be disappointed. I have told how it was reasonable to expect Christ would be treated. I need not tell you how he actually is treated. I need not tell you how long a person might live in some of your houses, without hearing the name of Jesus mentioned, except profanely, without hearing one expression, or seeing one token of grateful affection for him.

Surely, my friends, these things ought not so to be. Surely, a Saviour, a self-devoted, crucified Saviour, a divine Saviour ought not to be treated in this manner. Surely, he has a right to expect some better return from our race than he has yet received. And what has he done, that he should be treated in this manner. Many good works has he done for us; for these shall we maltreat him? Well might we blush to belong to a race of beings who treat him thus, had we not each of us still more reason to blush for our own share in the neglect with which he has been treated.

Let me entreat you to lay these things seriously to heart, to inquire whether Christ has among his treasures any token of grateful affection from you; to remember that if it were reasonable to expect that Christ should be received in the manner we have described, thus to neglect him is the most unreasonable and the most criminal sin of which we can be guilty. It was the sin which destroyed the Jews. They rejected and slew the prophets, and God punished them with a seventy years captivity.

They rejected and crucified his Son, and after almost eighteen hundred years, still groan under the punishment of that sin. My friends, we begin where they left off. Their last sin is our first. Their last step in the career of depravity, the step which plunged them into perdition, is the first step taken by those of you who are still rejecting the Saviour. What, then, will your end be? If your infancy in sin equals their manhood, and even their old age, what desperate lengths may you be expected to go, in sinning against the Saviour, should your lives be spared?

O, then, turn while there is hope; turn before it is too late; give to Christ the reception which he has a right to expect; and let your first step in sin be your last. To you, my professing friends, the subject is, if possible, still more interesting. If so much may be reasonably expected of others, what may not be expected of you? of you, who profess to know the Saviour, to hope that he loves, that he has pardoned and saved you? Are you loving and honoring and serving him in as great a degree as he desires?

Is your love for him great in proportion to the greatness and number of the sins which you hope he has forgiven? Do you wonder that you are bound to love and praise him, not only for yourselves, but for your unbelieving neighbors, to endeavor to pay their debt of gratitude as well as your own? Were he now corporeally present on earth, and should all the unbelieving part of the town unite in neglecting or insulting him, would you not feel bound to exert yourselves to the utmost to atone for the neglect, to supply the deficiencies?

The same reasons exist why you should do it now. O, then, be up and doing. Endeavor to ascertain what the Creator of the world deserves when he visits it in the form of sinful man, to die for its salvation; to calculate what you owe him for the sins he has pardoned, to estimate what the Saviour is worth to you; and say if you can serve him with too great zeal, or persevere too long in his service.

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