

Christ the Beloved

by H.J. Vine

Christ is the Beloved of the Father, and our relationship with Him is the foundation of our joy and satisfaction.

Scripture: John 16:27

Topics: "Christology", "Christian Unity"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the various relationships we have with the Lord Jesus Christ, emphasizing His personal name as Jesus and the rich mercy of God that allows us to be related to Him. He highlights Jesus as the mighty Victor who fought alone on the battlefield of Calvary, securing our present and eternal well-being. Vine delves into the divine delight the Father has in His beloved Son, Jesus, both in His majestic glory and His lowly grace, showcasing His eternal majesty and grace. He encourages believers to love one another as Christ has loved us, fostering unity and edification within the body of Christ.

Transcript

A great military leader returns from his campaigns on the battlefield to receive the well-earned rewards of victory. Many rejoice at his triumph, but all do not know him in the same way. The soldiers who fought under him speak of him as the general. The servants at his residence, who await his arrival, speak of him as the master. A young man affectionately greets him as father. A lady lovingly welcomes him home as husband. The Government of his country honour him as their brave and noble representative.

All these designations centre in one person, in one individual with a personal name of his own. Those who stand related to him, do so according to the designation in which he stands related to them; and they are affected correspondingly. Their well-being and happiness, however, greatly depend upon his personal character. It is just so with ourselves and our Lord Jesus Christ, God's beloved Son. His glorious titles and offices are multitudinous. His personal name is Jesus.

Any relationship in which we stand to Him is the result of the rich mercy of God; for since all had sinned none could claim any relationship to Him at all. But God intervened for our blessing in the Person of His beloved Son; and through the atoning work of the cross He has forgiven, justified, and saved those who believe on Christ. He has secured their present and eternal well-being and happiness, so that no doubt should be allowed to linger in the minds of any of His loved ones as to this. It is God's intention that we should be free from all self-thought, to be taken up with the glories of Christ, whom the Holy Ghost would bring livingly before our souls.

The Lord Jesus Christ returned as the mighty Victor from the battlefield at Calvary, where--not as the warrior of whom we have spoken, who had others to fight under him--He fought the fight alone. We have a foreshadowing of this in David, whose name means "Beloved." Alone he slew the lion and the bear; and when all Israel trembled before the Philistines, headed by Goliath the giant, he stepped forth alone and overthrew him. None stood with the true David, the true Beloved, in the battle of battles. His heel was bruised in the conflict, as was foretold in Genesis 3; but He bruised Satan's head, and annulled his power (Heb. 2). In Christ, who resolved the whole question of good and evil raised by the fall of man, sin, death, and hades found a Conqueror. He is not alone, however, in the results of His victory. Israel shared in the spoils of David's victory, and the Beloved Son of God shares the results of redemption with us in resurrection life. He became poor for our sakes, that we might be enriched eternally. Blessed be His name! We may well give thanks also to God, "who gives us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ," and lift up our songs of praise to the well-beloved Victor with grace and melody in our hearts. "Fear not," He said to John; "I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades." He is the risen One: victorious over every foe.

"His be the Victor's Name,
Who fought the fight alone;
Triumphant saints no honour claim,
His conquest was their own."

This glorious and victorious Person is everything to us. He is our Deliverer, He is also our Life, and He is our Hope. We confess Him as our Lord, and reap the benefits of His authority exercised on our behalf. As members of His body, the assembly, we are livingly united to Him in heaven, by the Holy Spirit; and we thus know Him as the Head, the Christ, the Son of the living God. As those whom "He is not ashamed to call brethren," we know Him as the First-born. As the bride of Christ, the assembly, we rejoice in Him as the Bridegroom, the Beloved of our hearts. The blessedness and glory of these relationships are all secure because of what He has done, and because of what He is in Himself. They are understood and enjoyed increasingly, not by occupation with the relationships themselves merely, but as we grow in the knowledge of Him in whom they are established. This is of the last importance, and it is just here that many have gone astray, leading large numbers away from true joy in the Lord. In this, as in all else, Christ is our Resource. In Him the Fullness resides.

Time and space would fail to speak of Him as the Son of Man, the Son of David, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and many other of His glorious names and titles, with which the boundless reaches of the glory of God are connected. We may, however, as enabled by the Holy Spirit seek to see something of what He is to the heart of the Father; to have the eyes of our hearts rejoiced, by beholding the exalted beauty of the Beloved of God our Father, to whom we sometimes sing:

"Brought to know Thy Well-Beloved,
Drawn to Him in boundless grace;
Thy effulgence, love and glory
Shining in His blessed face."

We have good cause to rejoice in Him as the joy and satisfaction of our own souls, the beloved of our own hearts, for "the glories that compose His Name all stand engaged to make us blest"; but the Father would have us to know something of the pleasure and preciousness He finds in Him for Himself also, as He has made this known to us by the Spirit in the Word of Truth.

He said to the Father, in the hearing of His own, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." He Spake then of the far-away eternity, when as the eternal Son with the Father, He was the loved Object of His heart. Something of the ineffable beauty and blessedness of this is conveyed to us by the Spirit in that precious expression, The Son of the Father's love (Col. 1:13). As God the Son He was co-equal with the Father. When, however, He spoke to the Father of that love wherewith He loved Him before the world's foundation, He was here upon earth as Man; and He was surrounded by the men whom the Father had given to Him; by the men He was leading to know the Father's Name and the Father's love; that love which He Himself knew so well. That Man, the Son, was still the loved Object of the Father's heart. He did not leave that love behind Him when He came from heaven. Nay, His coming brought that love to the earth for the first time, for there never had been any object suitable to that love upon earth before. And, blessed be God, when He left the earth and returned to the Father, He did not take that love away with Him, for He had made the Father's Name known to others, bringing them to the knowledge and enjoyment of that same love. It is ours now and for ever.

Speaking as Man, the Son who was in Himself equal with the Father, said, "My Father is greater than I." What a sight it must have been for heaven, to see Him here in His lowly loveliness and obedience thus. A Man of grace and holiness, the supreme delight of the Father's heart, walking and working amongst those who had sinned against heaven and in God's sight; glorifying Him and making Him known amongst those who had dishonoured Him! Wonder of wonders! Divine dignity and grace shining in the presence of human degradation and pride!

Who was that unknown One who went along with the crowd of repentant sinners to the waters of John's baptism? Who was it to whom John referred when he said, "I indeed baptise you with water, but the mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not fit to unloose"? It was Jesus, the Beloved of the Father. As He came up out of the water God distinguished Him from all the others! The heavens were opened to Him: the Holy Spirit descended as a dove upon Him: the voice of the Father was heard saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight." What a convincing expression of divine delight was that in the beloved One! What a vivid picture of divine complacency in Him was the dove-like descent of the Spirit upon Him! in contrast to the fact that no resting-place was found in the world's watery wastes for the sole of His foot, as foreshadowed by the dove that was sent out of the ark by Noah. Now a man, the Father's beloved Son, is the Object of divine delight, and the Centre of divine rest. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost were there livingly and actively revealed in connection with that one blessed Man.

God gave yet another glorious expression of His delight in His beloved Son. Peter wrote of the surpassing radiance of it (2 Peter 1:16). It was given in the Holy Mount. There in royal majesty the glory of their Lord shone before the disciples. The splendour of it outshone the sun at noonday. From the bright overshadowing, the excellent glory, there came a voice that gave Him honour and glory. It was the Father's voice. The Apostle tells us, it was "such a voice," uttered from heaven. Its heavenliness had greatly impressed him, as it said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight." It is striking that this is the one recorded instance where Peter speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son, after Matthew 16. Who shall fathom or tell the feelings of the Father's heart as He gave expression to His joy in

Him in those endearing words: "MY BELOVED SON!" No creature can, and yet we delight to linger over them. They mark out that Man of Majesty, shining in His Kingly glory with honour and power; they distinguish Him from every other one who has had, or ever will have, kingdom and dominion. They could not have been addressed to David, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar, or Alexander, though the latter attempted to exact divine honour from others. To Christ, the Beloved, they alone belong. The voice was heard on the mount: it was heard beside the river. It spake of the Man of majestic glory in the mount: it spake of the Man of lowly grace beside the river.

His majesty is eternal: so also is His grace. It is a joy to us to see Him singled out in His glory as God's beloved Son: it is none the less so to behold Him thus distinguished as the lowly, lovely, gracious, holy, and obedient Man beside the river. In the wilderness immediately after the Father's expression of delight in Him Satan endeavoured to spoil that delight by his temptations, but He remained dependent upon, and faithful to, the One whose beloved Son He knew Himself to be; He overcame the enemy by the Word of God, and glorified God amid desolate scenes, the very opposite to those in which the first man was set, when he failed and fell under Satan's power. What joy it must have given to the Father's heart, to behold Him thus victorious in His obedience and dependence!

He has glorified the Father upon the earth. He has finished the work He came to do. He is now as Man in the highest place in heaven. Nevertheless, although His atoning and redeeming work upon the Cross is done: although He is risen from the grave: although He has ascended to God's right hand: although all authority is given into His hands: still He is the same blessed Man, the beloved Son, the delight of the Father's heart. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hands": He is where He should be, in the highest place: but He is still the same--"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today and for ever." We are taken into favour in Him where He is before the Father's face; accepted "in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). If we could tell how near and how dear that beloved Son is now to God the Father at this very moment, then should we know how near and dear we are to Him. Such is the richness of divine grace. God has given us in righteousness the place of favour which belongs to the One who took our place under judgment upon the Cross; and this is unalterably true, and most blessed for us; but let us look above this even, as knowing we are thus blessed "in the Beloved," and see the pre-eminence and preciousness of the beloved of the Father. He has glorified Him in His life and work upon the earth; and the pleasure of the Lord still prospers in His hands. He glorifies every divine attribute: He also satisfies the very nature of the blessed God. Words fail as we contemplate it, yet we can sing:

"The Father's full delight

Is centred in the Son,

And countless tongues in heaven unite

To tell what He has done."

John 5:20 tells us that the Father "dearly loves the Son" (St.); and He tells us that the Father loves us, because we have loved Him (John 16:27); also, "As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you" (15:9); again, He said, "I love the Father." It is a circle of life and love into which we are brought, where heavenly joys and holy intimacies are known, where we have communion with the Father about the Son of His love, where we rejoice together in the same Object.

And now, beloved brethren, What does he say to those who are thus favoured--to all of us? "Love one another." Shall we not hear and heed this "new commandment" given to all His own? Was there ever a moment when we needed to listen to it, and to answer to it, like the present? Servants of Christ! How do we speak and think of His loved ones in all their trials and weaknesses and dangers? Let us learn from that devoted servant so often spoken of; who thus speaks of the saints: "My brethren, beloved and longed for;" "elect of God, holy and beloved." The cold language of the politician, the philosopher, or the theologian sounds strange to the flock of God, the assembly of Christ. The sheep love the good Shepherd's voice; the voice of Him who died for them and lives again. It encourages and edifies them. They know that voice and they rejoice to hear it. The voice of a stranger they will not follow. They know Christ, the Beloved, the Son of God: they have eternal life: the sensibilities which belong to this life are theirs. In our walk and ways and words among them we need to remember this. We shall then help one another on after the Son of God; and avoiding the little or large party folds, which ensnare and enslave so many, we shall be able practically to fulfil His blessed word--

"Love One Another."

In conclusion: In the liberty of the Holy Spirit, let us rejoice in the Lord always, even as we are instructed to do; knowing that we are eternally

"Accepted in the Beloved;"

speaking of Him in the language of true affection, from hearts touched by His deep and eternal love, in the language of the bride, of the assembly,

"This is My Beloved;"

and learning more and more of His preciousness to the Father; of the pleasure He finds in Him whom He dearly loves; and of whom He speaks thus:

"My Beloved, in Whom My Soul is Well Pleased."

Thus may we know what it is to have divine love dwelling in us, and the Son in us, until we see His face in the home of that love for ever. Amen.

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