

Jesus Went Before Them

We often remark upon the courage of our Saviour when He faced His own suffering and death. This little passage reminds us again how that the Lord knew exactly what awaited Him at the hands of His enemies in Jerusalem. Yet He hastened to His destiny, describing the agonies that lay ahead with words like ‘mock’ and ‘scourge’ and ‘spit’ and ‘kill’. He knew beforehand all He would endure; the hatred and rejection of His own countrymen, and the fierce cruelty of Roman crucifixion.

‘Awake, O sword!’

But that was only the start. Against God’s Shepherd the sword of divine judgment would also awake. He who knew no sin would become sin for His people, a unique, soul crushing experience in itself, unknown to any other. Then the cup of God’s wrath against the sin of all His elect, full, brimming and fervent, would be poured entirely into Christ’s soul and overflow His Spirit. The physical agonies of the Saviour, intense as they were, paled beside this soul-suffering inflicted upon Jesus by God’s righteous indignation.

A baptism of fire

It was to this appointed hour the Lord Jesus Christ hastened. Mark tells us, ‘Jesus went before them’. This little phrase seems to epitomise the Lord’s approach and attitude to His great purpose of redeeming His people from their sin. From His earliest days the Lord Jesus could say, ‘I must be about my Father’s business’. As the time of His death approached it appears the Saviour’s step quickened towards it and His anticipation increased.

I have loved thee

This is no surprise to all who understand the impetus behind our Saviour’s voluntary sacrifice. Our Lord Jesus Christ loved His people with such affection He could hardly wait to complete the great task of cleansing them from their sins, securing their atonement, and bringing them into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Christ’s death was the price of our ransom and, of course, He knew that.

Privileges of Grace

Our Saviour longed that we, His people, might have the full evidence of our accomplished redemption confirmed to our hearts. He wanted us, by faith, to enjoy freedom from the dominion of sin and Satan, freedom from the law and its bondage, from types and shadows, freedom from the fear of death and hell, and also the free use of Gospel proofs and privileges by which to make our access to God sweeter and more blessed.

‘In due time’

Accordingly, there was a time appointed for the fulfilment of the terms of the covenant of grace. A moment in history set by the Father when the Lord Jesus Christ would accomplish our atonement by His death. There was a ‘due time’ before which the Lord could not die, and after which He would not die. Paul tells us, ‘in due time Christ died for the ungodly’.

‘I Am He’

The Lord’s zeal to complete His task within the set time frame was evident. He set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem. He was ‘straitened’, that is, focused, single-minded and dedicated to this task. When Judas initiated Jesus’ betrayal the Lord told him, ‘What thou doest, do quickly’. When the soldiers came to apprehend Him in Gethsemane the Lord did not flee as He might easily have done, but volunteered His identity, ‘Whom seek ye? I am he.’

The cross before Him

So we come to our passage and we find that Our Lord Jesus Christ, having left the Rich Young Ruler behind Him, pressed on in His journey to Jerusalem, even to the point of outstripping His disciples – such was His passion and purpose, such His commitment and resolve to the amazement of His disciples. What lessons the Lord taught His people of His dedication and zeal as their Mediator! What an example for His disciples who in days to come would themselves go forth boldly upon their own ministries, yet who this day must literally become ‘followers’ of Jesus Christ!

A fruitful meditation

Of course, there is much more to this theme of the Lord Jesus Christ going on before His people as our great Forerunner and Trailblazer. He has gone on before and taken our place as our Substitute. He has gone on before to open the way of access to the Father; being the Door of Life. He has gone on before to intercede for us upon the merits of His own blood and righteousness. He has gone on before to prepare a place for us.

I Am the Way

Do we fear losing sight of Him? Might we lose our way as we follow and not know where to turn? No, He says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Fear not. "Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Amen

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