

Worship of the Father—Satisfying His Desire

- 1 O God and Father, we our praises bring,
For who more worthy of our praise could be
Than Thou, who seekest worshipers who sing
In spirit and in truth adoringly!
- 2 All worlds Thou hast created by the Son,
All things are held by His unmeasured power;
Yet we approach Thee in that glorious One:
What cause for worship in this holy hour!
- 3 'Tis He who leads us in this blessed sphere,
In the assembly singing praise to Thee;
What joy to Him that we should thus be near
As suited and in perfect liberty!
- 4 Here we unite, our song of joy is one!
And Thou, O God, art fully satisfied.
Amidst the praises led by Christ, Thy Son,
Thou hast a dwelling ever to abide. (*Hymns*, #54)

There is a longing in the Father's heart that He would gain many sons who would be filled with praise to Him. In this hymn, translated by Mrs. S. Hedman, we are summoned to increase and broaden our appreciation and realization of the yearning that was in the heart of God when He sent His only begotten Son to redeem and reconcile His chosen ones to Himself. This hymn seeks to generate praise to our God and Father with a view to satisfying His desire for sons who would worship Him in spirit and in reality. It expresses the exultant worship and proclaims the elevated joy of the many sons of God as they approach the Father with praises led by the Firstborn.

This theme is introduced in stanza 1 with references to the discourse of the Lord Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob. There the Lord proclaimed, "An hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness" (John 4:23-24). Reflecting the Lord's word concerning the Father's seeking for worshipers, the hymn's exclamation of praise is not directed to the "almighty God," but rather to our "God and Father." A striking characteristic of the ministry and person of the Lord Jesus Christ was His devotion to the Father. This trait in His ministry is especially evident in the Gospel of John. Even a casual reading of this Gospel leaves one with

the clear impression that the Son came to carry out the Father's will to make God known to us as the Father.

Declaring the Father

John 1:1 tells us that in the beginning the Word was with God and at the same time the Word was God. The Word became flesh, signifying the incarnation of God as a man, becoming a partaker of blood and flesh. The disciples who beheld the glory of the incarnated Christ, described it as the glory of "the only Begotten from the Father" (v. 14). Although no one has ever seen God, the "only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father," has declared Him (v. 18). The only begotten Son declared God the Father through the attributes and virtues that He manifested in His person and work. As the Word who became flesh, He made the Father known both through His living as well as through His teaching. On the eve of His betrayal and subsequent crucifixion, the Lord Jesus even declared that whoever had seen the Son had seen the Father (14:9). The Son of God was, in reality, God living among man, and His living was a declaration and demonstration of everything that was in the very being and heart of His Father whom He announced.

Bringing God and Man into a Father and Son Relationship

However, the Lord Jesus not only wanted to make the Father objectively known to man; His desire was to bring man into an intimate relationship with the Father. The goal of His ministry was to accomplish redemption in order to make God organically known as the Father to many sons, to those who were cut off from His life because of sin. John declared, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (1:12-13). This proclamation has become commonplace among believers and even unbelievers, but in its straightforward, unadorned, and undistorted pronouncement, it is astonishing! God in the Son came to man with a view of organically joining man, in Himself, to God as His sons.

This Father and Son relationship is unveiled in the Lord's lengthy discourse with His disciples before His death. He plainly said, "I am the way and the reality and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me" (14:6). It is lamentable that this clear speaking has been reduced in Christian tradition from the enormity of its significance into a generally held—but flawed—concept of going to heaven. God longs to have genuine sons in oneness as His full expression. This is much more than a gathering of sinless inhabitants in a celestial palace. The Lord's objective in His speaking was to point the disciples to the Father, not to a future paradise. His goal is the same for us, that is, to bring us into a present, living relationship with the Triune God in which the Spirit of reality as another Comforter is not only with us but also in us so that the Son and the Father can make an abode in us (vv. 1-23). Ultimately, His commission and ministry was accomplished through His death and resurrection and then applied to the disciples when He breathed the Spirit into them (20:22). In anticipation of the age-changing moment when He would dispense Himself as the Spirit into His disciples, at the dawning of the day of His resurrection, the Lord said to Mary, "Go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (v. 17). What a marvelous announcement: "My brothers" and "your Father"!

The Father Seeking Worshippers

The Lord Jesus spoke of the Father's seeking worshippers when He contacted the Samaritan woman at the well. When He asked her to draw a drink of water for Him from the well, she asked, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask for a drink from me, who am a Samaritan woman?" (4:9). Then the Lord said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (v. 10). When the woman asked further concerning this water, the Lord said,

Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life. (vv. 13-14)

Then the Lord revealed that the springing-up water is directly related to the worship of the Father. Although they were conversing about God in general, the Lord specifically applied the matter to the Father.

The Lord's assertion in verse 23 concerning the Father that "those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness" cut through the Samaritan woman's religious view of worship. For her, worship involved places and rituals; hence, she questioned which traditions were correct—

those of the Samaritans or those of the Jews. Although the Lord affirmed that the place and way of the Jewish offerings were according to God because "salvation is of the Jews" (v. 22), He also indicated that something new was occurring, saying, "An hour is coming, and it is now" (v. 23). This is an indication that the reality of the offerings in the Old Testament, which typified Christ, would be fulfilled in Him. Furthermore, His coming introduced a new means of contacting God, as signified by His reference to receiving living water that would become in her "a fountain of water springing up into eternal life" (v. 14). True worshippers must worship God who is Spirit in, through, and by the human spirit (v. 24), receiving God as living water that springs up into eternal life. Christ as the fulfillment of all the offerings is the unique means by which man is qualified to worship the Father in spirit and in reality.

The Father's Full Satisfaction Being in Sons Who Worship

The worshippers whom the Father seeks are, in reality, children of God (1 John 3:1), genuine God-men. Only sons have the living water of eternal life flowing out from their innermost being. Only sons are participants in the righteousness of the Father through the Son. Only sons are qualified to sing hymns of praise to the Father, not as genuflecting members of the old creation who prostrate themselves before their Creator, but as appreciative and loving sons who offer the Father not only the fruit of their lips (Heb. 13:15) but even their entire being. As sons, they receive from the Father all that He is so that He may be their rich supply unto their full maturity as heirs of God for His full satisfaction.

Coming to the Father through the Son

Stanza 2 directs us to the Son through whom, in whom, and unto whom God created all things, and in whom we—the worshipping believers—now have entrance into the presence of the Father to offer our praises to Him: "All worlds Thou hast created by the Son, / All things are held by His unmeasured power; / Yet we approach Thee in that glorious One: / What cause for worship in this holy hour!" This portion of the hymn may reflect the teaching of Paul in Colossians 1:12-22 in which he gives thanks to the Father who has qualified us for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light and delivered us out of the authority of darkness, transferring us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Paul then exalts the Son who is the active instrument of God's creation and the unique power through which all things in the universe cohere. Finally, he points to the fact that the Son is now the means by which we can be holy and without blemish in the Father's presence. There is a notable ring of praise in Paul's admiration and exaltation of the Son's love which brings us into a loving appreciation of Him.

Singing Hymns of Praise to the Father in the Midst of the Church

Stanza 3 is a clear reference to Hebrews 2:10-12 where we see Jesus as the Author of our salvation leading the chosen ones, the many sons, into glory. The hymn further affirms that the Son sings praises in the midst of the church: "Tis He who leads us in this blessed sphere, / In the assembly singing praise to Thee; / What joy to Him that we should thus be near / As suited and in perfect liberty!"

The Son who leads many sons into glory is now leading our praises. "In the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise to You" (v. 12) suggests that the Son today is singing in and with the many sons as they sing praises to the Father. Praise to the Father is a culminating peak and a fitting climax to a Lord's table meeting, reflecting the Lord's example when He initiated the Lord's table:

As they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took a cup and gave thanks, and He gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you...And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Matt. 26:26-27, 30)

The singing of a hymn, no doubt, involved the Son's singing praises to the Father. In like manner, we should join in with the Lord to offer praises to the Father after our remembrance of Christ at the table meeting.

The final phrase *as suited and in perfect liberty* is considerably arresting. *Suited* may refer to the sufferings endured by the Lord to accomplish our redemption, as stated in Hebrews 2:10: "It was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Alternatively, it may bear witness to the fact that He is not ashamed to call His sanctified followers "brothers." It is fitting! The Son of God has come and is now sanctifying the many sons; both He and we are all out of the One. Both He and we have the Father as our source, possessing the divine life and nature. In order to accomplish this, the unique Son of God, who is divine from eternity, became a man, becoming the same as us by partaking of blood and flesh (v. 14). Now the many sons, who have been redeemed by His blood and regenerated by His life, are partakers of the same divine life and nature. What the Father has done through the Son and what the Son has accomplished with the Father is now manifest in the many sons, the brothers of the Firstborn. Thus, it is fitting that we enter as one into the presence of the Father through singing hymns of praise to Him!

Perfect liberty perhaps denotes freedom from the fear of death, because the one who had the might of death—the

devil—has been destroyed, and denotes our release from being held slavery through the fear of death (vv. 14-15). Hallelujah! The whole creation also is groaning with the hope of being freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:21).

Perfect liberty may also allude to the liberty experienced by the many sons who were once held in bondage to sin but who are now liberated to approach the Father in the Son. It is without doubt a marvelous freedom for us to have such a way to join the Son in His enjoyment of the Father through praise! Surely it is a situation "suited and in perfect liberty!"

Praising in Oneness for the Father's Satisfaction and His Eternal Dwelling

Stanza 4 continues its focus on Hebrews 2 with the Son leading joyful praises and the many sons, who are joined to Him, entering into the rich enjoyment of the Father. In this stanza His children rejoice in their oneness, having been joined to the Son in His praise to the Father. God's satisfaction is not only related to the praises that He receives but to the realization of His desire for an eternal dwelling place: "Here we unite, our song of joy is one! / And Thou, O God, art fully satisfied. / Amidst the praises led by Christ, Thy Son, / Thou hast a dwelling ever to abide."

In His fellowship with His disciples prior to His arrest and crucifixion, the Lord Jesus prepared them for His physical departure by speaking of His future abiding in them: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him" (John 14:23). It is the desire of the Father and the Son to make their home in the loving disciples. In this way the church as the gathering of God's redeemed and regenerated sons becomes the house of the living God (Heb. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15).

The dwelling place of God is in and with His corporate people. The Lord Jesus decreed that He would build His church, and Paul stressed this point by unveiling that the church is built through the growth in life and by the mutual function of all the members (Eph. 2:21-22; 4:15-16). The Lord's purpose on earth is to build a house constituted with living members of the Body of Christ to be an eternal dwelling place for God. As living members, we participate in this building up by holding Christ as the Head, growing in the life of God, and mutually caring for one another in love. Such a labor can be realized and carried out only in an atmosphere of loving one another and following the Son as He leads us in our enjoyment of and praises for the Father in a manner that matches the scene that the writer of Hebrews has so vividly painted.

by Gary Kaiser