

Pastor Writes

Greetings to you! This morning we give thanks to God for our mothers during this worship as we celebrate it as *Mother's Day*. The theme for our morning's meditation is, 'The Son of Man is exalted to the right hand of God'. On Thursday we marked Ascension Day when Christ ascended into heaven and was exalted to the right hand of the Father. Jesus had appeared on numerous occasions during a forty day period before he ascended into heaven. During this period he presented himself alive after his death on the cross, and was also speaking to them about the kingdom of God. When he was about to ascend from the earth he told them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit to be given to them. He reminded them that repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. He asked them to stay in the city until they were clothed with power from on high. Then he led them out to the vicinity of Bethany and lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them he ascended into heaven and the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy. This morning we look at Christ's ascension as a sign of our glorious destiny and the rich inheritance he has called us to.

In the reading from the book of Ephesians we see Paul's thanksgiving prayer for the believer's knowledge of God and their awareness of the church's significance. Paul's request to the Father is that he may give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they may know him better. The word 'knowing' has the sense of an intimate personal relationship with God himself. Adolphe Monod says, 'Philosophy taking man for his centre says, "Know thyself"; only the inspired word which proceeds from God says "Know God".' This knowledge is impossible without revelation and therefore Paul prays that God may give them a Spirit of wisdom and revelation. He further prays that the eyes of their hearts may be enlightened in order that they may know the hope to which he had called them, the riches of his glorious inheritance for his Holy people. In biblical usage the heart stands for the whole inward self, comprising of mind as well as of emotion. So, the eyes of the heart is simply our innermost being which needs to be opened or enlightened in order to grasp God's truth.

Paul talks about the hope to which he has called us. God did not call us randomly or without purpose. God has called us to be saints or 'called us with a Holy calling', since he who has called us is Holy himself and says to us 'you shall be holy for I am holy.' The point made is that the Word has liberated us from judgment and we are not to lapse into slavery again. The apostle's second prayer to God is that we may know the riches of his glorious inheritance as his Holy people. What is this

inheritance that Paul is talking about? If God's call is the beginning of our Christian life, then God's inheritance points to its end. It points that final inheritance of which the Holy Spirit is an initial deposit or guarantee. Peter describes it as 'imperishable, undefiled and unfailing kept in heaven for you.' So we as God's children are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ and one day all that inheritance will be ours. Paul prays that we may have a glimpse of this glorious inheritance to which we have been called. This inheritance will be together with a great multitude which no one can number, from every nation, from all tribes, people and tongue.

Paul then talks about the power that is available to us in the interim period. Only God's power can fulfill the expectation which belongs to his call and can keep us safe from all the attacks of the evil one and help us to complete the race faithfully in order to inherit the riches of the glory. This power is the power of the Holy Spirit which is great and immeasurable and made available to all who believe. This power raised Jesus from the dead, made him sit at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly places putting all things under his feet and made him head over all things for the Church. The resurrection and ascension were decisive demonstrations of divine power. The two powers that human beings cannot control and which holds them in bondage are death and evil. Stott says, 'Man is mortal he cannot avoid death. Man is fallen he cannot overcome evil. But God in Christ has conquered both and therefore can rescue us from both.'

Death is a bitter and relentless enemy. It will come to all of us. No human power can prevent this, let alone bring a person back to life. But God has reversed this by raising Jesus from the dead. Secondly, Christ has defeated Satan and all the powers of darkness. Thirdly, we recognize Jesus' headship of the Church. Our greatest encouragement is to know that God has placed everything under his feet and appointed him to be its head. So we know that Jesus Christ is the one who leads the Church. It is his Church and we are co-workers with him. As we celebrate this Ascension Day we rejoice in the hope of the glorious inheritance that is waiting for us and his immeasurable power that is available for us in the present time. May we stand firm till he comes back.

Shalom

Paul Swarup

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