

"But as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name".

John 1. v.12.

The first word in the text, but, refers us to the preceeding verse; "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not". Very solemn contrast. They rejected Him. "He was despised and rejected of men", and look Who He was, Whom His own rejected. He was the Son of God. "In the beginning was the word". It could as properly be said, 'In the beginning was the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was God', the same was in the beginning with God. Blessed declaration of the eternal Son of God. Declared with sacred majesty in the 8th Proverbs, beautiful chapter there, where the Lord Jesus Himself declares His eternal generation.

Not only so, "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made, in Him was life and the life was the light of men". This is the glorious Person whom the world knew not. He was in the world and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not. O the gross darkness that covers the people, the darkness of ignorance of God; and not only ignorance of Him, but enmity and hatred to Him. The carnal mind is enmity against God, "Not subject to the law of God".

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not". Pilot brought Him forth and Barabas, asked, "Whom will ye that I release unto you, they said, not this man but Barabas...crucify Him, crucify Him, away with Him". "He came unto His own and His own received Him not". "We will not have this man to reign over us; who is the Lord that we should obey Him?". That is what they said. Would you say it? If we know our hearts we would. As we are born in our nature we say the same things. Some of you may remember when you did not say them in words but in your life, and that is what the world is saying today; "We will not have this man to reign over us". "Who is the Lord that we should obey Him?"

"Not this man, but Barabas", and you see Barabas is released. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not". This glorious One, the dignity of whose Person is divine, the express image of His divine Father and the brightness of His glory. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not". He was the precious corner stone, disallowed He was, disallowed of men. They disallowed His claims, they disallowed Him to interfere with them and, naturally, we disallow Him. But look at the blessed contrast. If we are inside of this text it is by grace. Paul knew this. "By the grace of God I am what I am. Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou that thou hast not received?" If we know ourselves my friends, we shall have no stones to throw at the Pharisees and we would agree sadly, solemnly, with what we sing,

"The soldiers pierced His side 'tis true,
But I have pierced Him through and through".

So that this little word 'but' is very important. A mercy if it is in our experience. It reminds us of that but and indeed it is of the same character as that in the 2nd Ephesians. "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins, BUT God Who is rich in mercy", that is greater, greater than you being dead in your trespasses and sins, this is greater, "BUT God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together and raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus". Why, it looks impossible except that the Word of God declares it, and some unworthy saved sinners have experienced it. So, have we received Him, or are we of those who receive Him not?. It will be well to look at what

Paul said, "Are we better than they ?, no, in no wise", Do you believe this ? I believe it of myself. Sin abounds perhaps today as never before, but I cannot look at the worst of sinners but what I must say in answer to this question, "Are we better than they ?, no, in no wise". "By grace", free grace, "Are ye saved, through faith," and that faith - "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God".

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him". And, therefore, the importance of this word is to consider what it is to receive Him and whether we have received Him. Taking a general view of it in the main, I believe that we shall find that if we have received the Lord Jesus, we receive Him in two ways mainly. We receive Him in what we are, and we receive Him in what He is. Now you look at your own case and see if this is so. With respect to yourself, How do you receive the Lord Jesus, but as a poor, lost, self-destroyed, self-condemned sinner ? You must receive Him as such. You receive Him therefore, under a sense of your deep need of Him. And in the second place you receive Him in what He is; and what He is so fits and is so suitable to what you are. And those two exercises will run through, more or less, the whole of your experience.

"But as many as received Him". In this reception of Him, there must be a knowledge of Him, and a knowledge of ourselves. In the first place, it is not a reception of Him as a possession of Him, a full assurance of your interest in Him. But it is faith embracing Him in all His suitability to your case. Believing, that as it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell in Him, that there is nothing lacking in that fullness. In that fullness there is everything that pertains to life and to godliness, everything that accompanies salvation, everything that constitutes salvation, and you receive that. You receive the truth of it before you receive the comfort of it. I believe, that faith believes, if I might so speak, in two main degrees. Faith believes the truth by the Holy Spirit, believes that God is. Believes that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. Believes in the Holy Ghost who alone can quicken the soul into life. A real faith receives of that glorious truth of the eternal Trinity before faith has that blessed full assurance of an interest in Christ, and at this point, if there are any here who have that faith - and a precious faith it is, yet you feel you do not possess Him. You long to. I would say this, and feel it safe to say it, "Cast not away therefore your confidence", it is a good confidence, it is a confidence in Christ. You are confident He is what He is. You are confident that He could save you if He will. The faith of the leper was the faith of God's elect. He came unto the Lord Jesus beseeching Him, kneeled before Him saying, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." He had a full assurance in the ability, in the sufficiency, in the divinity of Christ. Well now, that is a reception of Him. I say not a reception of an experimental possession of Him, although there is a possession in it, yet not to your apprehension. "O, make the union closer yet, let the marriage be complete".

"As many as received Him". And in this particular the Holy Ghost will take of the things of Christ and show them, reveal them unto such a sinner and therefore, you will receive Him in His incarnation. I wish that the Holy Ghost would make a vital connexion between every vital doctrine of the Gospel and our experience, if so that is to be joined unto the Lord, and nothing else will join you. An evidence of eternal union with Christ and in that reception of Him it is a reception of faith. You will receive the truth, not merely read about it, not merely hear about it, but the life of God in your soul being the life of faith there will be a reception of the things revealed in the Scriptures, the things declared in the Gospel. They will register, you will feel the connexion between Christ in His Person, His work, His sufferings, His death, His glorious resurrection and the salvation of your soul, and that is to receive Him.

You take for instance the incarnation of God's dear Son. Have you received it ? I do not say, do you know about it, we all do, all Christendom does, but have you received it ? Is it a foundation in your souls experience.? "God so loved the world that He sent His

only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth..." and you see by the text that believing and receiving are the same thing, for the text commences and concludes with those two things. "But as many as received Him, to them...that believe on His name, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God". If you believe on His name you receive Him. Except for the incarnation of God's dear Son there could be no communication from Heaven but that of divine, vindictive justice.

There would have been no need for God to send His Son into the world to condemnation. Condemnation could be executed from the courts of heaven, but salvation could not be accomplished without a Mediator. Do you receive that? Is that connected with your souls salvation? Is it precious? I have mentioned doubtless before, but at this point to hear the voice of divine mercy as we read in the 10th Hebrews, speaking of those sacrifices that could never take away sin, indeed, there was a remembrance of sin made every year; when they offered those sacrifices there was a remembrance of sin. Then said the Lord Jesus, "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire... then said, I lo, I come," Those sacrifices were useless, they never reached the conscience, they could never take away sins, "Therefore, what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son". It is only this glorious Person that stands between a convinced sinner and hell. Had He not come, heaven would have been empty of the human race and hell would have been full. Do you receive it?

"But as many as received Him" in His incarnation. Ah, you will receive that truth in the love of it. It was not a person born of the virgin Mary, it was a humanity, the eternal Son of God in the mystery of Godliness took into union with His divine Person, human nature, and took it in such a way that it was sinless and impeccable, and this in order to be a substitute for the worst of sinners. O here is the foundation. This is the foundation that was laid in Zion, that foundation that was found in the manger. Ah, my friends, if Christ had come in regal splendour, ostentatiously, they would have believed Him. They expected one to set up a kingdom, to deliver them from the Roman yoke, but O, says Zechariah, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold, thy King cometh unto thee, He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, upon a colt the foal of an ass". The kingdom of God cometh without observation. A showy, noisy beginning to a religion is not the religion of the Holy Ghost. "He keepeth silence, and putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope". But O the connexion between that beginning in the work of the Holy Ghost and the incarnation of God's dear Son. This is the source of all blessedness. This is the point of contact. When God's eternal Son came into this world and took human nature. The law must be obeyed by that nature that broke it, and, therefore, He came.

The substitutionary nature of the work of Christ is very blessed. O, how the arms of a poor, self ruined sinner will embrace this truth. How you do receive Him in His sacred virgin birth, so that the whole of His subsequent work partakes of all its virtue and validity and power from His Person.

"O, let a lasting union join
My soul to Christ, the living vine".

Well, so far as that, do you receive Him? Do you reject that? Do you believe on His name? Just a point here for another evidence, if you do, He is precious. "Unto you, therefore, that believe, He is precious". Therefore, He is precious unto you that believe. If He is precious to you, you are a believer, and you are a receiver, and if you receive Him, you must have that living faith. It is only faith that can receive Him. If you have faith in your heart, you will feel the truth come in. You will feel the application of it. If you are destitute of life and faith you will hear the word, you will receive the Gospel in word only and correctly. Very solemn for the Gospel to come in word only. May be completely orthodox. Goes into your outward

ear, into your natural understanding, so that you can talk about it, maybe write volumes on it and be completely dead, no reception.

"But as many as received Him". O sinners, those of you who feel so sinful you are not fit to pray to Him, not fit to come and assemble with His people, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them", and if you receive Him by the Holy Ghost, it is some indication that He receives you. What a mercy there are no conditions in the Gospel, no conditions in salvation, because the Lord Jesus, the substitute for all His people, has fulfilled every condition. All the conditions required by the law He has fulfilled and satisfied. Do you believe it? Does it mean anything to you? O that is a very solemn and important enquiry in the Lamentations, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" That will come right into your heart, as many as receive Him. When do you pass by? Whenever you read the Scriptures. When do you pass by? Every time you come to hear the Gospel. You are passing by now as we in our feeble way try to exalt Him. Is it nothing to you? Does it not register at all? Is there no connexion between this glorious Lord and His fulness, His grace, His Gospel, His salvation, His merit, His righteousness, His holiness? Is it nothing to you? Have you no need of it? Does it go into your ears and into your head, has it no authority in your souls?

He is precious to as many as receive Him. Do you receive Him? Do you know Him? You might say, that is a very great question to ask, Do I know Him? He is so great, He is so incomprehensible; and is that precious that He is incomprehensible? It would not be precious if we only had to consider an incomprehensible God, but it is precious that such a God has made Himself knowable and approachable in His dear incarnate Son. And you will be thankful He is incomprehensible, that He is infinite, because it makes everything that He has done and all the blessings He has to bestow, infinite things and infinite blessings. Do you receive this?

"As many as received Him". Do you receive Him in His blessed office as a great high Priest? If you say you do, why do you receive Him as such? We ought to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in us. Ah, we may feel our ignorance - and we shall if we are taught of God, but whatever the Lord has taught us we shall be able to give a reason for what we believe, why we believe it. If anybody was to ask you to give a reason for the hope that is in you, I believe that some of you who perhaps could not go into the mysteries of the doctrine of Christ, would say this, My reason for my hope in the Lord Jesus is just simply this,

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee".

It is a good reason for that hope, the teaching of the Holy Ghost there, and you will receive Him as a poor undone sinner in the glorious office of His Priesthood. If you have a view of Him by faith as a Great High Priest, that is a sacred sight to a sinner. A High Priest's duty was to offer sacrifices for sins upon the altar, and the Lord Jesus is the High Priest, His sacred humanity is the altar and His body is the sacrifice, and when you see and feel what you are in the innumerable sins, the depravity of your nature, what a sight it is, it is incurable except through this Great High Priest, yet to hear that word in the Hebrews - "How much more". I shall never forget those three words, and with respect to His dear people they apply to everything, without exception, in their lives, whatever you look at, if you are His. "How much more". Especially with respect to our ruined nature, a body of sin and death, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offer Himself", that will break your heart, offered, not the world, it was His, everything is His, everything is created by Him and for Him. Here are men struggling and killing one another for a little of its sordid gold, it is all His. But the whole universe would not have atoned for one sin of one sinner. "Offered Himself, without spot, unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God". Do you receive it? Do you receive this Great High Priest? Is there that

anxious prayer in your heart from time to time, "When wilt Thou come unto me". When you catch a glimpse of Him, do you say in your heart, "O that I knew where I might find Him", can you say it? I don't mean repeat it, if you can you receive Him. O blessed reception of faith. I feel sometimes too wicked to come into a pulpit to say nothing of coming into a pew, but I do believe I have received Him, received Him as the worst of sinners and His glorious High Priesthood shines and sparkles in the eyes of a poor repenting, trembling, coming sinner.

"But to as many as received Him". Do you receive Him as a refuge? Who needs a refuge? Those that are exposed. Those that are pursued. If ever we receive the Lord Jesus we may depend upon it the Lord Jesus will bring us into such straits, such positions, such extremities, such impossibilities, that there is no relief but through Him, no way of escape but in Him. Have you been brought there? and together with this sense of a need of Him as a refuge there will always be a desire to possess Him for Himself. That is one feature of the 142nd Psalm that I have much admired. The Psalmist was put in a position where there was no way of escape but Christ, "Refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul, but I said, thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living". He did not stop at a refuge. I believe it is true to say that an exercised, Spirit taught sinner will never flee alone unto the Lord Jesus for a refuge to save Him from hell, but he will also long to possess Him for Himself. You will flee to Him to hide you, you will flee to Him that He may be all and in all to you.

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even"... it is well to notice this, it may be an encouragement, we could read the text in this way, "But as many as received Him, even to them that believed on His name, gave He power to become the Sons of God" and it would also embrace such in election, if we could read the text like this - "But as many as received Him, even to them that believe on His name, 'which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God' He gave power to become the Sons of God".

The truth is beautiful and if the Holy Ghost would gather His poor trembling, coming people inside of it, it would indeed be cause for eternal praise.

Amen.

Transcribed verbatim and not edited for publication.