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LaD 389

on preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on
Wednesday evening 17.2.71.

Hymns 593, 67, 65.

Reading: Colossians 1 (from v.9)

Text: " 2.10

"And ye are complete in Him"

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

It may seem almost presumption for me to attempt to speak on such a word as this, especially as some of you know how low I sunk in my feelings on the past Sabbath; so much so that at the time I did not feel I could enter a pulpit again. Since then I have had some help that has raised me up a little, and some hope that the Lord has regarded the prayer of a destitute creature as I felt to be and not despised it. Although feelingly I hardly know how to speak upon such a word as this it has been continually speaking to me, as much as to say, although you, like many others, may sink very low sometimes, yet that does not affect the standing of His dear people in a precious Christ. There they are eternally appointed, chosen and loved, although often in their own personal feelings they may be much nearer hell than heaven. Even so there is a blessed Gospel, and what I have read tells us what that Gospel is in this sense that all His dear people, irrespective of how low they may sink, are complete in Him.

When we look up to the sky and admire the wonders of creation we may say what a miracle it all is; there we see the handiwork of God; but it came to me that there is a greater miracle than the miracle of creation, and that is for a poor, guilty sinner in himself to be complete in Christ. In fact I might say that when one really feels that he is complete in Christ, then it is a greater miracle to him than all the wonders of creation. There is such a tremendous contrast between the two parties indicated in the text that it seems sometimes as though reconciliation is impossible because in ourselves we are lost, completely lost in and through the Adam fall, so that in our state by nature we are ruined, we are "as far from God as sheep can run", as we have read in chapter 1, such is the heart of man, and of the Lord's people also in their unregenerate state. The Apostle, writing to these believing Colossians says, "And you, that were sometime

alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works", indicating that is what you were. When we think of what we were, that is if there has been any change in us, it is indeed a humbling reflection. What a mercy if we can feel it is true that the Lord has remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endureth for ever.

We must not get away from what the Scripture declares about this people. It is said of the Ephesians that they were dead in trespasses and sins were walking according to the course of this world, and were strangers and foreigners; that is true of all in their natural state. What an awful separation sin has made. It has brought death, hardness, blindness, rebellion, guilt, curse; and we must fall under this curse, unless grace intervenes to deliver us. The contrast is so great; here this blessed One of whom we have read this evening who is absolutely free from sin, and you and I are full of sin, as opposite as we could possibly be. He is full of light, we of darkness; He is full of power, we of weakness; He is full of grace, we of sin. But even so, though that is so sadly true, a reconciliation is possible in the case of all those that are appointed "not to wrath but to obtain salvation through and by our Lord Jesus Christ". The Apostle could say of these believing Colossians, although he refers to their former state as he did of the Ephesians, and "ye are complete in Him".

I would desire as helped to speak of this in the first instance as relating to what is involved in such a tremendous change in a person. What is involved consists in two things; that is, what has been done for him, and what is wrought within him. These are the two things. What is it that brings about such a blessed state as this, that His people are complete in Him? One of the things consists in the obedience of Christ in His fulfilling the law under which we stand. There can be no reconciliation apart from substitution. There must be one to stand between the helpless, ruined condition of the sinner, and the claims of justice; and this is exactly what the dear Redeemer did when He came to this earth and took our nature upon Him. He did this for a particular purpose, to fulfil the law under which His people stand condemned; and that is an awful condemnation, yet by His perfect obedience He fulfilled it and that obedience was

accepted at the hand of justice and demonstrated by His resurrection from the dead, His resurrection evidenced the acceptance of His sacrifice. On this ground it can be said of all for whom He rendered this perfect obedience, that there is therefore now no condemnation. Many, many times have I looked at that word and felt what a blessed state for a poor sinner to be in, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." You may say, this is too great for me, that is as I feel myself, but we are not to say this or that is too great unless the Scriptures say so, if the Scriptures say it cannot be, we are warranted to conclude that it is an impossible thing; but the Scriptures affirm the very opposite to this and even as we have it in the text that the Lord's dear people are complete in Him. He fulfilled the law, and became the end of it, so that all the redeemed are dead to it. This is a foundation for our reconciliation.

Another aspect of this consists in the price He paid to ransom His poor, helpless, sinful people from the curse under which they stand. What was the price He paid? It was the price of His own heart's blood. Being Himself made a curse He delivered them from the curse under which they lay. What an amazing thought is this, and yet there could never be any reconciliation, or coming together otherwise, or apart from full satisfaction rendered to the claims of justice. We cannot render it, we cannot put the crooked straight and the rough places plain. We are just dependents upon the sovereign mercy of a covenant God in Christ, He came down into this world, - amazing grace, distinguishing love,- and stood in the place of these poor helpless sinful creatures, these rebels, and paid the price, paid the ransom with His blood. Then there is a third aspect of this, vital doctrine, this blessed reconciliation is effected by the power of His resurrection, as we have it recorded that He was "delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification". When we have a view by faith of the blood of Christ we can see justification there, "much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him". If you think of justification, of a risen Saviour, you see it there, "Hell yanquished, heaven appeased,
God is satisfied and pleased".

If you think of it in relation to His exalted all-prevailing intercession you see it there. There He is enthroned above at the Father's right hand having power to save them to the uttermost, these poor sinners, helpless, lost and ruined in the fall and yet loved notwithstanding all. Here is the ground work of this blessed reconciliation, and that is what the Apostle refers to here in chapter 1.20 "And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself", to remove an impossible barrier as far as we are concerned and bring the two parties together. "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ". If we feel something of the sting of sin, and get a glimpse of a bleeding, dying, Saviour we shall value the atonement, I am sure we shall. Once in my life in a particular way I believe I had a view of that atonement that I have never forgotten, and hope I never shall, and when I come to the end of my short life, which cannot be long now, I want to feel the sacred efficacy of this atonement which has been made precious more than once in my soul. Reconciled; He has reconciled us, appeased justice, removed the curse, opened a new and living way, reconciled all things concerning His people; the separation made by sin, the curse that lay upon them and many other things beside. He has reconciled all things unto Himself, made us nigh by His precious blood. So in the following verse - "and you" - I hope that may embrace all of us here, "and you" (v.21). How is this? "In the body of His flesh through death". We must go to Calvary. There is much drifting away in these days from the one centre of a poor sinner's hope. It has come to be considered somewhat old-fashioned by some professors, but it matters not to me how old-fashioned it is. I want an old-fashioned Gospel to take me to heaven. Here then is a reconciliation, here is the ground work, the grand foundation of it all, and all this has been done for us in order that, if we are really His, this can be true "Ye are complete in Him".

There is also the work of that good Spirit in the heart of a poor sinner who has an interest in this. What has to be done there? He has to be reconciled experimentally. What does this mean? He must feel something of what he is first of all, the guilt that lies

upon him, that great burden of sin. This is the beginning of this blessed reconciliation in the heart, then it is as we have it in the 51st. Psalm where the Psalmist says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit". Not a hard one, a defiant one, but one that falls at His dear feet feeling that all He can say is "God be merciful to me a sinner", but with a softened heart. I hope I have felt a little of this a few times, this brings about a little reconciliation, something more than a softened heart, it is a drawing power in your heart to Christ. Drawn by the cords of love and the bands of a man to Christ and to this good Spirit. When He empties a poor sinner from vessel to vessel, it is not that they shall despair and sink never to rise again; but He empties them to make them suitable for a full Saviour. They come together very blessedly, they are the only characters that come together - an empty sinner and a full Saviour. They are beautifully suited each to the other in that though "nothing in myself I am, I find all in Him". "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all". "Ye are complete in Him", and then this good Spirit brings the suitability of Christ to us in all things, and the power of Christ and moves us in our heart that we may know something for ourselves. Here is the prayer of the destitute, that prayer the Lord will not despise; and what a mercy it is that He does not despise the prayer of a poor destitute one. I have felt thankful for this. Not only so, this good Spirit also brings the atonement to the conscience with a taste of forgiveness. What a blessed reconciliation that brings! If you feel a taste of pardoning love, you are not far from heaven in your soul's feelings; no, how precious He becomes then. Precious! I remember years ago before ever I preached, though I had it upon my mind, that word came so sweetly to me "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious". He is not precious to the world, He is not precious to anyone else but to those who believe in Him. What about those who believe in Him? They are complete in Him. To them He is so precious, invaluable. We have no

hope of heaven apart from Him, but we have no ground for despair in the Gospel.

"Saints, raise your expectations high;
Hope all that heaven has good;
The blood of Christ has brought you nigh-
Invaluable blood!"

"Complete in Him."

Then again there is also that consciousness that we stand clothed in His righteousness. I know this may be very rare, but it is very blessed. The hymn writer says something like this,

"And, lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,
And cast it all around."

and this to cover you from head to foot, a perfect, seamless robe. He does not cast it round about somewhere near to you, but all over you so that sins of every name and size are completely hidden from view. "Ye are complete in Him." The connection with this in one's experience is in this flowing together of the graces of the Spirit of repentance, faith, hope, love. They flow together when you get a sight of Him. "Why was I made to hear Thy voice?" They flow together they seem to link each one with the other, confession of sin, faith, hope, love. Here then is the work of this good Spirit, what a blessed work it is, it is linked with that perfect work of the dear Redeemer on behalf of His people. "And ye are complete in Him", - not in ourselves, not in any accomplishments of our own, - in Him; and I am sure you would say, I know I cannot be complete in any other person but in Him.

What does this completeness consist in then? First of all it consists in a union, a covenant union, a bond. His people are complete in this union. We may sink very low sometimes, but I am sure it is well with them that fear God, for they are in a covenant union. That is not saying too much because the Lord Himself says so in John 17, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one". Who is that One? Himself. Here is a blessed union that nothing can sever, although we may sink very low, question everything and find it hard to believe anything, yet here is the truth. Here is

a union that death and hell can never break.

"Hail, sacred union, firm and strong!
How great the grace! how sweet the song!
That worms of earth should ever be
One with incarnate Deity!"

They are one with Him and they are complete in Him. They are complete in His fulness. We knew a choice character at Brighton in our earlier days who was so very much favoured by that Scripture in the Corinthians, "all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's". I am sure she was complete in Him. There is a fulness - "Of this fulness have we received and grace for grace", and here it is that in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. This is a fulness of grace, of power, of salvation. He is able to save them to the uttermost. They are complete in His fulness. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus". We shall never exhaust that fulness; it is exhaustless, and His people are complete in that fulness, although they may feel very poor and needy in themselves, yet here is the standing, they are complete in this fulness; and sometimes it is very sweet to feel it. This is a blessed reconciliation, is it not? and what does it enable you to do? To fall into His hands, there is no quarrel then. You do not say your salvation ought to be on some other basis or by some other means. If that good Spirit was to come to you and say "Ye are complete in Him", what a blessed effect it would have. What love, what contrition, what repentance, would flow toward Him; a poor sinful wretch like me complete in Him. Not only so, these poor people as I have already mentioned are complete in His atonement. "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him". If you want completeness you must go to Calvary and to a risen Saviour, Who is now at the Throne of God, a living Saviour Who is exalted there to give repentance to Israel". Complete in Him. I believe I had a moment or two once in my life when I did not feel there was anything between the Lord and my soul. Every barrier seemed taken away just then and I remember it so well, I know it was not fancied imagination, I believed there was nothing between us. It was a blessed moment. Here it is then, "Ye are complete in Him", complete

in the efficacy and merit of His love, complete in His perfect righteousness, washed and clothed. That is how those are described who came out of great tribulation with their robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, all complete in Him. Every poor sinner, though he may often be in much fear and trembling, if he is a vessel of mercy, when he comes to the end leaves this poor world to go to heaven, "complete in Him". O what a prospect this is.

His people stand complete in His love. In the Song this love is compared to a banner that is spread over His people. The church says "He brought me to His banqueting house and His banner over me was love". She must have felt complete in that love then. If the love of Christ is shed abroad in your heart you will feel complete in it; I am sure you will. You can then say, "On such love my soul still ponder, Love so great, so rich, so free; Say, whilst in holy wonder, Why, O Lord, such love to me?" You will feel it, and some of you have done. They are choice moments. I keep thinking about that hymn we had the other day,

"Happy moments, when King Jesus is in sight".

So they are when He is in the view of faith in a sweet and particular way. His people are complete in His love.

They are complete in His will too. If His love is shed abroad in your heart that will make you complete in His will. What does the Lord say about that? In John 17 He says, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory". These people are complete there. This is the will of Christ, that His people shall be with Him one day to behold that glory; they are complete in His will. They are complete in His providence. I know often it may not appear to be so because of cross providences but the Lord can bring you to feel willing to be passive in His hands under afflictive providences, and that you are complete in Him, that it is His providence guiding you through this path of tribulation; and that one day all your providences will be left behind for ever, and your ransomed soul will escape to the realms of bliss to behold His glory without what the Scotsman called the weary veil of the flesh between. "For here we see through a glass darkly; but then face to

face".

Here I must leave it. I believe this truth; I have no doubt but that all His dear people are complete in Him, and I want that good Spirit to come again and bear His blessed witness in my heart that such a miracle of salvation is true even of unworthy me. Amen.

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