

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

The glory which thou gavest me I have given them that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one that the world might know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.—John xvii: 22-23.

In the plan of redemption the first in design is the last in execution. God loved the world and designed to save it. Christ came to display the love of God and accomplish His purpose and to qualify His disciples to work under Him He gives them the glory which the Father gave Him.

Here we see, 1st, the glory of the only begotten of the Father; 2nd, the glory of the sons of God; 3rd, their union in the Father and His Son; 4th, the design of that union, that the world might know the mission of Christ and the love of God.

Christ's glory was not merely the glory of a holy being, as that of an angel, but the glory of loving relationship—God's Son and our brother. Strangers may unite for a purpose and may approve and love each other, but it is not the endearment of family affection. Christ's glory is full of grace and truth and so far as men receive that glory will they have grace and truth. When that glory is perfect they will be filled with all the fulness of God.

One Faith is always considered as an essential to Christian union, although many mistake opinion for Faith and propose the opinions of leading men as a creed on which to unite. The multiplication of such creeds proclaims their failure, and they divide rather than unite Christians.

The confession which Peter made, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God"—Matt. xvi. 16, Jesus calls "this rock" and said he would build His church upon it. God Himself first announced this creed and all who truly receive it receive the record which God has given of His Son—they receive Christ. Other foundation can no man lay than that which God has laid in Zion. All who love Jesus love this creed and can unite on it.

Our brethren plead for the union of God's people on this creed. They hold the Bible as our only guide, containing the whole counsel of God. They aim to preach the gospel just as Jesus gave it to His apostles and as they preached it with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. They tell enquirers the very words the apostles told such. In short, they urge saint and sinner to believe and obey Jesus the Son of God in all things clearly laid down in His own Book that they may receive His sure promises. They feel in duty bound to prove all things and hold fast only what is good.

God has greatly blest their efforts in uniting His people and in saving the lost. While we rejoice and praise His glorious name for this success we anxiously pray that it may be more abundant, and earnestly enquire how we can become more successful in the work. The more we examine our plea the deeper is the conviction that no part of it can

be relinquished; *e. g.*: How can we give up the creed on which Jesus builds His church? How can we alter His last message, "to every creature" or leave the apostles for any other models? If dissatisfied with the church of Christ, for what church will we contend? Or what book will take the place of the Bible? "Lord to whom shall we go?" Let us here pause and ask, have we the *grace* and *truth* which Jesus gives His own for the purpose of the oneness for which he prayed? Without Him we can do nothing and lacking His grace as well as His truth we are powerless. Why should we not as anxiously strive and study and pray to possess His grace as His truth when both are so essential to success?

It is sometimes deemed necessary to defend the truth by public debate. In such case who regards the *grace* of Christ as the leading quality in their champion? Is he not rather required to have a good knowledge of the subject, great ability to defend it, to expose error and crush an opponent? Doubtless one reason why a man is scarcely ever known to surrender in debate, however far astray, is that he sees in his opponent and his party a thirst for victory and a desire to crush him rather than a love for his soul. It is easy for a man to examine an argument and to feel its force when it comes from one whom he feels to be a friend anxiously desiring his salvation. Grace is as needful here as truth itself and if it were always in the ascendant, when debate is really needed we would at least sometimes see the opponent himself and vast numbers gladly accept the truth as it is in Jesus. Paul declares that without love the eloquence of men and angels is as worthless as sounding brass and tinkling symbols.

If an advocate in whom the grace of Christ largely preponderates will not always convert an opponent he will bring the matter to a speedy termination and show on which side the truth lies. Stephen was a wise disputant but even his clear arguments could be met by his quibbling enemies with a sophistry sufficient to satisfy their adherents and prolong the strife. But when was added to his truthful reasoning a love that never faileth they were not able to resist the wisdom and the *spirit* by which he spake and at once showed their error and defeat by resorting to falsehood bribery and murder.

How necessary that preachers should largely possess the grace of Christ and yet how apt are they and their supporters to overlook it or at least make it only secondary to an excellency of speech which spreads their fame and draws around them large and admiring audiences. Although Paul could have used excellency of speech and of wisdom he did not, but preached the plain gospel, relying on the power of God who held as foolishness the wisdom of this world. While every preacher should study to increase his talents and stir up the gift that is in him he should never forget that without the all-pervading love of God even were he able to speak with the tongues of men and of angels it were but sounding brass. (1 Cor. xiii.) The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, and grace in the preacher has much to do with inspiring confidence in the hearer. Eloquence may gain people to a party, but the love of God gains them to Christ. Hence Paul gloried only in the cross of the Lord Jesus. When he thanked God that the gospel had come to the Thessalonians in word only but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance he adds, "for ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes" (1 Thess. i. 5.) The love of Christ which constrains the preacher is not lost upon the hearers. He believes and therefore speaks not for the applause or reward of men but to gather souls into the eternal kingdom of God and whether always encouraged or not the grace of Jesus is sufficient for him and his strength made perfect in his weakness.

How necessary that all Christians should stand fast in the grace of God—have their conversation always with grace seasoned with salt so that they may speak with grace even when not speaking of grace. Comparatively few will examine our position or the soundness of our creed, but if the "New Commandment" of Jesus were in full force among us, if we loved one another as He has given commandment, it would not escape general observation but all men would know that we were Jesus' disciples and by its influence would tend to unite all in Him. It there is anything we supremely desire it is to have an influence in this matter to have some humble part in exciting brethren to a greater growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ so that our writers may elaborate the subject, "With all lowliness and meekness with long suffering forbearing one another in love. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace." (Eph. iv.) That our preachers may give the subject special study and prayer, that our whole brotherhood may converse on it, pray over it and it may shine in our lives that our influence may be largely increased in uniting those that are the children of God and in saving those that are not. In his sermon on the Mount, our Lord shows us that his grace stirs in us a love for all men, even for our enemies and His own life and death confirm the justice and grandure of such a love. In the letters to the churches, the grace of Jesus sparkles from every page. If Paul enjoins Christian liberality on his brethren it is because they know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who though He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor, &c. If he urged others to special duties he besought them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. His most pathetic letter (2 Cor.) begins with "grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ" and ends with "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." The very revelation of God to man is closed, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your all, (Rev. xxii. 21.) Divisions among Christians mostly arise, not as is erroneously thought, because they cannot believe the same creed, but through self-will and a carnal preference for leading men, (1 Cor. i: 2-3) The grace of Christ destroys these discords and unites His people. When Paul pleads with the Ephesians to keep the unity of the Spirit and tells what that unity is, he surrounds the matter with an atmosphere of love. When he intreats the Philippians to fulfill his joy that they be likeminded, he does not direct them to examine their creed to see if they all agree on it, but rather, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." He shows them that this oneness can be maintained by an exercise of self-denial which has its example and inspiration only in Christ and that out of His fulness we can all receive grace for grace. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was fashioned as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Philip ii.)

Paul considered the love that led Jesus to make all that sacrifice to save the Philippians sufficient to annihilate self and unite them forever in Christ, and exhorts them to let His mind be in them.

Although Jesus' humiliation and death had been the theme of the apostolic life, its mention stirs up the grateful emotions of his heart as fresh as ever and he seems to forget everything else that he may gaze by faith on His original glory and follow Him from the throne to the manger and thence to every