

Rev. 1:5-6. the Chief Among Ten Thousand

by Horatius Bonar

The sermon highlights Christ's love, cleansing, dignity, and glory, emphasizing our royal priesthood and the importance of responding with an amen to the doxology.

Scripture: Revelation 1:5

Topics: "The Love of Christ", "Our Identity in Christ"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the profound love of Christ, who has washed us from our sins with His own blood and elevated us to the status of kings and priests before God. He highlights the unique praise directed to Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, and the significance of His sacrificial love that cleanses and dignifies believers. Bonar explains that this love is not only historical but also present and future, assuring us of our royal and priestly identity in Christ. The sermon culminates in a call to recognize our dignity and live in light of our eternal calling, as we ascribe glory and dominion to Christ forever.

Transcript

"Unto Him who loves us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever! Amen."--Revelation 1:5-6

Suddenly and abruptly does this doxology break in. The first and third persons of the Godhead are, if one may say so, passed by, and the second person is singled out for praise. The naming of His name draws forth this loud burst of irrepressible song. The 'man Christ Jesus,' the 'Word made flesh,' the crucified Christ, is the theme.

If He be not God, why is He thus specially singled out? If He be less than the Father and the Spirit, why is so large a portion of song and glory reserved for Him? If He be a creature, why are divine honors thus heaped upon Him? Why do the Father and the Spirit thus join in exalting His name?

This is pre-eminently the doxology of the heart. It is a song of love. Love dictates it; love begets it and calls it forth--that 'perfect love' of the Son of God, which not only casts out all fear, but rouses to joyful, loving adoration. Was ever any love like His? Did ever any love so merit song? Did ever any favors received, so call for thanksgiving?

Unto Him who loved us. He loved and He loves; for we may take in both the past and the present (and the future also), whatever reading we accept of the original words. This is 'the love that passes knowledge,'

without bounds and without end--the same yesterday, today, and forever. 'He loved us, and gave Himself for us.' The love is great for He is great. It is divine, for He is divine. It is human, for He is human. It is free, and altogether irrespective of goodness in us; for no other became Him, and no other would have suited us.

And washed us from our sins in His own blood. The love leads to and secures the washing. He washed the feet of His disciples; so He washes us wholly--head and foot, spirit, soul, and body. He did it--it is a certain and accomplished fact. He did it in one sense when he died; He did it actually when we believed; for it is our believing that brings us into contact with Him and His blood. As soon as we receive the Father's testimony to Him, and in so doing receive Himself, He washes us--washes us from our sins, washes us in His own blood--the blood nobler and richer than that of bulls and goats, the blood that speaks better things than that of Abel. He is our Cleanser. He is the great Fuller, who with His 'fuller's soap' (Malachi 3:2), which is His blood, cleanses us. He is the great High Priest, who with His hyssop (Psalm 51) purges us. He makes both us and our garments whiter than the snow; like His own transfiguration body and clothing (Mark 9:3); like His own head and hair, which was 'white like wool, as white as snow' (ch. 1:14). Thus we become 'the Church without spot,' like Himself; and then He can say of us, 'You are all fair' (Song 4:1,7); 'You have ravished my heart;' 'How fair and how pleasant are you, O my love!' (Song 7:6.)

Verse 6. And has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. The loving is the first thing; the washing is the second; the constituting us kings and priests is the third, which consummates all, and reveals the extent of the love--the great things which it is doing for us here, and will do for us hereafter. It is this love that makes us the 'royal priesthood;' which gives us the priestly throne and kingdom; which sets us on high, as, like Himself--Melchizedeks, priests of the most High God--kings of righteousness, kings of Jerusalem--not of the Jerusalem which now lies in ruins, but of the true Jerusalem, the heavenly city, which knows no ruin and fears no Roman host, whose builder and whose maker is God.

He HAS done this! Not He shall do it. It is done. We became kings and priests as soon as we became believers; nor can anything alter this royal privilege. Degrees of honor and differences in the extent of our dominions there are, as star differs from star in glory; but the kingship and the kingdom, once conferred upon us, cannot be taken away. Ours is an everlasting dominion (Daniel 7:27), a crown of life and righteousness which fades not away--the pledge of all which we have in the present possession of the Spirit, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Yes, kings and priests unto God and His Father--that is, 'to Him who is His God and Father!' Our kingdom and priesthood are in connection with God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a special kingdom and priesthood--such as can belong to no other than the redeemed. We are kings and priests in the service of, and at the disposal of, His Father and our Father, His God and our God. Our right to wear the crown and miter is connected with redemption and sonship--and it is as one with His Son that the Father uses us, and gives us the honor and glory.

To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever! Praise and prayer are directed to Christ! Strange that some should say--We are not to pray to Him directly; as if the many passages which begin, 'O Lord,' were not addresses to Him, and as if the many doxologies in which we ascribe praise to Him directly were not proof of His being equally the object of prayer as of praise. Shall we ascribe glory to Him, and shall we not pray to Him? His is 'the glory.' All excellency, created and uncreated, in heaven and earth, is His. His is the 'dominion;' universal dominion, over all creation. He is its Head, and Lord, and King!

Forever and ever! Never shall this glory and dominion cease to belong to Him; never shall His praises cease to be sung by all earth and heaven--by men and angels. There is none like Him; none so fitted to receive our praises; none so qualified to wear the crown and be exalted head over all. He had by His divine nature the right of universal dominion; by His human nature as the second Adam, the right of earthly sovereignty; as God-man and Redeemer, He has won these in a new way by His blood. They are doubly His. Amen! So be it, and so it shall be.

Let us gather up the foregoing exposition into the following points--

(1) The love; (2) The cleansing; (3) the dignity; (4) The praise; (5) The amen.

I. The love. The name of Him who loves is not given, because it would be superfluous to state it. Only One could be meant. His is love like Himself, infinite; love like that of the Father to the son, or the son to the Father; unchanging, never ending, yet free! Love stronger than death or the grave; love that loves us out of sin, out of hell, out of the grave, into heaven. It is the love whose breadth and length, depth and height, are immeasurable; the love that passes knowledge. Of this love none could better speak than John; he who had leaned on the bosom of Him, whose Gospel is throughout the story of Jesus' love.

II. The cleansing. This cleansing is the great proof of the love; for it is not 'to Him who loved us and delivered us from wrath;' but 'to Him who loved us and washed us.' He washed and He washes; it is both--the washing of the whole person once, and the daily washing of the feet. He washed us "from our sins." These defiled us all over; He washes us all over from the all; He makes us clean--'Now you are clean, through the word which I have spoken.' He makes us clean every whit. He does this in his own blood; not in the blood of bulls, which can never take away sin, but in His own. It is precious blood; it is spotless; it is divine; it is sacrificial; it is efficacious; it is altogether suitable. He does it all Himself; "By Himself He purged our sins;" 'how much more shall the blood of Christ purge your consciences!' We have God's testimony to this blood and to its power; and he who receives the testimony is then and there and thereby cleansed; so that, though the chief of sinners, 'we have no more conscience of sins.' Nothing can wash but this, he who uses it needs nothing more; and yet nothing less will do. It does its work effectually and at once.

III. The dignity. He has made us kings and priests. Such is the height of dignity to which He raises us. He gives us a kingdom; and in that kingdom He makes us kings, not subjects. It is the throne that is ours--not a home in it merely, or wealth in it, or a place of honor in it. It is nothing short of the throne and the crown! It is not yet ours in possession, but it is ours in prospect; we are kings just now, though it does not yet appear what we shall be.

But the priesthood as well as the throne is ours. We are not simply, like national Israel, to get the benefits of priesthood; we are priests ourselves, belonging to the priestly tribe and family--true Aaron's--true Melchizedek's; appointed to minister in the heavenly sanctuary. The priestly miter and robe and ephod are all ours--and we are to exercise our priesthood hereafter throughout the universe! We reign as kings, and as priests we form the medium of communication between the creature and the Creator, between the works of God's hands and the great Maker of all. It is unto God and His Father that we are such; our priestly, royal service has directly to do with God, and is given us by God Himself. As Christ is, so are we--His joint-kings; His joint-priests; the royal priesthood in whom and through whom God is to be glorified, and His creation governed forever.

IV. The praise. It is to Him who loved us, whom we ascribe the praise; for of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. It is to Him that the song of earth and the song of heaven are both sung. The glory is His, the dominion is His--and for eternity! Eternal glory, eternal dominion, we ascribe to Him! All that the Father has is His--the Father's throne, the Father's dominion, power, honor, dignity. He is Head of His Church; Head of creation; Head of the universe! In our songs we heap these honors on His head; in our service, and in every part both of work and worship, we do the same. Glory and dominion to Him who loves us!

IV. The amen. This is the summing up of all; with heart and voice we sum up this doxology, and cry Amen! This is the response of heaven just now; it will before long be the response of earth. Meanwhile it is the response of the Church of God on earth, of each saint here. We hear the glorious doxology first uttered in Patmos, and we cry--Amen! We shall one day do it with a louder voice, and with our whole soul!

How are we disposed to this doxology just now? Does it suit our taste, does it meet our sympathies? Does the love of which it speaks constrain us? Has it touched, broken, melted our hearts?

Have we realized our own dignity? Do we feel the honor, the privilege, the responsibility of being kings and priests? Do we act, live, speak, feel accordingly? Do our glorious prospects impact upon us now? Are we walking daily in the anticipation of what shall be? Are we working, praying, praising, giving, suffering, denying self, under the influence of that honor which shall so soon be ours?

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