

PRECIOUS SAVIOUR

"Unto you therefore who believe He is precious." I Peter 2:7.

Peter made free use of the word "precious," which signifies a thing of value. A thing that is expensive is ordinarily regarded as worth much. Of some things it is said that they are inestimable; that is, their worth is such that you cannot place a value on them. They go above any real or imagined price. While the word "precious" is applied to objects of merchandise, and contains in it an idea of value, it also implies the idea of fondness. We do not speak of a precious horse, but we do speak of a precious babe. We speak of something as being precious when it is in such a form that it can be personalized in some way.

This word "precious" admits of both a lower and a higher significance. In its ordinary use it expresses the idea of "great value," and still a value which admits of measurement and payment. We speak, for instance, of precious stones, precious fabrics; our valuation of these things is determined, not only by their beauty, but by their rarity, and you will observe it is possible at some point to put a price upon them, to buy and sell them. They are precious, but still they lie within the bounds of a definite valuation. That is the lower use of the word. In its higher use, while predicating rarity and intrinsic value, it suggests a worth on which no price can be put, something which lies above the measureable sphere of a price list and a catalog. A father's wise counsel and a mother's tender love are "precious" in a sense quite other than that in which jewels are "precious"; and this higher preciousness is not based upon any definite measurement of the particular qualities of father and mother. They are "precious" not merely because they are wise or strong or good, but beyond these things there is a relation of our life with theirs which suffuses all thought and feeling. They are essential to us, part of our beings, part of our lives. In this higher sense of the word the idea is expressed of a vital and ceaseless interrelation, it is in this sense the word is used in our text.

Carry this interpretation of the word up to its highest pitch, and you get as near as words can get to that relation between Christ and His people. He is our life and our hope; our faith in Him brings us into saving union with Him; He is God's beloved in Whom we are accepted, and man's strength by Whose vigor we stand. So we are not content to stand a long distance from Him, cataloging His qualities, and admiring His character, but we fling ourselves at His feet, we trust Him, we love Him, we follow Him, and we serve Him.

I. Christ Is Precious.

1. Christ is precious subjectively.

In His own person Christ unites God and man. He is the all-perfect God. In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person. He is the essence, the substance, and the sum of all preciousness. Many things are more or less precious; but the Lord Jesus is preciousness itself, outsoaring all degrees of comparison. All the qualities that constitute preciousness are in Him, in a degree of excellence that imagination cannot overcolor, that even love cannot exaggerate. In respect of rarity, He is the only Saviour of men; the "one Mediator between God and man"; the only hope of sinful souls. In respect of beauty, He is the perfection of all moral excellence. In character He is absolutely pure, perfectly good, and graciously benevolent.

2. Christ is precious objectively.

(1) As the Revealer of God.

Sinai taught God's holiness to Israel, and the whirlwind taught God's power to Job; but Immanuel--God with us--is a revelation dearer and sweeter than all. This solves many of the perplexities of life. Jesus, in His humanity, lived a life like ours. He was weary, hungry, persecuted, and, in all points, was

tempted like as we are. He was the Well-Beloved of the Father, absolutely perfect in His sight; He is precious in ours. For something to be rightly called precious it should have three qualities: it should be rare, it should have an intrinsic value of its own, and it should possess useful and important properties. All three of these qualities meet in our adorable Lord, and make Him precious to us.

As for rarity, He is absolutely unique. As to intrinsic value, He is incomparably, immeasurably and inconceivably precious. As to useful qualities, where else could we find such a variety in one place? He is eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, feet to the lame, freedom to the slave, healing to the sick, joy to the mourner, and life to the dead. Think of His life, and how He gives life to the believer! Think of His death, and how it redeems from hell all those who trust in Him! Think of His resurrection, and how it justifies believers; and of His second coming, and how it delights our hearts!

(2) As the Redeemer from sin.

The believer appreciates salvation because he knows what it is to be lost. One who doubts as to the matter of sin and its penalty cannot value Christ and salvation; but they can who truly sing:

"Plunged in a gulf of deep despair,
We, wretched sinners, lay."

If the soul does not know Christ, it cannot know forgiveness. What if man could not be forgiven? Imagine how it would have been with Peter if, when he cursed and denied that he ever knew Him, Christ had not turned and looked upon him. Sobs followed that look; but they are the music by which a soul marches home to God. The forgiveness of sins is something that we all need. What if there were no Redeemer from Whom we could obtain forgiveness?

(3) As the Reconciler to God.

The experience of reconciliation to God is the most momentous transaction in the life of any individual. When one is reconciled to God, he has his sins forgiven, and he has peace with God. What a glorious thing it is to have peace with God! Christ Jesus is the only one who can reconcile us to God. He is the only hope for a lost world and absolutely the only Saviour for a sinner. Without Him there is no possibility of a reconciliation with God.

II. Christ Is Precious To Believers Only.

Faith is essential to a right view and a correct estimate of Christ. In the eyes of those who are destitute of a lively faith Christ is not "precious." To them He is not "the chiefest among ten thousand," and "altogether lovely." It is to the believer, and to the believer alone, that Christ is precious. It is the believer who has felt the burden of sin and can say, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

Christ is the most precious possession of the believer. How I wish that I had the ability to speak of His preciousness as it should be! He is worthy of an angelic speaker to tell out all His worth. Very God and perfect man, He is altogether lovely, but, alas! this blind world does not see His beauty.

Only believers know the preciousness of Christ. We live in an age when men speak well of Him. Lip service is paid to Him in the press. Non-Christians in India, though at times bitterly opposed to what they see of Christianity, will never say a word against Christ. They will speak highly of His life and His teaching. But how is Christ regarded by multitudes in this country? They give Him admiration and treat His name with reverence, but He is not precious to them.

There is a fable of a princess who was given the choice of a jewel, but found herself unable to choose between the sapphire as blue as the sea, the emerald as green as the forest, and the ruby which glowed like fire. She wanted all three! The fairy, seeing her dilemma, melted all three in the furnace of the sun, and produced one perfect jewel, an opal of blended beauty, in which at one time you could see the blue like the blueness of the sea, green like the green of the forest, and red that glowed like fire. So there is every kind of beauty in Jesus. There is strength like the strength of the lion, "The Lion of Judah" is His name; there is meekness like that of a lamb, "Behold the Lamb of God," cried John the Baptist. There is justice such as no earthly judge ever attained, and there is mercy such as no earthly father ever displayed. There is intense hatred of all sin and wickedness, and there is yearning love for the sinner. Only believers know how wonderful, how precious He is.

Think what others are missing who know Him not! They may have health, they may have wealth, they may have friends, they may have honor, but if they do not have Christ they are without man's most precious possession, and nothing can make up for that.

To the believer Christ is precious in all His offices. Behold Him in creation, government, providence, revelation, salvation, resurrection, and heaven! How can we but adore His divine person, and admire His wonderful works! Christ is precious to us in prayer, in praise, and in reading His Word. What treasures of wealth, of wisdom, of knowledge, and of happiness are revealed to us by His grace! Christ is precious to believers in prosperity or adversity, at home or abroad, in health or in sickness, in life and in death.

Christ is so precious to us in our struggles with Satan and sin, as we fight with lusts, resist temptation, overcome worldliness, subdue selfishness, or mourn over failures and falls. How assuring and helpful His perfect life, His promised grace, His ready and tender sympathy! But for Him we should have despaired in our helplessness.

How precious He is in the hour of sickness as He comes and says, "I will make thy bed in all thy sickness." How precious to thee in the hour of trial, when He says, "All things work together for good." How precious He is when loved ones and friends are buried, and we stand by their open graves, and hear Him say, "I am the resurrection and the life."

As we think of the preciousness of Christ, we recall what was said by a child in a Sunday School, when the teacher said, "You have been reading that Christ is precious; what does that mean?" The children were silent for a little while, but at last one boy replied, "Father said the other day that mother was precious, 'for whatever should we do without her.'" This is a capital explanation of the word "precious." You and I, as believers, can truly say of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is precious to us, for what should we do without Him, what could we do without Him?

Christ is precious in every way to every person who believes in Him. The better one comes to know Him, the more precious He becomes. What are some of the reasons why Christ is so "precious" to the believer?

(1) He is his Saviour.

Christ has saved him from the guilt of sin, the punishment of sin, and the love of sin. If we are physically ill, and receive some benefit from a doctor or specialist, are we not grateful to that person to whom we owe so much? How much more do we owe to Christ? "Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." How precious is He "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree!"

(2) He has given him eternal life.

Christ said, "I am the door." He is the door to life, which is life indeed, abundant, full and everlasting. We owe much to teachers and friends who have been to us doors

into some new interest in life. The one who gave us an insight into poetry, what a new world he opened up for us. How different was that walk across the fields when in the company of one who opened to us the world of botany! But what a large world Christ has given us; the earth is more beautiful since we knew Him. Our life has a new meaning since we knew Him, and even death does not hold any fears for us.

(3) He is with him always.

Christ is the one Friend Who never fails us. We owe so much to our friends, but they cannot be with us always, and some of them are quite changeable.

"Unlike our friends by nature
Who change with changing years,
This Friend is always worthy
The precious name He bears."

Are we ill in bed? He is by our side. Are we hard at work? He is ready to help us. Are we among strangers? There is always One Whom we know. He is the Friend "who sticketh closer than a brother," a Friend from whose friendship naught on earth can separate us.

Those who have Christ have life, but those who do not have Christ are without life. Of Himself Christ said, "I am the life." When He is received by faith the believer obtains eternal life. Next to life in preciousness is light. Light! oh, how precious would it be to you, if you were incarcerated in one of those old prisons in Venice below the level of the water, deep down, with winding passages, where even a refracted ray of light could never reach you, where you would sit alone and feel for the wall, but could not see anything. Now the soul has no light, no true light, no heavenly light except what Christ brings. Yes, Christ is precious because He raises us from the dead and gives us light. Another precious thing which Christ brings is love. Still another preciousness in Christ is liberty. He is precious because of the life, light, love and liberty which He gives us.

As our faith in Christ increases, He becomes more and more precious to us. He grows more and more precious to us as the years go by. Paul mentioned the "unsearchable riches of Christ." By that he did not mean that those riches could not be discovered, but that they can never be fully known and never entirely exhausted. However much one learns, there is yet more to be explored. Christ becomes more wonderful and precious as the believer experiences more and more of His grace and love.

"The dear old story of a Saviour's love
Is sweeter as the days go by;
The glad assurance of a home above
Is sweeter as the days go by."

Since Christ is becoming more and more precious to believers as the days go by, how can they prove that He is so precious to them?

(1) By trusting everything to Him.

The Christian deliberately puts the matter of his eternal salvation in Christ's hands. He must, therefore, esteem Him precious. Every believer stays his hope solely upon the work of Jesus Christ.

(2) By sincerely loving Him.

Because believers love Him, they enjoy communing with Him, thinking about Him, and talking about Him. They cannot speak well enough of Him. Could you, at your very best, exalt the Lord Jesus so gloriously as to satisfy yourself?

(3) By faithfully serving Him.

True believers can never do enough for Christ. They are glad for the privilege of

laboring for Him Who died for them. Though they grow weary in His work, they never grow weary of it.

Happy beyond words to describe are they who have believed in Him. Having Christ, they have all things that are worth having. If you do not have Him, won't you receive Him now?