

Hebrews 1: 3-5; “The Express Image of the Father”, A Sermon for the Christmas Season, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall, on December 16th, 2018, in the Morning Worship Service.

This past Sunday we looked at how God the Father spoke the Incarnation of the Son of God. God had spoken in many portions and many ways in the times past, before the Incarnation, but now He spoke in a way far more dramatic and substantial; in His fulfilling of all the prophecies of what He would do to have a people for His own possession, a people whom He would save from the mass of perishing humanity; a people who would glorify Him in this life and throughout all of eternity. He spoke His very own Son as His final perfect word to all people, that they might be saved. Today, I want to speak to you of the perfections of God the Father which are perfectly seen in Christ His Son. And the Truth which I want to declare to you this morning is this: All of the glorious attributes and perfections which are in God the Father; in His nature and in the glorious essence of His being; they are only revealed savingly to men through their first coming to behold the glory of Jesus Christ His Son. The Father has purposed that the Son reveal everything about Him that He would have to be made known.

This was the purpose of the Incarnation. This was the purpose of God’s sending His only-begotten Son into the world. It was; that by these mighty acts of His appointment, that the truth about His own greatness, His holiness, and His saving love, might be seen perfectly displayed in Christ. What are the perfections of God the Father that He would have displayed through Jesus Christ His Son? 1st of all – The Father would have us to behold His Son as being the radiance of His glory. 2nd – The Father would have us to behold the glory of His Son as His perfect Image. And 3rd – The Father would have us to behold the glory of Christ as the One who upholds all things by the word of His power.

1st of All – Let us behold Christ as being the Radiance of His Father’s Glory. (vs. 3)

“Who being the brightness of His glory ...” This is the only time in the Bible that this word “brightness” is used in the Bible. It is a very profound and powerful word used in relation to Christ and His Incarnation. It is translated in the King James and the New King James Bible as Christ being “the brightness of His Glory”. The Weymouth Translation has it – “He brightly reflects God’s glory”. But reflecting glory is different from being the radiance of it, or the brightness of it. Simon Kistemaker says in his commentary – “The word radiance is to be preferred to variations of the word “reflection”, which many translations provide.” “The moon receives its light from the sun and simply reflects these light beams to the earth.” “The moon itself does not possess nor emanate light, because it does not produce light.” “The sun as a heavenly body radiates its light in all its brightness and power to the earth.” “By way of comparison, we may see Christ as the radiant light coming from the Father as sunlight emanates from the sun.” This is well said. The Church and every believer in it, reflects the glory of Christ in them.

But Christ is actually the most bright and special part of God’s glory. This is because the Son is of one essence with the Father. When the Son became “the only-begotten of the Father” in eternity past, He did not change in any way from what He always has been. He did not become a separate essence from the Father, but a distinct Person from and with the Father. “In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” The glory of the Son who was with God, was the same glory of the Father who was God. Jesus says, “I and the Father are One,” in John 10: 30. The American Standard Version of 1901 says that Christ is “the effulgence of the Father’s glory.” (*απαυγασμα τῆς δόξης* in the Greek) Webster’s Dictionary defines effulgence as “a flood of light; great luster or brightness; splendor; as the effulgence of divine

glory.” It is a word of superlative signification, and applied, with peculiar propriety, to the sun and to the Supreme Being.

And this should lead us to reasonably conclude that just as the physical sun which is set in the heavens, gives forth a flood of light; a brightness and a splendor; even so God has sent forth His Son into this fallen world of sin as the brightest of His beams of spiritual light. Christ the Son is radiant in His glory even as God the Father is radiant in His glory. All of the greatest excellencies of the Father are found, and can be seen by those who have spiritual eyes to see, in the Son of God. The Nicene Creed says, “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.” “And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.” Ah precious creed; to speak of the Lord Jesus as “Light of Light”. But this verse is even more explicit than the Creed. Christ is the brightness of His Father’s glory.

Athanasius, when he was defending the doctrine of the Deity of Christ against Arius said this: “Who is so senseless as to doubt concerning the eternal being of the Son?” “For when has one seen light without effulgence?” And Theophylact, a patriarch from the 10th century said, “The sun is never seen without effulgence, nor the Father without the Son.” How true this is! For – “just as all the glory of the sun is seen in the bright effulgence of its rays, so is all the glory of the Godhead seen in the face of Jesus Christ.” (Charles Simeon) What you and I need to try to grasp is that this is what the Lord Jesus has been, in His Being all along. He was not only the radiance of God’s glory at His ascension to heaven, but even at the hour of His lowly birth in the stable at Bethlehem, this was true of Him. “Silent Night, Holy night, All is calm, All is Bright; radiant beams from Thy holy face; with the dawn of redeeming grace.” “Jesus, Lord at Thy birth; Jesus Lord at Thy birth.” Was Jesus’ face shining with an unearthly light? According to the scriptural account, we do not know. But we do know this; that even in His infancy He was the entire spiritual Light of the World.

In that babe in the manger was the spiritual light and life of all men; the only light whereby they might see spiritually and be saved. In John 1: 4 states – “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” “And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.” “This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.” “He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.” You and I need to understand this morning that before Jesus Christ came into the World, that the World was in spiritual darkness. “The whole World was lost in the darkness of sin.” “The Light of the World is Jesus.” “Like sunshine at noonday His glory shone in, the Light of the World is Jesus.” “Come to the light; ‘tis shining for thee.” “Sweetly the light has dawned upon me.” “Once I was blind, but now I can see; the Light of the World is Jesus.”

Before we come to know Jesus Christ personally, we are darkness in our souls. It is not just that the World is dark, but we ourselves are full of spiritual darkness. Ephesians 5, verse 8. “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” “Walk as children of light.” To be in darkness is to be walking in sin and in ignorance of the truth. It is to walk in pride and selfishness. It is to walk in sensuality and foolishness. It is to have many other things which are more important to you than knowing God and following Jesus Christ and keeping His commandments. But when Jesus comes to your soul, light comes to your soul. Heaven comes down and glory fills your soul. When John the Baptist was put in prison by Herod, it says in Matthew 4: 13 – “Jesus came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The Land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee

of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned.”

This was the light of Christ’s glory as a Savior. His glory was seen in His doing miracles and heard in His teaching about the way to eternal life. People began to perceive the truth about the grace that He came to bring to sinners. We little realize just how great Christ’s glory is; when we first hear the gospel. But when the light of Christ is shining in a saving way; sinners are illumined. They are being called out of darkness and into His marvelous light where they see the truth that they need Him to be saved. They look to Him by faith, and they are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. Why? Because Christ comes and shines His light into the hearts of sinners as the gospel is preached, in accordance with the purpose of the Father to save them. You will say to me, “Then why are not more sinners saved if Christ has this great ability?” It is because we are all by nature, before we are brought to Christ, willfully blind to spiritual truth. We do not want Christ, and so God will often leave sinful men and women to themselves. He leaves them to the sins which they think that they must continue pursuing. The light is shining but they do not want it to shine on them. John 3: 19 – “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

But, turn over to 2nd Corinthians 4, and you will see God the Father’s sovereign ability to shine His light savingly into the hearts of people in relation to the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Verse 1 says, “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.” “But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake.” “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

What is the one great object of the Evil one Satan, which is shown to us in these verses? It is to “veil the gospel”. It is to hide it from sinful men and women, lest the light of the good news of the glory of Christ should shine on them. All that is really necessary for people to be saved is for God, and Christians, to shine the light. God has shone the light into our dark hearts, and we beheld the glory of Christ and His marvelous grace. It is both marvelous and powerful. Marvelous, that God would shine His holy light upon unworthy sinners like us. Marvelous how general He is in the shining of light. And yet even more marvelous in how sovereign and particular He is in the shining of His saving light. “Light is sown as seed for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” Powerful in that His light is well able to drive the darkness of sin and ignorance away. When the Father shines in this great and powerful way, then Christ Himself manifests His glory to the person who may not even understand this powerful working, and saves them, and gives them light. Christ is the radiancy of that glorious light which the Father has shone.

“Christ whose glory fills the skies, Christ the true, the only Light.” “Sun of righteousness arise, triumph o’er the shades of night; dayspring from on high, be near; Daystar, in my heart appear.” “Visit then this soul of mine; pierce the gloom of sin and grief; fill me, Radiance Divine; scatter all my unbelief; more and more thyself display, shining to the perfect day.”

Oh that you and I might see this day that Christ is the Radiance of the Father’s glory! Oh that we might be believing in all that we read in the Scriptures about this great and powerful subject. Christ is the Light of the World. It is He who says to us, “He who follows Me shall not walk in

darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (John 8: 12) The continual shining of the light of Christ should cause us more and more to behold by faith, the great glory of Christ. “ Will you not behold the glory of God in the face of Christ today? Will you not reverence the Father and the Son in the worship that you give to them as Divine Persons of the Godhead? Do not think it a casual thing to know His presence and to abide in the pure light of Christ. For it not. It is the greatest of privileges. Therefore you should pray that you would learn to be careful to walk in the light as He is in the light; to pray that you would really see and know that your fellowship is with the Father and the Son.

Further, you should see that your becoming mature as a Christian really is a matter of abiding in Christ’s pure light of truth and grace. Be not be deceived or enamored with the darkness of Satan’s worldly and sinful reasonings, which He calls light. Remember that he can disguise himself as an angel of light. Know Christ and read your Bible. Do not confuse the things of Christ’s true and pure light which He shines upon His written Word, with the things of Satan’s disguise of light. “When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, what a glory he sheds on our way!” “While we do His good will, He abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey.” Remember that Jesus is the Radiance of God’s glory, and remember to rest in the joy of what He is.

“Jesus I am resting, resting, in the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness of Thy loving heart.” “Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee, as Thy beauty fills my soul.” “For by Thy transforming power, Thou hast made me whole.” “Ever lift Thy face upon me as I work and wait for Thee; resting ‘neath Thy smile, Lord Jesus, earth’s dark shadows flee.” “Brightness of my Father’s glory, Sunshine of my Father’s face, keep me ever trusting, resting, fill me with Thy grace.”

2nd – We want to behold the glory of Christ in realizing that He is the Express Image of the Father’s Person.

Our text says that Christ is “the radiance of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His Person”. The words, “the express image of His Person” are *charaktēr tēs hupostaseōs* in the Greek. Christ is the character or impression of the Father’s hypostasis or substance. Adam Clarke says, “The hypostasis of God is that which is essential to Him as God; and the character or image is that by which all the likeness of the original becomes manifest, and is a perfect facsimile of the whole.” “It is a metaphor taken from sealing (minting a coin or a sealing a letter); the die or the seal leaving the full impression of its every part on the metal or wax to which it is applied.” (end of quote) In the New American Standard it reads, “Christ is the exact representation of the Father’s nature”. The English Standard Version says, “Christ is “the exact imprint of His nature.”

Simon Kistemaker says, “God himself stamped upon His Son the divine imprint of His being.” “The word translated as “exact representation” refers to a precise reproduction of the original.” “The Son, then, is completely the same in His being as the Father.” “Nevertheless, even though an imprint is the same as the stamp that makes the impression, both exist separately.” “The Son who bears the very stamp of God’s nature, is the Father but proceeds from the Father and has a separate existence.” If you will turn over to John Chapter 14, you will better behold Christ’s great glory in this respect. Verse 1 says, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.” “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.” “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” “And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

“Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?’ “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’ “No one comes to the Father except through Me.” “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from

now on you know Him and have seen Him.” “Philip said to Him, ‘Lord show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.’” “Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip?’” “He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?” This is how much the Son of God represents His Father in heaven. He represents Him as a perfect and exact representation; so much so that Jesus could say, ‘He who has seen Me has seen the Father.’” As Christians, therefore, we should be able to receive the truth that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father in eternity past. For only God can beget God. Only God can bring forth His Son as one essence with Himself and yet distinguishable in His Personhood. As

Francis Turretin says in his Elenctic Theology, “The question is not whether Christ can be said to be begotten of God by the miraculous conception of the Holy Spirit; or whether He can be called the Son of God by a gracious communication of existence, power and divine glory.” “But the question is whether He was begotten of God from eternity, and whether He may be called Son on account of the secret ineffable generation from the Father. The Socinians blasphemously deny this; we affirm it.” By the way, you should understand that this doctrine is called the Eternal Generation of the Son; which term requires explanation. Turretin goes on – “As all generation indicates a communication of essence on the part of the begetter to the begotten (by which the begotten becomes like the begetter and partakes of the same nature with him), so this wonderful generation is rightly expressed as a communication of essence from the Father (by which the Son possesses indivisibly the same essence with Him and is made perfectly like Him).”

“Whatever may be the analogy between natural and human generations, and the supernatural and divine, still the latter is not to be measured by the former or to be tried by them because they greatly differ (whether we consider the principle, the mode, or the end).” “For in physical generation, (that is among men) the principle is not only active, but also passive and material; but in the divine it is only active.” “In the former, (that is, a father’s begetting a son through physical generation) a communication is made not of the whole essence, but only of a part which falls (is born) and is alienated (becomes a distinctly separate substance) from the begetter.” “In the latter (that is, in God’s begetting His Son), the same numerical essence is communicated without decision and alienation.” In the one, the produced (child) is not only distinct but also separate from the begetter because the begetter generates out of himself terminatively.” (That is – there is no further union in the flesh) “In the other, the begetter (God the Father) generates in Himself and not out of Himself.” “Thus the begotten Son (although distinct) still is never divided from Him.” “He is not only of like (homoiousios), but also of the same essence.” (homoousios) This doctrine of eternal generation we should receive as orthodox; as essential to our faith, for it affects our whole salvation in Christ’s being the whole meritorious basis of our salvation and His representing the Father in His justice in the salvation which was wrought by Him. God the Son was begotten of the Father is our confession.

3rd – We want to behold the glory of Christ as the One who upholds all things by the word of His power.

“Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power...” In thinking of this Christmas season when we celebrate the Incarnation of the Son of God; our Lord Jesus Christ; let us remember that we may have known Christ for many years, even as these disciples did, and yet not really grown in our knowledge of Christ because we do not see the Father in Him. We think of Him as something less than the Almighty God. It is a very blessed thing for us to glory in the fact that the Lord Jesus is in the Father and the Father in Him. Because a great part of our faith is learning to trust in our Lord’s strength and His wisdom to guide us all the way through this life and through death into eternal life with Him. This is where we can take comfort from the fact that He

“upholds all things by the word of His power”. You and I who believe in the Lord Jesus are a part of those “all things”.

Certainly we are upheld by Christ, the Son of God, in our physical frame day by day because He is God made manifest in the flesh. We have a High Priest who can sympathize with our fleshly weaknesses, because He once became Man and knew weariness and pain and distress and sorrow, as well as joy in all that He came to do for us. Let us see Him as He really is now; the One who has all power and authority in heaven and earth, and let us apply to Him for all of our bodily concerns as well as our spiritual concerns. Dear believer, your faith is upheld by Him, just as much as your physical life is upheld by Him. You must see Him as the Almighty and you must trust in Him for your flesh and your heart to be upheld by Him. Your strength and your heart may fail, but He is the strength of your heart and your portion forever, it says in Psalm 73, verse 26. Your work for Him is also upheld and established by Him. Jesus says to Peter in Luke 22: 31 – “Simon, Simon!” “Indeed Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.” “But I have prayed for you, that faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” Peter could have never resumed and fulfilled his ministry without the Lord strengthening him.

Let us remember in closing, that our Lord was born a child, but yet a King. He was the King of kings and Lord of lords, and yet He became a baby in a manger at the same time. The Son of God, lying there in the manger, was just as much fully God then, as He is now. This was because the Father was in Him and He was in the Father. Christ, in conjunction with the work of the Father and the Holy Spirit had very simply and voluntarily, veiled His Godhead in His human nature in the Incarnation. His human nature was helpless and needed Mary’s tender care. But His deity was just as infinitely strong as ever. There never was a sin in this Child, even when small and weak. If this is how He was then; will you not see how capable He is now, of transforming you into His own image and likeness?

You may be very weak. But Christ in you is very strong. Let us resolve this Christmas to live our lives realizing that this same Jesus that I preached to you this morning is at work in you now as a believer, upholding your faith, and strengthening your heart. He upholds you, as one of His “all things” that He upholds by the word of His power. He will be guiding you through this life until the day that you will meet Him face to face. And if there should be someone listening today who does not yet know God; realize that it is only when you trust in Jesus that you will behold the glory of God. You will see the desirability of being saved, when you begin to behold the glory of Jesus Christ, above all men; all prophets, all priests, and all kings.