

The Person and Work of Christ

"The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person, forever" (Shorter Catechism, 21).

Paul said, "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (I Tim. 2:5-6). The same apostle wrote, "We preach Christ crucified" (I Cor. 1:23). Christ's person and work, then, lie at the very heart of the Christian message.

THE ETERNAL DEITY OF CHRIST

Jesus Christ is essentially and eternally God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14). In Romans 9:5 Christ is said to be "over all, God blessed for ever." In Titus 2:13 He is called "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ is "God . . . manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16).

THE TRUE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

The miracle of all miracles is that God the Son became a man. He did not cease to be God, but He took a true human nature--a real body and a reasonable soul--into union with Himself. He came into the world as a babe, having been conceived by the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:31-35). What a miracle! What condescension! "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5). Only as a true man could our Saviour suffer, be tempted, take our place, bear the wrath of God against men, and by His own meritorious obedience procure salvation for His people. The price of such a salvation was incalculable, but, as the hymn writer so beautifully put it, "Jesus paid it all."

THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The keynote of the gospel in the preaching of the apostles is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every time they preached they gave prominence to the resurrection. "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; . . . was buried, and . . . rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3, 4). His resurrection declares His deity (Rom. 1:4) and the reality of His people's acceptance with God in Him (Rom. 4:25). Our Saviour is a living Saviour and is therefore able to save. He who conquered sin and death can save souls from both. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

This same Jesus is coming again (Acts 1:11). The bodily return of Christ is the "blessed hope" of the church (Titus 2:13). It is a hope that causes those who cherish it to live in purity (I John 3:3). God's people have differing interpretations as to the prophetic details of their Saviour's return--for example, whether it will be pre-, mid-, or post-tribulational, and whether it will be pre-, post-, or a-millennial--but they are all perfectly agreed that He is personally coming again.

The Free Presbyterian Church encourages Christians to major on the glorious certainty of the Lord's return. We do not exclude believers from our fellowship because of minor differences in eschatology. Every preacher obviously has to preach what he is convinced the Scripture teaches, but his appeal is to God's Word, and he will not try to bind the conscience of a brother who happens to disagree with him on some details of eschatology. These matters are not unimportant, but to us they are not matters over which Christians should separate one from another.

PREACHING CHRIST

When Paul said he preached Christ, he meant it. And so do we. Jesus Christ is the great subject of our preaching. We lay great emphasis on the objective work of Christ. He has made an all-sufficient atonement for all His people. In a day of man-centered preaching we constantly proclaim that it is not the strength or merit of our faith that saves, but the strength and merit of Him in whom it rests. Christ is all our merit, and we need no more (I Cor. 1:30). By the imputation of His righteousness we are freely justified (Rom. 3:20-28). This free justification provides the motive power for our service (Gal. 5:1; II Cor. 5:14). We do not believe in guilt theology--making believers feel bad enough for doing or not doing something that they will do what we command just to ease their consciences. It never works! We believe in grace theology. We will preach against sin in the lives of Christians, but always

to point them to Christ (Heb. 12:1-3). It is only as "we see Jesus" (Heb. 2:9) and understand our full acceptance by God on His merit without our added works (Eph. 1:6) that we will have the power to do good works and strive after holiness. Thus we preach Christ as the message both sinners and saints need to hear.

C. H. Spurgeon's eloquent statement at the opening of his great Metropolitan Tabernacle in London perfectly states our purpose in preaching:

I would propose that the subject of the ministry of this house, as long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshippers, shall be the Person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist, although I claim to be rather a Calvinist according to Calvin, than after the modern debased fashion. I do not hesitate to take the name Baptist [in our case, Presbyterian] . . . but the body of divinity to which I would pin and bind myself for ever, God helping me, is . . . Christ Jesus, Who is the sum and substance of the gospel; Who is in Himself all theology, the incarnation of every precious truth, the all-glorious embodiment of the way, the truth, and the life.

This is the heart of the ministry of the Free Presbyterian Church. This is the undergirding reason for every stand we adopt. We expose and oppose the apostasy that is all too clear in many churches. We do not do so because of a desire to be contentious. No, our contending is for "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). It is our commitment "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). That compels us to be "set for the defence of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17).

Peter said, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious" (I Pet. 2:7). We want every worshipper in our services to feel and know the preciousness of Christ, the One whom Solomon described so beautifully in his Song: "Yea, he is altogether lovely" (Song of Sol. 5:16).