

Little Children, Your Sins Are Forgiven For His Name's Sake

I John 2:7-17, October 19, 2014

Trinity XVIII

Beloved of the Lord.....This past Friday there was an interview on Fox News with a Christian man from Nigeria who had survived being shot in the head by the Muslim group, Boko Haram (Greta Van Susteren, foxnews.com). This man lived with his wife and son in the northern half of Nigeria which is controlled by the Muslims. Around 11PM one night masked members of Boko Haram were going door to door looking for Christians. Armed with AK-47's these Muslims came to this man's house and discovered he and his family were Christian. They took the father out of the house, while the other and son watched from within. They asked him at least three times if he deny Christ and become a Muslim. If he did not they would kill him. At one point they even asked his wife to convince her husband not to be a Christian, but she refused. They asked him one final time if he would convert and become a Muslim, and this man answered he wanted to die a Christian. They then shot him in the head and he fell to the ground. They yelled Allah Akbar, and then went to the next house looking for Christians to murder. Fourteen or sixteen Christians died that night.

As it turned out, this man who was willing to die confessing Christ was not dead. The bullet had passed through his nose, exiting the lower right side of his face which is now deformed. Not only did God provide a miracle so that he lived, but God allowed him to come to this country to confess Christ on TV and the internet by this interview. What was remarkable about this man was his simple and humble faith in Christ. He didn't even hate these men which shot him and murdered others, for he knew Jesus said "Love your enemies", and this man really did. "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth." These enemies of Christians who thus slay and persecute believers, rest assured if they don't repent God will judge them on the Last Day. But we are not to hate them, but love them, as Christ loved us. If we give ourselves over to hatred we live in the same darkness they do and we will face the same condemnation when we die.

In this world we are often challenged by unbelievers who say "if there is a god, why does he allow this horrible persecution to continue in Iraq and Syria....He must be a cruel god for look what happens to his children!" But what truly happens at such times of persecution? FIRST let us remember that when a martyr dies confessing Christ, they are quickly received into heaven above, and that is a world this world cannot see because they live in darkness. Is it so bad to be shot or even beheaded, if the next moment you join Christ and the saints above? If we are willing to die for Christ, confessing Christ, don't we teach the world Christ is worthy dying for? Who are they willing to die for? SECOND, when God allows the persecution of His own dear children, it is for the purpose of spreading the Gospel message. The Gospel is on the move when Christians

flee. God is working to save more souls in this manner, and He also tests the faith of believers. Is our faith in Him or ourselves? Finally consider this Christian man whose life was spared. God tested his faith so that he through Christ triumphed over death and the devil. Then afterward God gave this humble Christian a pulpit where the Gospel could be preached. Fox News via Greta Van Susteren was that pulpit on Friday, October 17th. This is all to the glory of God's name. God allows it all because He "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Therefore "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

I. An old and new commandment. The Apostle John begins our lesson today with these words, "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning." The "old commandment" is nothing more than brotherly love, and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Those then who abide or live in the love of Christ, such ought "to walk even as Jesus walked." We are to walk daily in brotherly love. But this is a new commandment only in the New Testament sense. Christ by this time had so walked in brotherly love, so that His eternal love for all the brethren of this world was made evident by the cross. Only through the cross of Christ can we see what true love is, for it is sacrifice, a far higher love than this world knows. Knowing Him now we know "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." Wherever the Gospel is preached, Jesus the True Light shines. Prisoners living in sin are loosed from sin. God's love sets them free. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

How then can we or could we walk in hatred and anger? So John writes, "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now." This passages teaches us that those who hate their neighbor, or hate the Muslims, or if they hate a fellow Christian in church, such are living in darkness. They belong to Satan's kingdom. Do not then (dear Christian) allow hatred and anger to rule you, lest the Holy Spirit depart. James 5:9 says, "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door." Don't carry a grudge! Hebrews 12 tells us "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." "If you carry a grudge, if you nurture that hatred in your heart, the devil will defile as he has the Muslims. The existence of hatred and anger within does not mean you have fallen, but if you allow that hatred to rule you so you no longer earnestly repent, you will be condemned eternally as every Muslim which dies in unbelief. God thus tells us in Colossians three, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him."

Here then is a type of proof as to whether or not you are a true Christian. Do you repent of your hatred? By the love of Christ are you able to forgive your neighbor? Can you love them rather than hate them, as the Nigerian Christian did in the interview? If you can, by God's grace, then "the darkness is past, and the true Light now shineth."

II. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." John now continues, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." Here we can rejoice because all our sins, even our sinful anger is forgiven, "for His name's sake." Little children too can daily rejoice that Jesus loves them and forgives them and will be with them also. Jesus also wants all men to be saved and believe in His forgiveness. We ought to then have true pity upon all Muslims, homosexuals, living without repentance in the power of sin. Darkness has blinded their eyes. But when we look to Christ and the cross, we see there is forgiveness for them too, just the same as for us. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." This means also dear Christian, Christ died for every member of Boko Haram, or ISIS. Christ died on the cross also to provide forgiveness for all the Muslim clerics who teach poor souls to commit suicide and murder. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

John continues, "I write unto you fathers because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." Every Christian father knows, and is comforted, Jesus of Nazareth is also True God, "from the beginning." Because Jesus is Almighty God, His blood certain carries ALL POWER, even enough to cleanse every father and mother of their sins, even our sinful anger is forgiven! Likewise, "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the Wicked One"....and "because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the Wicked One!" Young men should not glory in their strength given at the prime of their life, but every young man should rejoice in faith knowing God has given them power to resist the devil and his temptations. Christ and His Word which lives in their heart is STRONGER than all evil, even the Wicked One. Satan's head is still under the heel of Christ, and Satan is under your heel too dear believer, simply if you believe your sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake. We need not live in fear of Satan, so don't let Satan trick you into being afraid. The Bible says, "The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Likewise "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." You are justified by the blood of God! What really can Satan do but huff and puff? He cannot blow God's house down. His end is eternal condemnation. You have no end, but only the beginning of life everlasting. Jesus said "He that believeth on Me is not condemned, but has everlasting life."

Finally beloved of the Lord, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If you love the world more than Christ, you will deny Christ when threatened by the Muslims with the loss of your life. Jesus said, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Remember Lot's wife. She loved Sodom and Gomorrah more than God her Savior, and so she died without Christ and was condemned.

But where are all the martyrs and saints now? They stand eternally in glory. What good is the lust of the world or the pride of life? What good are all the riches of the world or all her sinful pleasures for they will all fade away! God will one day judge this world and all her inhabitants, and the entire earth will be burned with fire because of the stain of sin. Only God's children live forever, "because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." Therefore "the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." Do the will of God then dear believer and love thy brother as thyself. You are not saved by such love, but God has saved you by such love, the eternal love of Christ your Brother. Abide in Him. Walk in His love, and His love will lift you up to heaven when you die. Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds and faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.