

The value of Christ to those who believe

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“To you who believe this stone [Jesus] is precious” (1 Peter 2.7)

Introduction

This verse tells us that to the person who truly believes in Christ, he is unspeakably valuable. This is in strong contrast with the attitude of the unbeliever towards Christ. Peter says that for those who do not believe Jesus is the “stone the builders rejected”, and a “stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” To unbelievers Jesus is like a waste building product, fit only to be chucked out on a skip. But for the believers Jesus is precious beyond all estimation.

The Bible tells us that we must be born again if we are to enter the Kingdom of God. The rebirth is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, whereby he makes us alive spiritually, and gives us understanding of spiritual things. One thing that is a sign that someone has been born again is that his attitude to Christ goes through a complete revolution. He used to have no regard for Christ. He thought of him as worthless. He might have paid Jesus the compliment of being a “good man”, even a “religious leader” or a “prophet”, but as far as his own life is concerned, he thought of him as of no real value. But then something happens. The Holy Spirit works in his life, and completely alters his view of Christ. The one who was regarded as of no value at all, he now sees to be the most wonderful person in the whole universe, more precious, more valuable, than any other being.

This can be illustrated by the life of Saul, who became the apostle Paul. Before he was converted he was filled with murderous hatred towards Christ, and towards his people. He consented to the death of Stephen, the first martyr. So full of hatred for Christ and his people was he that he was prepared to travel to

foreign countries to track down Christians, that he might arrest them and bring them back to Jerusalem to be tried and killed. On one such journey his whole life was changed. He met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. His whole outlook was transformed. He went to his room and prayed, and the scales literally fell from his eyes. He could now see how wonderful Jesus is. He now started to serve him as passionately as he had previously persecuted him. He preached about him everywhere he went. No-one could keep him quiet. He endured terrible persecution for Jesus' sake. Many times he was threatened with death. But he never regretted serving Christ. Why? Because he had come to see him as so valuable. This is how he described his attitude to Christ:

Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him (Philippians 3.7 – 8).

Everything in his life, he says, is rubbish, next to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ. He is worth more than all.

What is it, then, about Jesus Christ that makes him so valuable to the true believer? It boils down to three things:

1. Who he is in his person
2. What he did on the Cross
3. The blessings that are in Christ

Let us think about these things together.

1. Who Jesus is in his person

Firstly, the person who is a true believer values Jesus because of who he is in his person. The true believer realises that Jesus is no mere man. He is the eternal Son of God. He was with the Father before anything was made, eternally loving the Father and being loved by him. He made all things. He upholds the whole universe by his power. He is the King of all kings, and the Lord of all lords. Everything was made for his glory. All the angels are constantly worshipping him, along with the Father. Then, at the time agreed with the

Father, the Son left the glory of heaven and became a man, in the person of Jesus. Jesus has two natures, his divine nature and his human nature. He is fully God and fully human at one and the same time. He was tempted in every way as we are, yet was without sin. He lived a perfect life. He was full of love and compassion for all those with whom he had contact. He never lied. He never cheated anyone. He was never angry without cause; never ratty; never unpleasant. He showed his divine power by his glorious miracles: he healed the sick, fed the hungry, delivered those with evil spirits, raised the dead. He laid down his life on the Cross, and then took it up again afterwards by rising from the dead. After his resurrection he appeared many times to his disciples. They touched him. He ate food in front of them. Then he was taken up to heaven. He is now in heaven, reigning at the right hand of the Father, and constantly praying for his people. He is bringing all his enemies to subjection to himself. Soon he will come again, and every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that he is Lord. He will judge everyone who has ever lived with perfect justice. Those who have refused his salvation he will be judged for their sins and send them to everlasting destruction in hell. Those who have received his salvation he will call to inherit the new world that he will make, and will live in perfect happiness, in fellowship with God and with all others who have been saved.

What a wonderful person! There has never been anyone like him, and there never will be another like him in the future. He is the only begotten Son of God. He is rightly trusted, worshipped and adored for ever. So the true believer values Jesus for who he is in his person.

2. What he did on the Cross

Secondly, the true believer values Jesus because of what he did on the Cross. I expect everybody who reads this knows that Jesus died on a Cross, as a fact of history. You may well be aware of something of the intense physical pain and suffering that Jesus went through as he hung on the Cross. What not so many realise is that there was a spiritual dimension to Jesus' suffering which was far greater than his physical suffering.

As Jesus hung on that Cross, God treated him as the sin of all those people who would believe in him as their Saviour. All their sins were placed on Jesus. The Bible says "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law" (Galatians 3.10). That means that all of us are under a curse in our natural state, because none of us has obeyed all the

commandments that are written in the book of God's Law, the Bible. "There is no-one righteous, not even one." "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3.10, 23) "We all like sheep have gone astray, we have turned each one to his own way" (Isaiah 53.6). .

But on the Cross, Jesus took the curse of the sins of his people upon himself. The Bible also says, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" (Galatians 3.13). Jesus became a curse for his people, so that the curse which should have gone on to them might go onto him instead.

So the person who truly trusts in Christ realises that Jesus is his very best friend, because he has done more for him than any other person. He says to himself "Jesus, the eternal Son of God has died for ME! He has carried MY sins! Why should he love ME dreadful sinner that I am, that he should die in MY place?" What a friend! What wonderful love!

Paul says this in Romans chapter 5 verses 6 to 8:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Peter also says, "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (1 Peter 3.18).

Occasionally we hear on the news of a great act of sacrifice where a child was drowning in a river, and a passer-by sees the child in distress, rescues the child, but then himself gets into difficulty and drowns. Imagine, if you were that child, how you would feel as you grew up. You would always be grateful to that man who gave his life to save your life. How much more is the true believer grateful to Christ for what he did. He was not a mere man, but he was and is the eternal Son of God in human form. And he did not just go through physical death, but he bore on his shoulders the wrath of God the Father against a countless number of sins. And he has saved not just the physical life of the believer, so that he has a few more years to live before he dies, but he has saved his spiritual life for all eternity, saving him from the hell which otherwise would have had to go to, and giving him eternal life, friendship with God, for ever and ever. So we see that the true believer values Christ for what he has done for him on the Cross.

3. The blessings that are in Christ

Thirdly, the true believer values Jesus Christ because of the many and vast blessings that are in Christ. When you believe in Christ you are united with him. This means that all that he has becomes yours. It is like marriage. When a man marries a woman all that he has becomes hers, and all that she has becomes his. So it is with Christ. All that he has becomes ours. The apostle Paul says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Ephesians 1.3). Here are some of the blessings which believers have in Christ:

- Forgiveness. For the person who trusts in Christ, all his sins, past, present and future are completely forgiven. God promises, "I will forgive their wickedness, and remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31.34). "As far as the East is from the West, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103.12).

- Justification. In Christ, true believers are justified, that is, declared not guilty by God. We "have been justified through faith" (Romans 3.23). If God has declared us not guilty, then no-one can bring any charge against us. "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns?" (Romans 8.33)

- Redemption. Those who belong to Christ are redeemed, set free from the power of sin, through the Cross. Are there habits which you wish you did not have, perhaps of drinking too much, taking illicit drugs, or getting angry, or being spiteful? In Christ the power of these destructive habits can be broken. "For you know that it was not with perishable things that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you by your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1.18 – 19).

- Adoption. In Christ, believers are adopted into God's family. We are able to call God "Father" and Jesus is our older brother. "In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the One he loves" (Ephesians 1.5 – 6).

- Love. Those who believe in Christ are the objects of God's eternal love. Nothing can separate them from the love of God.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35-39).

– Peace. Those who belong to Christ may know the peace of God in their lives. They know that they have peace with the God who rules over the whole universe. Therefore they do not need to worry about anything. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give you as the world gives.” (John 14.27).

– Membership of the church. Those who belong to Christ have the immense privilege of being made part of the church. This is the body of Christ, and consists of those who have been saved by God’s grace. The church is God’s “showpiece” to the angels, demonstrating his wisdom and glory, by bringing people from every background into one huge loving family.

– Hope. Those who belong to Christ have an unspeakably glorious future to look forward to. When Jesus comes again we shall all be raised from the dead. Those who belong to Christ will enjoy the beautiful new world that God will make, and will be in perfect fellowship with God and his people for all eternity.

So we see that there are three main reasons why a true believer values Christ: because of who he is in his person, because of what he did on the Cross, and because of all the blessings which come with Christ.

Conclusion

There will no doubt be a great variation in the knowledge and understanding of Christ of different people who read this booklet.

1) Unbelievers

For some who read what is here what has been said may come as something completely new. Perhaps this is the first time you have ever heard of Christ, and

how wonderful he is. Or maybe you have been had contact with Christ for many years, but as you read this for the first time you see something of the wonder of who Jesus is. Or maybe you have been a church-goer for many years, and you would say that you believe in God and in Jesus Christ, but you have a nagging suspicion that you have never received him as your Saviour.

If you are in the position of never having previously received Christ, then listen to this: God is offering Jesus to you. Almighty God is saying to you in effect, "I am offering you my precious Son. You may have him, and all that is in him." He is not just offering you his gifts. He is offering you his only begotten Son. Do not refuse his offer! Come to him! Receive Christ! If you come to Christ, and ask him into your life, he will come in and be your friend. Jesus says "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3.20).

You might say, "But I have been too bad. I am not worthy of God. All deserve is to go to Hell." Listen! No-one is worthy of God. If we got what we deserved, all of us would be in Hell, myself included. Jesus said "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5.32). He says "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6.7). God also promises "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Joel 2.32). He also says, "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon" (Isaiah 55.6 – 7). Whoever you are, whatever you have been like, no matter what sins you have committed, turn from your sins, come to Christ, and ask him to be your Saviour. He will not refuse you if you come to him.

2) Backsliders

It is quite possible that someone who reads this may be a backslider. Maybe you have professed faith in Christ. Perhaps you have been baptised, and witnessing a baptism service carries a poignancy about it, because you can remember when you stood at the front of the church and made your confession of faith before the people.

You have wandered from fellowship with God. Your love to Christ has grown cold. Bitter and angry thoughts towards God and man have taken a grip of your heart. Sins you thought you had left behind many years ago have come back to

haunt your life. It is a long time since you prayed or read your Bible on your own. Doubts have come to fill your mind, where once there was strong faith. Attendance at church has become sporadic. A barrier has come between you and God's people. Your non-Christian family and friends have noted what has happened and are pouring scorn upon Christ on account of your inconsistent profession of faith. You are as miserable as sin. You know enough of the Bible to know that this world has no lasting pleasures and comforts, yet you have none of the comforts of knowing God. You have neither the pleasures of this world nor comfort of the hope of the world to come.

As you look at your life, you do not know what to make of the spiritual experience you had when you first confessed Christ. It seemed so real then, so genuine, but now you wonder if you ever truly knew the Lord.

If you are in this position, what should you do? You should come to Jesus in exactly the same way as the person who has never believed in him comes: as a repentant sinner, looking to him for grace. God is offering Christ to you, the backslider, as he offers Christ to the out and out unbeliever. YOU may have him as well! God says to his people in the Old Testament times, and to you as well, "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever" (Jeremiah 3.12, KJV). He also says, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him" (Hosea 14.4, KJV). If you are a backslider, come to Christ. Confess your sin to him. Turn from it. Receive Christ as your Saviour, as if for the first time. He will not refuse you if you come to him.

3) True believers

Many who read this booklet will be true believers. If you are a true believer, then no doubt you will have been thinking to yourself as you have been reading this, "Amen! Yes, Jesus you are the most precious one. Thank you for all that you are and all that you have done for me." What, then, should be your response if you are a believer? Here are some suggestions:

- Keep your relationship with God sweet. Do not lose your first love. If you do sin, come back to Christ quickly, confessing your sin and receiving his forgiveness.

- Let his praise be constantly on your lips.

- Serve him with joy. Do not begrudge any sacrifice you make for him.
- "Boast" about him to all and sundry. Tell all your friends, family and work colleagues what a wonderful Saviour you have.

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