

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

INDEPENDENT • MISSIONARY • ESTABLISHED 1786

“Preaching the same truth since before Kentucky was a state”

VOLUME 36, NO.10

JULY, 2005

THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE FAVOR

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II Chronicles 34:18-27,
“Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiyah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king’s, saying, Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book. And Hilkiyah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college:) and they spake to her to that effect.

And she answered them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the

LORD.” Isaiah 66:2, *“For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”*

Introduction: Worship under the law covenant, when compared with a spiritual worship under the Gospel covenant, was a system of carnal ordinances, and required a great deal of external pomp and grandeur. Hebrews 9:1, *“Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.”* In harmony with this principle, a costly and magnificent structure was erected, by Divine direction in the wilderness, called the tabernacle because it was built in the form of a tent and moveable from place to place; and afterwards a most stately temple was built by Solomon at immense cost, where the Divine worship should be stately celebrated. Both of these were

called the house of God, because in them the shekinah glory or symbol of God's presence was manifested. For this reason they were called the house of God. Hebrews 9:8-9, *"...the first tabernacle was yet standing, Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience."* The tabernacle is called a figure of the heavenly tabernacle into which Christ entered after His work of redemption.

Coincident with the introduction of Christianity, Christ turned away from the temple, saying to the Jews, Luke 13:35, *"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate..."* meaning that it was empty and no longer owned as the house of God. The temple continued to stand, however, and sacrifices were offered upon the altar until A.D. 70, when Titus the Roman general captured Jerusalem and destroyed the temple.

Another place of public worship was the synagogue. This was a place of public instruction, but no sacrifices were offered in it. The synagogue seems to have originated during the Babylonia captivity, when the Jews were far away from their place of worship. Wherever Jews congregated in any large number, they would erect a synagogue. Into these synagogues Paul often went to

preach the gospel, and the Christians worshiped in the synagogues until they were expelled. John 16:2, *"...They shall put you out of the synagogues..."* Now here is a strange thing. There is absolutely no provision in the New Testament for a place of worship for believers in Christ. The early believers met in each others homes, and there are a number of references to the church that is in thy house. Colossians 4:15, *"Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house."* In the New Testament, the church or assembly is called the house of God. I Timothy 3:15, *"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."* Ephesians 2:20-22, *"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."* The New Testament church is not a house of brick or wood, but a spiritual house built of living stones and inhabited by God through the Spirit. Acts 17:24-25, *"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands: Neither is*

worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing..." Let us raise this question. Why is the New Testament silent concerning a place of worship? I cannot hope to give an authoritative answer, but we can say this much: There is absolutely no warrant for all the emphasis that has been laid on the matter of church architecture, which has well nigh resulted in the financial and spiritual bankruptcy of missionary endeavor. God knew that man would place an undue emphasis on a place of worship, and therefore He would leave him without excuse. Think of the money tied up in pipe organs, and other equipment in our churches that are in no wise essential to the program given by Christ.

Now back to the temple and worship under the law. These externals under the law were not intended to exclude spiritual worship, but to express and assist it. And these ceremonials were not to be substituted for morals and godliness, but to be observed as helps to practical righteousness and spiritual worship. But it is natural to degenerate mankind to invert the Divine order of things, and to rest in the externals of religion, with out regard to the heart, and to depend upon ceremonial observances as an excuse for neglecting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith. This was the awful error of the Jews in the

time of Isaiah, and this was the sin being struck at in the passage before us. The Jews gloried in having the house of God, and were trusting in vain words. Jeremiah 7:4, *“Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.”* In this passage God describes the spiritual worshippers and the objects of Divine favour.

POOR MAN

It is the poor man to whom the Majesty of heaven condescends to look. Not the poor in this world, but the poor in spirit. Matthew 5:3, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

The poor man to whom God looks is deeply sensible of his own insufficiency; his is a spiritual poverty of which he is painfully conscious. He feels his need of God, and thirsts after Him, and longs for His favor. Prayer is the language of spiritual poverty.

This spiritual poverty implies deep humility and self-abasement. He is mean in his own eyes; he does not account himself of much importance. His language is that of the publican, rather than the pharisee. He feels as did the prodigal, when he turned his face toward his father’s house. Luke 15:21, *“And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.”*

The man who is poor in

spirit is sensible of his need of Divine grace to work in him that which is well pleasing to God. To him love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control are fruits of the Spirit.

He is deeply sensible of the absolute necessity of the righteousness of Christ for his justification. He is like a poor criminal, that having nothing to plead in his own defense, casts himself on the mercy of the court; he places his whole dependence upon the merits of the blood of Jesus Christ and makes that his only plea. *“My only plea Christ died for me.”*

The man who is poor in spirit is an importunate beggar at the throne of grace. He lives upon charity; he lives upon the bounties of heaven. Proverbs 18:23, *“The poor useth entreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.”* They that are rich in their own conceits can live without prayer, or content themselves with the careless performance of it.

CONTRITE SPIRIT

The object of Divine favour is further described as having contrition of spirit. The word signifies one that is beaten or bruised with hard blows or an heavy burden. It belongs to the mourning penitent whose heart is broken and wounded because of sin. Sin is an awful enemy to him, it bruises and crushes him and he feels a terrible pain under it. His stony heart has been taken away by Divine grace and he has a heart

easily bruised and wounded. This may also describe the poor anxious soul that is broken with cruel fears of its state. The stout-hearted can venture their all upon uncertainty and indulge pleasing hopes without anxiously examining their foundation; but he that is of a contrite spirit is tenderly sensible of the importance of the matter, and cannot be easy without some good evidence of safety. He is given to self-examination. He gives all diligence to make his calling and election sure. II Peter 1:10.

TREMBLE AT WORD

He is further described as one that trembleth at God’s word. This is exemplified in the case of king Josiah. When he ascended to the throne, he instituted many reforms. Israel was given over to idolatry; the worship of the temple had been neglected and the temple was in bad repair. The book of the law had been lost and forgotten. Josiah had reigned for eighteen years and had never seen it. The Book was found. II Kings 22:8, 11, 13, *“...I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it...And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes...Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found...”* And Josiah’s reformation began. He

sought to obey the Book.

A blessing without humbling is temporary. There was not joy at the first. The stony ground hearers, "*anon with joy*" received it. The need of this hour is for the people of God to find the Book. If the Book were found spiritually, in many lives there would be weeping and trembling as they felt the displeasure of God against their wicked practices. We should seek to obey the Book. How opposite is this to the temper of the masses who regard the word of God no more than the word of a child or a fool. They will have their own way, let God say what He will. Instead of trembling and obeying, they sit careless and stupid under God's word as though it were some old, dull, trifling story. There is little depth. We read the Scriptures unmoved.

MEANING OF EXPRESSION

The meaning of the expression, "*To this man will I look.*" Hebrews 12:2, "*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...*" It does not mean to look as a careless spectator, but as a Father, a Friend, and a Benefactor.

He looks upon such with acceptance. He is pleased with the sight. He loves to see us moving towards Him. The father saw the prodigal son afar off.

He looks so as to take notice of us. Yes, He sees all our sins, but He also sees our conflict with indwelling sin. He sees us trembling at His word,

and grieving because we have not kept it perfectly. Psalm 34:15, "*The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.*"

How does God look upon you? With eyes of indignation or with pity and compassion?