

Shepherds' Conference  
Wednesday, March 9, 2016

*"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all,  
how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"*

Romans 8:32  
Ligon Duncan

There are few sentences that have ever been written that are more profound than the sentence we have just read (Rom. 8:32). Even in the Bible. There is a veritable compendium of theology penned in those few words by the Apostle Paul.

Three encouragements as we consider the deep things of God —

It is good for us to wrestle with deep things in God's Word because those deep things are found in the book of the people of God. Paul wrote these words to shepherd and feed the people God had called him to minister to.

Wrestling with the profoundest theological truth teaches us the limits of our own understanding — and that's a good thing. "Mystery is absolutely essential to dogmatics." (Bavinck) Of course we will find things in His Word that will stretch us to the limits of our comprehension. If we understood everything in the Word of God, it couldn't be true.

This verse is given for a very practical purpose — "how do we know that God is for us?" This is Paul's answer to that question. Do you want to know that God is for you? Listen to this verse.

Here are four things to specify in the preaching of the gospel —

## **1. What We Learn About the Father's Love**

The eternal love of the Father is the initiator in the work of Christ on the cross. The emphasis of Paul in this verse is not on Christ but on the Father. It is the Father who did not spare His Son; it is He who gave Him up; it is He who will give us all things. This is so important because of the nature of the Father and His role in redemption and what is happening on the cross. Sometimes our whole perspective of salvation is all wrong, as if the Father had to be convinced to give salvation. But that is not the picture of the NT.

Think of how often the love of the Father is emphasized in the explanation of the gospel. E.g., John 3:16. But we don't pause to listen to the verse; we think of it as the love of Jesus, but it is the Father's love that produces the gift of the Son. The emphasis is on the love of the Father and the gift of the Son from the Father. Cf. Is. 53 — the suffering servant is bruised by the will of the Lord. This is picked up in apostolic preaching (Acts 2:23).

This is an emphasis on the priesthood of God the Father. When we look at Calvary we are moved by the spectacle of what is happening. But do we pause to think of what the Father thinks

is happening and what He is doing on the cross. This is pictured in Gen. 22 and the sacrifice of Isaiah. Or consider 2 Sam. 18:33 — every father understands what David is saying, but David is a pale reflection of the heavenly Father. He is not unmoved by what is happening on Calvary, and what He is *causing* the cross to happen.

Jesus is not on the cross because Jesus is attempting to get the Father to love His people, but Jesus is on the cross because the Father does love His people. On the cross, God's love *and* God's wrath are displayed. His love is displayed even by His wrath poured out against the Son. It's vital to understand this as we preach the cross. The Father's love is so great that He has given His own Son.

## **2. What We Learn About the Son's Worth**

The value of what the Father gives is highlighted in ***He did not spare His own Son***. This Son was loved as no human son has ever been loved and He was loving as no human son has ever been loving. This verse echoes Gen. 22.

Paul calls Jesus in Col. 1:13 — the Son of His love. All of the glory and uniqueness of that relationship is obscured by the viewers of the cross — they see a criminal, a man who is getting what he deserves; but that is not what the Father sees. He sees the glorious Son. Cf. the baptism of Jesus in Jn. 1. The Son loved to fulfill the righteousness of the Father. "It is my food to do the will of Him who sent Me." Jesus loved doing what the Father sent Him to do.

Spurgeon said that in looking at the cross, it is possible to ask the question, "Did the Father love me more than the Son?" (Be careful how you answer that!) On the authority of Jn. 17:26, it can be said that the Father does not love us less than He loves His Son. Look at what He has given for us!

## **3. What We Learn About the Wrath's Curse**

The Son is not spared on the cross. There is a sense in which what Jesus is going to experience and it is expressed in His cry on the cross that He was the least prepared person in the universe to experience the cross.

In Genesis 3, it says ***they hid themselves***. They did what? God's presence is the whole reason for our existence (Moses' words in the wilderness at the Golden Calf). When Moses wrote Gen. 3, he had to think, they did what? The presence of the Father is what we live for; and Jesus always had only known the presence of God. And on the cross He bore the wrath of God.

It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He sovereignly turned Him over. It was His positive action that put Him on the cross. At the cross there is no substitute and there is no voice calling "Stop" as there was in Gen. 22. There is no substitute sacrifice for Jesus because He is the substitute. The only One in glory who will know what it is like to be forsaken by the Father is the Savior.

How can this be?

#### **4. What We Learn About the Grace's Substitute**

The combination of “Jesus” and “cross” makes no sense, because at the cross the wrath of God was striking out against the one place it has no right to strike.

The wrath of God is being poured out on the one innocent being in the whole world. What's going on? If it had been you and me it would have made sense, but the sinless Son of God under the wrath of God? It makes no sense. The horror of the cross is that it is the sinless Son of God who is cursed for sin and rebellion. It is the most unjust thing that has ever been done.

How can this be? *for us all* connects the Redeemer to the redeemed. The Son was loved by the Father and wanted to take the place of sinners. He is grace's substitute. How do you know that God loves you and is for you? Because He did not spare His own Son...