

## THE SELDOM REALIZED GIFT OF GOD

John 6: 37

**“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”**

Have you ever had one of those exceptional, exciting, and enlivening experiences (I worked on all the "e" words) of studying a passage of Scripture many times before, and then coming to see some wonderful truth you had never before realized? That happened this week in preparing to lead a Bible Study for *Grace For Life*, the television outreach of Reformation Ministries. I am teaching a series entitled "So That's Who God Is!", a study of the life of Jesus in John's Gospel. It is so thrilling, that I want to share it with you.

Read the verse above. Did you see it? I missed it until the marvelous truth was pointed out to me by Arthur John Gossip (d.1954), a Scottish pastor, chaplain, and Professor of Christian Ethics at the University of Glasgow:

"So Christ regards us as a gift to Him from God!"

That comment set my mind spinning. What an amazing thought! Jesus says that "the Father" gave *us* to Him. As John presents a theological interpretation of the life of Jesus (in contrast to the Synoptics' historical and chronological presentation), he reveals an amazing truth in the way he records the words of Jesus. John didn't want us to miss it:

**We are the Father's gift to the Son!**

In II Corinthians 9: 15, Paul, says about the grace of God, "Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift." But here, you and I are God's gift to Jesus. Think of it: with all of our warped, corrupt, twisted, jealous, covetous, incorrigible, and rebellious ways, God still offers us to Jesus as a gift. And, Jesus receives us as a precious and treasured gift from the Father. How precious and treasured are you to Jesus? Have you seen *The Passion of the Christ*?

The tone of John 6 is that Jesus gladly receives us. He considers you and me a gift worth having...and worth dying for. Why? Love, of course, is the main reason. Just as John 3:16 says that it was because of love that the Father gave us "His only begotten Son," so it is because of love that the Son receives us as the Father's gift to Him. Why does the Father give us to the Son, and why does the Son receive us, with all our screwy ways? They love us. (Don't miss the parallel: the Father gives the Son to us (John 3:16); He gives us to the Son (John 6:37) We are secure, indeed!.)

Commensurate with that love, they know that the only hope we have for salvation from ourselves, from our unsubmitive, insubordinate, hardheaded, and hardhearted, destructive selves, is that Jesus take us on as His project. They know that the only workable solution to our inexpugnable ways is the death of the old self and the regeneration of a new heart. "You must be born again" (John 3:7).

The old gospel favorite had it right: the transformation of the human heart is the greatest miracle of all.

It took a miracle to put the stars in place.

It took a miracle to hang the world in space.

But when He saved my soul, cleansed and made me whole,

It took a miracle of love and grace.

Stars and planets and all the trackless, impenetrable space that the Hubble is just now glimpsing, do the Father's bidding without remonstrance. Not so you and me. We argue, resist, oppose and disobey. It takes far more patience, love and grace from God to deal with the likes of us than with the rest of the universe.

Yet, with all our obdurate headiness (I'm exhausting Roget trying to make the point of how unlikable, unlovely, unworthy twerps we are), God sees you as someone worth loving, and against all bets, someone He wants to redeem to Himself. And it is in His redemption that the depraved find dignity: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Is that not amazing grace!

One final point I want to share with you from the pen of the Reverend Professor Gossip. It is in the last portion of the verse: "**I will certainly not cast out.**"

Gossip prefers the tone of the King James' translation, "I will in no wise cast out." There is no reason, ever that Jesus will tire of the Father's gift to Him and abandon us. There is no cause for Him to have done with us, and bid us adieu. Whatever happens, whatever we become, whatever we do or omit doing, there will be no casting out from His presence. Glorious comfort: "I will in no wise cast them out."

My friend, find great relief and rest in that. You are God's gift to His Son, and He will never, for any reason, put you aside. No matter how far you may wander from Him, how far you have "missed the mark" (the meaning of the Greek word for "sin"), He will never give up on you. Rather, like the Father of the Prodigal Son, He is always watching, always yearning for you to come home. And when you do, He is so thrilled, that He runs to meet you, places the ring of authority on your finger, the sandals of sonship on your feet, the robe of love and warmth on your back, and He throws a party to celebrate your return.

He is not discouraged by your failures, even if they are repeated again and again. Arthur Gossip poetically says, that Jesus "hopefully begins afresh, still confident and undiscouraged by our many failures." Is that not astounding! Who else would ever treat us with such mercy and grace! Our sins and failures never discourage Jesus. He knows the depth of the Father's love and the powerful effect of His cross. He will start over with us again and again. Such an amazing God! Worthy of our worship! Indeed!

When it is all said and done, when all the battles are over, some won and some lost, we need have no concern about how well we did: He neither credits our successes nor debits our failures. The one thing of which we can be confident, the one sure hope that is ours, is not our efforts and service for God, but rather, God's efforts and service for us. What does counts, is our faith in Him who has given us to His Son as a gift, and in the Son who cherishes us as a gift from His Father. And, it was you He had in mind when He declared, "I will in no wise cast out." Believe that!

I have been on this journey of discovery of how profound God's grace is, now, for four years. I continue to be amazed!

Grace to you,

**Stephen N. Johnson**

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