

GOD'S PRINCIPLE OF RULE SET OUT IN CHRIST

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HOW GOD HAS FORESTALLED THE MAN OF SIN

“And all were amazed, so that they questioned together among themselves, saying, What is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”—Mark 1: 27.

“And they feared with great fear, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”—Mark 4: 41

I want to say a word tonight as to the effect of the Lord's ministry on the lives of those who heard it, to say a word first as to the impression it produced, that it was new, different from what had preceded it.

Now the ordinary religionist may have his peculiar religion; but on general principle he is simply a religionist. Religion is very old. Of course the very word used for it is of God, Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, to keep oneself unspotted from the world, James 1: 27. But religion by itself is a very old thing in the world and will remain in the world even when God is refused and the Holy Spirit is refused. When the Holy Spirit shall leave the world and the church shall leave, religion shall remain; but not the pure religion James speaks of. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father will not remain; that is dependent on the presence of the Holy Spirit. To visit orphans and widows in their affliction, to keep oneself unspotted from the world, belongs only to Christians, only Christians are religionists after that fashion.

But there is the other religion of Cain which is equally old with the pure religion. Cain's religion, as you know, was made dependent on cultivation. That was not pure religion but it was religion; it was a recognition of God and of God's rights to receive a sacrifice; but it was not pure. It was impure; but being impure it nevertheless is old, and continues in the world until this

time. Very often it is seen in people who come to gospel meetings out of custom, because it is customary to spend an hour or two on Sunday evening at a meeting. Now, beloved friends, I would like to be very simple, and I would say to you, if you are here tonight on those lines, there is nothing new in that at all; it is as old as Cain. It is seen in China, Japan and other heathen countries; doing things out of custom. The Lord found it at Jerusalem. Jerusalem was full of it; they were religionists, they went to the temple, they kept the passover, there was the synagogue in which the Lord cast out demons. The synagogue was not new; a man possessed of a demon, that was not new; but one thing was new, and it was recognised to be new, and that was the doctrine the Lord Jesus Christ taught and the manner of His words. That was new and it was recognised to be new. As you will observe, it says, What is this? what new doctrine is this?

Now it is a very good thing, even if you are a religionist, to begin to enquire, What is this? It would be a very long address that would answer that question. It takes all the ministry of the twelve apostles to answer it, and added to that it takes all the ministry of Paul to answer that. It is a very great thing. I wonder if you know anything about it? This thing is very wonderful. What is this? is the question in the synagogue. Has it been answered to your satisfaction? It is different from what you have been accustomed to. What is it? It is the presence of the Son of God here in this world. He who by His Spirit hath garnished the heavens; He by whom it says, all things were made; and He by whom they are upheld. They are upheld: upholding all things by the word of His power, Hebrews 1: 3, by His power. He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast, Psalm 33: 9. What God speaks is the expression of His mind, His commandment is that it should stand fast. The expression of God's mind must stand, and it stands fast. Other things may go; but what He commands, what He has spoken, stands: He commanded, and it stood fast. Take the very best watch made, in time it goes wrong. Consider those marvellous heavenly bodies; our chronometers are to be regulated by them, they are fast in their orbits, accuracy marks them; inaccuracy would bring confusion and destruction. Well, they are held by the word of Christ's power. This is the Man who is speaking to the demon in

the synagogue. Do you not think He does it in a new way? It must be so. Think of the Person who was there! The Son of God in the synagogue! The synagogue was a sort of branch of the temple; the temple was the centre of the synagogue. The Lord went into the synagogue, a meeting house in Capernaum, but a new thing was there. What is this? they said, what new doctrine is this?

Now have you made enquiries like that? Have you satisfied your soul about them? For this thing has come into the world. Solomon said, There is no new thing under the sun, Ecclesiastes 1: 9. The gospel of Mark is the counterpart of that. Mark shows that there is something new under the sun, and that new thing is Christ casting out a demon in the synagogue. And that new doctrine is what He spake. It was new. I ask you here tonight before God, Have you settled this question? In other words, are you converted?

We are living in a time in which great influences are at work in order to affect people. I was only speaking today about Jephthah, the Gileadite, one of the judges of Israel, Judges 11. A section of Israel in his day was attacked by the children of Ammon, and they had a considerable array, there was no lack of men; but there was a lack of one man; what man is going to lead? That sort of thing is going on at the present time. There is no lack of men: there are some fifteen hundred millions of men, women and children in the world [1916], but there is no man, people say, no one man. There is going to be one! That is the danger that is ahead of us and I want to speak seriously tonight to you, that you may be sure that you have got the right man in your soul. I have seen it lately in public print, the demand for one man; it is perfectly intelligible, they want a man, they want a leader. Now you want a leader in your soul; Jephthah was the leader the Gileadites selected, I wonder whom you are going to select for your leader? It is a serious time for the world; the danger is making room for antichrist. He comes, we are told, in all deceit of unrighteousness, 2 Thessalonians 2: 10. That is how he comes, and he soon discerns there is a place for him, there is a vacant seat. People are saying so, and we are all apt

to be carried along with the tide, and I speak to you in the way of warning, especially to the young people here.

But God has brought in a Man; according to Mark He began in a synagogue in Capernaum, He went in and cast out a demon; He did not touch the demon, He commanded the demon and the demon went out, hence the question, What is this? what new doctrine is this?

Now the man of sin shall come and he makes an impression. We are told he comes in all deceit of unrighteousness, he sees and seizes the opportunity. His coming is said to be according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness; that is how he comes. Well, the seat is vacant . . . without an occupant; will he take it? He does take it. He does not content himself to be simply a man, but he opposes and exalts himself on high against all called God, or object of veneration; so that he himself sits down in the temple of God, 2 Thessalonians 2: 4. Think of the presumption in a man; but men want that, they want a leader. They want their man and they are going to get him. God can forestall that; He has forestalled it in my soul, through the gospel!

Some of us were talking this afternoon about the superman, a current expression in the world, meaning a man that is more than a man, he is a product of development. He is a man who shall have six fingers on his hand and six toes on his foot; it is not natural but moral. His number is 666, he is a superman. Have you not heard that expression? It is worthy of note; it is a sign of the times. He is a man who can marshal the forces of nature, who can harness them. He is evidently scientific, utterly without principle, has only one aim and that is his own advancement, like Simon Magus, saying that himself was some great one, Acts 8: 9. He is called a beast in Revelation 13: 11–14, and God permits it to work great signs, that it should cause even fire to come down from heaven to the earth before men. And it deceives those that dwell upon the earth, Revelation 13: 13, 14. Do you think you can stand it? Now if you reject Christ you can never stand against that, you will submit to it, it is just what you will desire.

We are on the eve of these things. One would like to tell these things to every person in christendom if one could; but one feels one's obligation to tell it everywhere one can, as we are on the eve of these things. The vacancy is there only waiting the man to come forward, and Satan will bring him forward. He will be an advertiser saying that himself was some great one. He is a superman, as I have said, prefigured by the man in 2 Samuel 21: 20, who had six fingers and six toes. The Lord Jesus came on the line of seven, and what you get here is the power of the Spirit. If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, not by the power of Satan, then indeed the kingdom of God is come upon you, Matthew 12: 28. In Revelation 5: 6 it says, I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as slain,—wonderful expression,—having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God. How attractive a lamb is, nothing to repel! He had been slain, He had been down into death.

The antichrist will not go down into death for anyone; there will be no marks of suffering in his hands, nor spear mark in his side; alas, many will have been pierced by his spear! The Lord Jesus came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them, and He gave Himself a ransom for all. The antichrist comes to kill and destroy. He rises to the zenith of man's glory over many a corpse, but the Lord is seen in the midst of the throne standing as a Lamb slain. He has seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God which are sent into all the earth. To slay? No, to enlighten people, to bless people. It is the perfection of spiritual power exercised by such a one as He. Every one who is a believer on Christ knows what perfection of spiritual power is in the hand of the Lamb; He received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which ye behold and hear, Acts 2: 33. The Spirit is here in perfection, perfection of divine power exercised under the Lamb, that is the Lord Jesus. He is the great opposite of the superman that is spoken of later in the book of Revelation.

Now, what new doctrine is this? It is this Man's doctrine, the doctrine of Christ. The Son of God has come, 1 John 5: 20. Jesus Christ come in flesh, 1 John 4: 3. Do not receive anyone who

does not bring that doctrine. Do not receive him into the house, and greet him not; for he who greets him partakes in his wicked works, 2 John 10, 11. The doctrine of Christ is new; it is to be received implicitly in the soul of the believer. Jesus Christ come in flesh, come by water and blood, 1 John 5: 6. Shall the antichrist come that way? No, he does not come that way. God's Man came that way; He came by the means of expiation, the means of cleansing for your conscience and your heart; He is God's Lamb. It is He who takes the book, it is He who opens the seals thereof; He has title to do it, for He came and died. That doctrine is to be received implicitly in your heart and conscience. The water flowed from His pierced side, and the blood, too. In the gospel it is the blood first, expiation is first; the conscience is relieved by the blood, and the affections by the water. The Christian has a purged conscience; his sins are all put away by the death of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is a witness that they are effectively put away. A Christian has pure affections; he loves the saints, he loves them for their own sakes and for Christ's sake. Saints are lovable for their own sakes, for they are born of water and the Spirit; they are pure, and he loves them. A purged conscience and love for the saints mark a Christian. It is a man after Christ. Now the Lord Jesus Christ, beloved friends, effects that for you.

One loves to think of the Lamb standing as slain in the midst of the throne, having seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God. He is seen in the perfection of spiritual power as having effected atonement. That is the Man that is presented to you in this new doctrine, so gloriously for the Christian. Paul says, ye have obeyed from the heart the form of teaching into which ye were instructed, Romans 6: 17. Have you obeyed it from the heart? Paul says, from the heart,—heart-wise, from the inside, not from the outside. Earthly religion operates from the outside, it does nothing permanently, but God works from the inside; there is the blood for the conscience and the water for the heart. The heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience, and finally the body washed with pure water, so there is a man here for Christ.

In the fourth chapter we have this word, Who then is this? What sort of man are you? In Matthew in the parallel passage the word is, sort,—What sort of man is this? Matthew 8: 27.

What sort of man are you? The only way to find out is to come and live with you; you have to live with a man to know what kind of a man he is. It is one thing to see you at the meeting; what kind of man are you at home? In the second chapter of Mark the paralytic was raised up and the Lord said, Arise . . . and go to thine house. Be a man like Me there first; shine there. Who then is this? That is the question raised. It would take a long address to answer that question,—What sort of man is Christ? We shall know what He is like presently in the glory, in the Father's house. What a future is before the Christian! We shall see the Lord there. He is chief in the Father's house, He orders everything there, He gives me my place and gives you your place. That is what is before us. What tenderness of affection; we shall see all the Father's affections on Him and His affections on the saints. What sort of man was He down here? That is the question to be answered for the moment, and it is to be answered, among other things, because the believer himself is to be after that sort.

Gideon said to the kings of Midian, What sort of men were they that ye slew at Tabor? Judges 8: 18. They could give an account of them, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the sons of a king. Would to God men could talk of me as they did of them; they were forced to confess they were after the pattern of a king. How one would love that the enemies of the Lord's people at the present time should be compelled to make a confession like that, if the question was raised as to what the saints are! Alas, we are so often unlike the Lord Jesus!

What sort of man is He? The four gospels answer that question, and Paul delighted to bring Him forward. For God is one, the mediator of God and men one, the Man Christ Jesus, 1 Timothy 2: 5. The Man, that is the One who gave Himself a ransom for all. That is the sort of man He is, who gave Himself a ransom for all. That is the kind of man, He dies, not only for the saints but for all. And then the apostle says elsewhere that this is the one Man I desire to know. But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of

His sufferings, being conformed to His death . . . I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus, Philippians 3: 8–14. That is what Paul wished, his heart was enamoured with that Man!

That is the sort of man Christ was, beloved friends, and, as I was saying, the effect of the gospel rightly received is to bring about a man like that, in measure a man like that. The idea is to bring in a man like Christ, not a monstrous man like the Philistine giant, not the result of cultivation and the like; but a spiritual man. See therefore that you are spiritual. One looks at the Lord's people and feels for oneself how unspiritual we are. We look at things in such a natural way. The Lord never did. The Lord always looked at things spiritually. He had seven eyes, spiritually, of course, which are the seven Spirits of God which are sent into all the earth. If one has seven eyes, what are they for? To meet the need of the world.

I was referring to Gideon and I do not know of any better illustration. Gideon said, What sort of men were they that ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the sons of a king. These Midianites were enemies of God's people. So there are today enemies who would slay us, if they could; but they were forced to confess they were like Gideon, each one resembled the sons of a king. Gideon's father was not a king, he was a poor man of Manasseh, he was no king, but Gideon was like a son of a king. He had that likeness from God. And the men of Israel said to Gideon, Rule over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also; for thou hast saved us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said to them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: Jehovah will rule over you. Show me a professing Christian who wants to rule and I will show you a thorn-bush; show me a Christian who is content to be ruled by Christ and I will show you a vine. So in the next chapter, Judges 9, Jotham speaks of the vine, saying, I will not be a king over the trees, I shall stay just as I am, I will furnish wine which cheers God and man. Should I leave my new wine, which cheers God and man, and go to wave over the trees? That is a spiritual man's judgment. The fig-

tree said, Should I leave my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to wave over the trees? But the thorn-bush said, I want to be king,—a bush that tears and scratches,—that is antichrist.

So do not desire to rule, desire to be ruled. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Ruler, He is the appointed Ruler among men. He is that among men. He has died for us. He has title to our affections. He has title to rule us, and if we retain our place of subjection we are beneficial to others and minister joy to God and man.

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