

I Will Give Thee Rest

The history of the church in the Old Testament supplies many lessons and examples for believers of every age. The spiritual troubles we have today have changed little from the experiences of men and women in days long gone. The principal reason for this is that our hearts and natures are the same and the wages of sin have not altered. The men and women of Israel sinned against God in the matter of the idolatrous golden calf. It was a great and flagrant sin which Moses confessed before the Lord. He called it making ‘gods of gold’.

Gods of gold

We, too, make ‘gods of gold’ when we take our eyes from the Lord Jesus Christ and allow them to settle upon something else, anything else, as a source of comfort and confidence in this world. I doubt very much any of us have ever literally fashioned an idol of whatever material and bowed down to it, but we constantly build around ourselves the securities of this world and in our imagination give credit for our peace to things that are worth nothing. Is it surprising if the Lord occasionally has to show us the meaning of ‘vain imaginations’ by removing those things we lean upon?

Christ is all in all

Brothers and sisters, let us remember we are no different from any other sinner except for what our Lord Jesus has given to us by grace. If God were to withdraw from us for a moment we would be as lost, helpless and hopeless as any fallen creature. All we are and have and ever hope to be is entirely due to the unmerited love of God in Christ. With Christ we have everything. Without Christ we have nothing.

God’s anger stirred up

Horrible as the wilderness episode of the golden calf was – and it was horrible, and Moses seems to have realised just how much offence had been caused to God by it – the passage before us today supplies us with an account of Moses interceding for the Children of Israel before God. In the course of this intercession Moses asks God for three things. We also have a statement from God Himself concerning His willingness to comply with Moses’ requests. It is this conversation I wish to draw to our attention this week.

Arguing from covenant promises

Remember, Moses was just a man but his intercession on behalf of Israel is a picture of the Lord Jesus’ intercession for His elect people, the church of God. When God indicated He would no longer travel through the wilderness with the people because of their sin, Moses solicited the ‘grace’ of God and the ‘way’ of God as he argued for mercy and asked God to consider the covenant promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses acknowledged God’s right to judge the sin of the people but drew attention to God’s mercy and importantly, God’s way of salvation in Christ.

Moses’ three requests

In tomorrow’s sermon listen out for Moses’ three requests. First, Moses asked to see God’s way, this “way” is the Lord Jesus Christ who said, “I am the way”. Second, he asked to know God’s presence, this is the union of the Son of God with men in the flesh for the redemption of their souls and Moses was permitted to glimpse the hind parts of God. Third, he asked to see God’s glory. God’s glory, Moses is told, is the acceptance and reconciliation of sinners by God upon the merit of Christ’s blood and sacrifice. This comes at the instigation of the sovereign God.

Each subsequent request Moses made was built upon the success of the former, which is a great encouragement for the Lord’s people to be bold in prayer. Each request was granted because Moses asked in faith, employed God’s own promises in asking, and drew upon the great purpose of salvation by grace.

The Way of escape

Thus we shall see, God willing, how out of a terrible rebellious act of idolatry God still showed Himself merciful by receiving an intercessor for sinners and, despite them deserving judgment, revealing His way of life, His sovereign grace and His discriminating glory. And we shall learn that what was prefigured by Moses the earthly type, is spiritually fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Divine Intercessor

Our Saviour is our Intercessor. He goes before Almighty God to offer precious blood and intercede for us. He asks first, upon the grounds of covenant promise for an open way of life for all for whom He died. He asks, second, that the comforting presence of Almighty God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with His people in their earthly pilgrimage. He asks, third, that the glory of God will be manifested in converting sinners and bestowing on them all the blessings of spiritual life that flows from their union with their ever-living Head.

And because the Lord Jesus is God’s dearly beloved Son who has finished the work He came to do and has done all things well, nothing is withheld from Him. Our Saviour will not be disappointed with us and we shall never be

disappointed with Him.