

# **THINKING ABOUT THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

## **(Sermon Summary)**

**Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> August 2022**

**Preacher: Walter Johnston (Retired Pastor of Chorlton Evangelical Church, Manchester).**

**Readings: Romans 8: 31-39; and 1 Peter 1: 3-9.**

We all of us have a past, a present and a future. Our past does not have to define our future. The Lord can forgive what we have done and change what we have become. He can give us a bright and certain future. All of it is to do with the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Wondering at the past.**

The Lord had a past. He was born in the same way that we are and yet was different. He was a normal child but was sinless. This child was the holy Son of God. The shepherds went to see an ordinary baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, which was quite usual, yet this child was different. He grew from infancy through childhood to adulthood. He was an ordinary man in that He had to sleep which is what He was doing when they crossed the Lake, and the storm came upon them. When He woke up, what He did was not ordinary. He stilled the wind and the waves, and everything was calm. He is the same as us yet different.

In Him we see the mix of the human and the divine. He lived perfectly, which was vital for our salvation. He was able to be the perfect offering for our sin. He had to be a man to be able to suffer, a sinless man to make the perfect offering, and God to be able to make an offering of infinite value.

He pleased God and men. God was well pleased with His Son, with His miracles, His teaching, and His life. The one who was beloved of God died as though accursed of God. By doing this He wiped out our sinful past and gave us a sinless present. All that condemned us was put upon Him on the cross. It was removed from our account never to be seen again. We have His righteousness. Nothing from the past can come back to condemn us.

So we look at the past with wonderment. It is now a holy and innocent past. We are 100% right with Him. We are justified and our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We are adopted and so we are now treated by God as sons and heirs. He loves us with unending love. We have peace with God in our hearts and also with one another. We belong to Him. People in the world are desperate to belong somewhere. We continue to be filled with wonder that He should have died for us and have given us all that we have. Why such love to me? Why would God plan such a thing as the cross? Why would the Lord do such a thing as to come into the world and to go to the cross? We are so undeserving and give so little in return.

So we look at the past and wonder.

### **Walking in the present.**

In the present we desire to walk with the Lord and to please Him. We have a new record in heaven, and this gives us a new life on earth. We have a new direction, and we walk with the best of Persons. We develop attitudes and behaviours that He approves of. We walk in a noble way. We encourage other believers to do the same. We walk in such a way that our spiritual life will prosper. Non-Christians should look at Christians and want what they have. We also develop the mind of Christ.

If we neglect to think of the past, our walk in the present is in danger of becoming casual. Our love cools and our zeal flags. If we neglect the past, we might cease to walk at all.

So God has given us the means of grace, both private and public, that we can be helped by. There is fellowship, the breaking of bread, the Sunday Services, and prayer. We walk with Him and get to know Him better so that our faith becomes more robust and steadier. We see better the vastness of what Christ has done. We become more confident walking in the present.

### **Waiting for the future.**

We are bold about the future. We believe and trust God for the future. We know Him in the present and trust Him for the future. He keeps His promises for the future. That future of glory is spoken of in most books of the New Testament. We are watching for our future, not in an idle sense, but it is an active watchfulness. We carry on living the Christian life as we watch. It is a gracious circle where our wondering leads to our walking and then on to our watching. We watch peacefully for the future.

In it all it is so good to know that we cannot be separated from His love. None can pluck us from His hand, which assumes that some things will try to do that. But He will keep us

so that this cannot happen. We cannot be separated from Him although this does not mean that we will be exempted from trials and testing. But He promises to take us through those tests, to guide us and to guard us. He will be a present help in trouble.

He promises to us that we will be with Him in heaven. We will be raised up and transformed. We will be among a new population of people, with perfect bodies and perfect souls. We should long for His return when we shall see Him as He is.

### **Encouragement.**

Through the gospel we are heirs with a good inheritance. Some of it we enjoy now but the richest part is still to come. He will bring it when He appears. It is kept for us in heaven (1 Peter 1:3-5). We are guarded and kept until such time as we will gain our inheritance. Like a will with our name on it, kept in the strong-room of a solicitor, so our inheritance is protected by Christ. He is keeping it for us and also keeping us at the same time,

So we live in three parts. There is something true about our past, present, and future in Christ. He Himself is our inheritance and there is nothing finer than this. So we pray 'Maranatha' - 'Come Lord Jesus'.