In His Humiliation His Judgment Was Taken Away

One important point I would like to stress from what we discussed earlier is our need to have the mind of Christ. The Lord Jesus was tempted by the devil, who made Him an enticing offer: *"All these things will I give thee,"* but with one condition, *"if thou wilt fall down and worship me."* This trial was not unique to the Lord Jesus; it can happen to us too.

When we look at Satan's method, we see that he first came to the Lord Jesus with an offer. He does the same with us: he comes by enticement. If he can win us over with attractive offers, he will have no need to tempt us through suffering. He comes first with pleasant things, things we find easy to accept. If he wins us that way, he won't need harsher methods such as suffering, because suffering can actually draw us closer to the Lord.

This shows us that we are in a fight, a battle with Satan, and we must be watchful. We are drawn to these offers by the lust that is in us, a consequence of being born in sin, and if we are not careful we can easily fall into his trap. The Lord Jesus was put in a similar situation when the people wanted to make Him king.

We will read a few verses to understand this situation better, and also the Lord Jesus' attitude towards what the people wanted. He hid from them and remained humble. We read from John 12, from verse 12: *"On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord."* Amen.

The people were offering to make the Lord Jesus king, but not in the sense that He stood for. They wanted their own kind of king, a form of government; not a kingdom of righteousness, but one that matched their own expectations. The Lord Jesus kept away from this desire of the people, which was in fact an offer that came from Satan. An astonishing offer.

Every time we are made an offer, we need to stop and think about why it is being made. Those offers may well lead us down a road that ends in destruction, so we must be very careful.

May God help us to have the attitude of the Lord Jesus and to hide when people want to praise us to the skies and lift us up. We will not seek praise for ourselves, so that people make us kings – not over a nation, but in our own field, where we are called to be greater and to have some standing.

I remember something from my younger days; let me tell you a short story. I was working and I was around 29, almost 29. I was already in a management position: I was the director of an international transport company. I worked for a large company in the country, which had about 300 employees and in turn owned other companies. The owner of this large company was an international export firm, one of Romania's major firms.

It was not a small company but one of the export firms from the days of Ceausescu, Romania's communist dictator. This head, who ran the big firm and also oversaw me and my transport company, became Minister of Trade, a very high position in the Romanian government. When he became minister, he chose a few people from his company to come with him into government, into the ministry.

From a human point of view, he did what was normal: he wanted to surround himself with loyal people. I was tempted to give up the position I had, which, although considerable, seemed small compared to the one I might have been offered. I remember clearly that I didn't think for a moment of going in that direction. I was aware of the dangers that came with getting involved in government. God protected me from that temptation.

That man was Minister of Trade for only six months. His term didn't last long, and then he had to go back to his company. I don't know what became of his colleagues or of the people he recruited; I didn't follow those details closely. But I am aware that a great deal can happen in our lives when we fall prey to Satan's temptations.

We should strive to follow the example of the Lord Jesus, to become like Him. Let us want to learn more about the Lord Jesus, to understand how to live as He lived. We will open the book of Acts, chapter 8. We will begin at verse 26 to understand the context: *And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*

And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

Here it is vital to notice that Philip preached Jesus, whom we also know as the Lord Jesus. Of the Lord Jesus it is said that *"in his humiliation his judgment was taken away."* This word, *humiliation*, reminds us of Joseph in the Old Testament, who went through many trials before God lifted him up.

Joseph, while he was in prison, interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's baker and butler. He then asked the butler to mention him to Pharaoh once he was restored to his post, hoping in this way to be released from prison. Yet God did not let the butler help Joseph in this way, because He had another plan for him.

In the case of the Lord Jesus, we read that *"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth."* He did not try to win people's favour or to justify His cause, but let God's will be done, even in moments of unjust judgment.

Philip preached the Lord Jesus so that the eunuch would learn to love Him and to want to live as He lived. As for the Ethiopian eunuch, although Scripture says nothing more about him, historical tradition suggests that he died a martyr. He received the Lord Jesus and, though he had once been a prince, a man at the head of government, a minister of finance, we cannot say what happened to bring him so low that he ended up martyred. He chose to be like the Lord Jesus. Praise the Lord!

If we turn back a page and read from Acts chapter 8, we come back to the idea that we want to preach the Lord Jesus in order to learn to live like Him. The devil comes to make us an offer, but we must live as the Lord Jesus lived. *It is written*, the Lord Jesus answers him. Let us read chapter 8, verses 4, 5 and 6: *"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."* Amen. What did Philip do? What must we do? Philip preached the Lord Jesus.

When we say he preached the Lord Jesus, we don't just mean that he spoke about His death and resurrection. He also lifted up the Lord Jesus, so that people could see Him and be drawn to Him, to the beauty of His character. We read verse 12: *"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."* Amen.

When they believed Philip, who preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ – or we could say, who preached Christ – they believed what Philip told them about the Lord Jesus. They believed that in His humiliation His judgment was taken away. We have a problem: we want our own judgment to stay intact, so that we, with our own wisdom, can make decisions, and make them without God, without Christ.

Let us see how the apostles went about it. We read in Acts chapter 16, verses 9 and 10: *"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them."* This is not limited to preaching the Lord Jesus; it also involves a deeper understanding of the gospel.

To make this clear, let us turn to 2 Corinthians, where the apostle Paul speaks about his preaching. In chapter 4 he reveals things about the Lord Jesus that are essential to how we should live and speak about our faith.

Quoting from verse 1 to verse 6: *"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."*

The apostle Paul stresses that the gospel he preached was not tampered with (or corrupted).

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

So Paul did not merely preach the word of God; he presented the Lord Jesus, of whom Scripture says that all the fulness of God dwells in Him, and that He is the image of God, the brightness of His glory.

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Let us think about what happens when light shines. Sunlight, for example, when it shines, lights up our lives and drives away the darkness. So we preach the Lord Jesus. We will go to Colossians to read about how important it is to preach the Lord Jesus and nothing else. This was God's plan, and we all remember that we were told to go and preach the gospel – that is, to preach the Lord Jesus – *to every creature*.

In Colossians 1, verse 15, the apostle Paul describes the Lord Jesus to the church in Colossae like this: *"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature."* The Lord Jesus is the image of God. The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ must shine, showing the image of God – that is, the Lord Jesus, who is the image of God. And in verse 19 we read: *"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."* All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in the Lord Jesus, and we will keep reading about these things.

We must preach Him, because in doing so we preach the fulness of God. We reveal all the hidden things of God, so that people will want to be like the Lord Jesus. Also in Colossians 1, verses 28 and 29, it is very important to take note of what the apostle Paul was doing: *"Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."*

This verse says a great deal. We preach the Lord Jesus not only so that He will be admired and so that we can sing Him songs of praise – though that is a good thing to do – but we have a deeper purpose. We want to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, to present him at the stature, the height, of His fulness.

That is why we preach the Lord Jesus: because we are striving to become like Him. This is the work the apostle Paul gave himself to. If Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, worked towards this goal, then we too should follow his example. *"Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."* Amen. God worked mightily in the apostle Paul so that Paul would preach the Lord Jesus. We have understood from 2 Corinthians that we have received this ministry from God: to preach the Lord Jesus and the kingdom of God.

In Ephesians chapter 3 we discover more about the Lord Jesus, which inspires us to want to live as He lived. We have His example: He was tempted with great offers, but He stayed true to the things truly worth following.

Turning to Ephesians 3:14-19, we read: *"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."* It is important to note that *"I bow my knees"* is the apostle's prayer for these things. It is a beautiful and powerful prayer, and we should pray for one another in this way.

"...That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Amen.

According to Acts chapter 20, the apostle Paul tells the church in Ephesus: *"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."* God's plan is for Christ to dwell in us: *"Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

It is the desire that the character of Christ should dwell in us, that the word of Christ should dwell in us richly, so that we may comprehend, as we have read, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fulness of God.

We have read that all the fulness of God dwells in Him. And all the fulness of God must dwell in us too. That is why it is essential to know Christ, to know the love of Christ which passes all understanding. These are things we have read before, things we grasp with our minds, but which our hearts find very hard to put into practice.

Speaking of the apostle Paul and his preaching of the Lord Jesus, I will read once more on this subject in Acts chapter 28, and then I will say a few things about the Lord Jesus. I would like us to reflect on His life and take it as our example. If we are truly concerned – and we should be – to live as the Lord Jesus lived, then the goal is for all the fulness of God to dwell in us.

In Acts chapter 28 we read from verse 22, where the apostle Paul is living in Rome. The Jews who lived there came to ask him about the Christian faith, a subject that stirred up opposition. Verse 22 says: *"But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God,

persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not."*

Then verses 30-31 describe how Paul stayed two whole years in a house he had rented and received all who came to see him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him. The point is made that he preached the life of the Lord Jesus with all confidence and without hindrance.

He spoke about the Lord Jesus, about the beauty of the Lord Jesus, the beauty of His character. This is the mission we are working on: Him we preach. This is our ministry, just as it was the apostle Paul's ministry, and as it should be ours. But to truly preach Him, we must live according to His teaching, because otherwise we could preach Him without living by His words.

We will open John chapter 5, which deals with one of the things we find hard. This is where God's work with us begins; this is the stage every one of us has to reach. It is the beginning of our life of faith with God, with the Lord Jesus.

In John 5 we see an attribute of the Lord Jesus that was preached by Philip, by the apostle Paul and by the other apostles. They preached the word of God, the gospel – that is, the Lord Jesus. Those who read Acts carefully will notice that when it speaks of the gospel, of the word of God and of the Lord Jesus, it is talking about the same thing.

All the apostles followed the same path, making disciples who were meant to grow up to the stature of the Lord Jesus. That is the purpose of discipleship, and the apostles made disciples everywhere they went. They preached the Lord Jesus, showed what He is like and how He lives, and taught people to follow Him.

We will read about the beginning of our life, which is very important, because this is where life starts; this is where things begin with each one of us. We will read from verse 17 of John chapter 5: *"But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."*

It is important to note that people were convinced the Lord Jesus was making Himself equal with God. We discussed earlier what it means to make yourself equal with God: it is when God has one opinion and you have another, and you consider your opinion more important. Making yourself equal with Him is not coming to the Lord Jesus with your opinion and letting Him, by His Spirit, convince you to give way, to deny yourself and let the Word work in your life. No, it is when you come to the Lord Jesus and try to teach Him how things are.

This was the charge the Jews brought against the Lord Jesus. They wanted to condemn Him, and the Lord Jesus answered this accusation – an answer we need to remember. Because He was accused of making Himself equal with God, *"Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself."* They accused Him of breaking the Sabbath (and so making Himself equal with God), of saying that God was His Father and that He

was His Son, and so on. But the Lord Jesus makes it very clear: *"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."*

This gives us a clear definition. So we could say that the Son dwells with us, and the Father with the Son. To understand what is being asked of us, let us read it like this: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, we can do nothing of ourselves. We do nothing but what we see the Lord Jesus do, and whatever the Lord Jesus does, we also do likewise."* This is our calling. When we preach the Lord Jesus, we must preach this truth. We do not make ourselves equal with God; we do not follow our own opinion.

We can learn a lesson or two from the word of God about how not to make ourselves equal with God. When we interpret the Lord's teaching and claim that it isn't really the way it is presented, we put ourselves on an equal footing with Him. It is dangerous to change the word of God to suit our own opinions. In John 5:30 the Lord Jesus says plainly: *"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."* Amen.

The apostle Paul preached the Lord Jesus and taught people to live by His example. So we too should live His way. We are called to live the same way. Those who accepted this preaching were baptized. But those who did not accept it, as we see when we read Acts carefully, went away stirred up and angry. For example, chapter 14 tells us that because some did not receive the word of God, the apostles turned to the Gentiles.

Our problem is that we agree with the Lord Jesus and with God only in things that don't affect us directly, that don't make us uncomfortable. But when problems arise in the family, with relatives, friends or acquaintances, we hold on to our own opinions instead of lining up with God. This is the hard attitude that many cannot accept.

The Lord Jesus did not choose to become a king or an independent thinker; He chose to do the Father's will. The Jews sought to kill Him because, in their eyes, He was making Himself equal with God, which they considered unacceptable.

Making oneself equal with God is one of the greatest sins, and God resists the proud and those who try to raise themselves to His level. It is important for us to understand why the Lord Jesus wants us to receive with joy the word about how He lived: because whoever receives this word with joy begins his life in Him.

That person is determined to live in complete obedience to the word of God. He does not want to take hold of God's word in the wrong way, nor to consider himself equal with God. As the Lord Jesus said, *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself,"* it is essential that we deny our own desires in order to follow His way. The work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is to transform us so that we become like the Lord Jesus.

The goal is to become like the Lord Jesus, who in turn is like the Father, and so to take on the image of God. This is the final goal, and only through this transformation can we come to have

the perfect image of God within us. This is how God works in us.

We will consider one quality of the fruit of the Spirit, longsuffering, and talk about how we can attain this virtue. God wants all His fulness to dwell in us, including His longsuffering. So how can we come to a state of longsuffering? We need to follow the path of longsuffering and ask ourselves how much time we should devote to cultivating it.

It is interesting to compare this process with children's education at school. The aim is for them to build up knowledge, and for that they attend lessons every day, except in the holidays. The timetable is well set out, starting with three or four hours a day in first grade and rising to five, six and even eight hours a day, depending on the curriculum and on how much information has to be taken in within a short time.

If we gave a few hours a day to studying longsuffering, how much time would we set aside for this virtue? The apostle Paul, Peter and the other apostles, and we as well, are called to preach the Lord Jesus, and to preach Him through the example of His longsuffering. Patience is an essential virtue. Remember that it is written plainly that *"God is love"* and that God is *"longsuffering,"* and we must aspire to be like our teacher, the Lord Jesus.

He is longsuffering, and because God is longsuffering, the Lord Jesus is like Him, since all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him. It is important to think about longsuffering every day. If, for a fleeting life that lasts on average 70-80 years, we devote so much time to study – 12 years of school plus university, and in some cases, such as medicine, up to 20 years – to qualify for a profession we may practise for only 30-35 years, how much more should we study and apply the teaching in order to cultivate longsuffering?

Let us examine our own desire to live as the Lord Jesus lived, who was meek and lowly in heart. The first step we must take is to be humble as He was. Then we must put into practice the teaching of the Lord Jesus, teaching that guides us towards this virtue. We must learn it, keep it in our hearts and then put it into action.

Let us look closely at some words from the word of God. As we preach the Lord Jesus, we need to realise that rejecting His word amounts to rejecting Him. Let us read from *Matthew chapter 5, verses 21-22*, and reflect on these verses, thinking of the people of the Old Testament and the great biblical figures who lived through these things: *"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."*

As we reflect on these words, let us strive to cultivate longsuffering in our lives. *"...and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."* Amen. The Lord Jesus says that whoever is angry will be in danger of the judgment.

Let us think about what this judgment involves and what the destiny is of those who are angry. Let us also think about what the word judgment means here. Is it a temporary judgment, or a

final one? It is essential that we free ourselves from anger, that we get rid of it in our lives.

In the Old Testament, people were overcome by anger, even to the point of killing, and the Word tells us: *"Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment."* Yet the Lord Jesus teaches us that not only the act of killing but anger itself must be removed. He helps us to put off this sin, to be set free from it.

He urges us to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, as it is written in the letter to the Colossians: to put away anger, idle talk and the rest, and to put on the new man. Let us put on longsuffering and kindness, but for this we must not make ourselves equal with God. We cannot mend an old garment with new patches; we must give up completely what was and start again from scratch.

It is true that putting the Lord's teaching into practice can be hard. We understand the great ideas, but often we don't apply them. Yet God doesn't ask us to do grand things; we face challenges every day that can bring us to the point of anger at any moment of the day. Also in Matthew 5, we read from verse 38: *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you."* What does *"but I say unto you"* mean?

We must not act on our own initiative. We are guided by what we hear, and we do not seek to follow our own will, but the will of the Lord Jesus, which is also the will of the Father.

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Amen. Many areas of life are covered by this teaching.

In light of these passages, how many people does the command not to resist the one who does us harm apply to? Let us think about who is included here. Are all people included, even our own children? Can we be angry with our children or not? Let us think carefully about these things.

There is a verse that tells us, *"provoke not your children to wrath."* So it is clear that we must not be angry with our children. But what do we do when our child wrongs us? Is it strange not to resist? Do we have enough tools to act in such a way that we never need to depart from the word of the Lord Jesus? We must follow what we hear. Every kind of person is included here. And God gives us the right ways to act.

This teaching also covers disciplining children. We may discipline them. If we say we must not resist the one who does us harm, then how should we go about discipline? In that case, it seems as though the one doing wrong is punishing us. Yet often anger creeps into our discipline.

Anger arises because in our spirit we resist the one who does us harm. The teaching of the Lord Jesus urges us to get rid of this spirit of resistance in us. *"If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also."* If we follow the word of Christ, we will come to have the image of Christ and gain longsuffering.

If we start picking His word apart and resisting it, suggesting that amendments need to be added because it doesn't cover every area of life, we would be implying that the Lord Jesus failed to include everything. But He did not fail. God's ways are perfect, and His works are perfect too. We must follow His way, which is perfect.

The Lord Jesus teaches us, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* Longsuffering is a fruit of the Spirit. So let us seek to follow the things of the Spirit. Pursue longsuffering, and let it become a treasure for us.

If we don't cultivate this virtue, we may well ask where we will end up. Will we be unprepared? The process is like school, where we learn lessons, prepare, and are then tested, receiving a grade according to how we did.

If, after a few days, we get a failing grade on our longsuffering exam, we must ask ourselves whether we learned and practised as we should have, or whether we failed. At school, a pupil who fails has to retake the exam. In the same way, in our spiritual life we must persevere and improve.

If we pass, we move up a level, showing that we have learned something of longsuffering, which has many sides to it. We must go all the way to the end and have longsuffering like the Lord Jesus. Patience must have its perfect work in us, so that we may be perfect.

When the day of testing comes, we should rejoice, because it is an opportunity to show that we have studied and been present at "school." Even if we don't always get top marks, what matters is that we pass.

It is important to remember the parable of the sower, which says that the cares of this life can choke the word we should keep in our hearts in order to bear fruit. Cares can smother the word and keep it from becoming part of the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit includes longsuffering, and our goal is to bear the image of the Lord Jesus. That is why Paul preached the Lord Jesus, and that is why we preach Him to people too.

In Acts we read that *"in his humiliation his judgment was taken away."* When the question is asked, *"Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?"*, it is in fact speaking of the Lord Jesus. In our humility, let us allow our judgment to be shaped by what we hear from Him, though that may seem hard.

This process does not rob us of our independence or our right to think; on the contrary, it guides us to think rightly, to take on the way God thinks. May the Lord help both you and me, because each of us still has our own shortcomings.

From my own experience, I can say that we may catch ourselves realising that we often lose sight of our need for longsuffering, and suddenly find that we have not shown it. And it is not only longsuffering; often it is a lack of patience itself.

It is essential that patience does its full work, so that we develop the capacity for longsuffering. According to the word of God, it is longsuffering, not mere patience, that is the fruit of the Spirit. Amen.

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