**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**ROMANS-023**. **THE GIFT THAT BRINGS ALL GIFTS by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"*

*Romans 8:32*

We have here an allusion to, if not a distinct quotation from, the narrative in Genesis, of Abraham's offering up of Isaac. The same word which is employed in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, to translate the Hebrew word rendered in our Bible as withheld, is employed here by the Apostle. And there is evidently floating before his mind the thought that, in some profound and real sense, there is an analogy between that wondrous and faithful act of giving up and the transcendent and stupendous gift to the world, from God, of His Son.

If we take that point of view, the language of my text rises into singular force, and suggests many very deep thoughts, about which, perhaps, silence is best. But led by that analogy, let us deal with these words.

**I. Consider this mysterious act of divine surrender.**

The analogy seems to suggest to us, strange as it may be, and remote from the cold and abstract ideas of the divine nature which it is thought to be philosophical to cherish, that something corresponding to the pain and loss that shadowed the patriarch's heart flitted across the divine mind when the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Not merely to give, but to give up, is the highest crown and glory of love, as we know it. And who shall venture to say that we so fully apprehend the divine nature as to be warranted in declaring that some analogy to that is impossible for Him? Our language is, I will not offer unto God that which doth cost me nothing. Let us bow in silence before the dim intimation that seems to flicker out of the words of my text, that so He says to us, I will not offer unto you that which doth cost Me nothing. He spared not His own Son; withheld Him not from us.

But passing from that which, I dare say, many of you may suppose to be fanciful and unwarranted, let us come upon the surer ground of the other words of my text. And notice how the reality of the surrender is emphasised by the closeness of the bond which, in the mysterious eternity, knits together the Father and the Son. As with Abraham, so in this lofty example, of which Abraham and Isaac were but as dim, wavering reflections in water, the Son is His own Son. It seems to me impossible, upon any fair interpretation of the words before us, to refrain from giving to that epithet here its very highest and most mysterious sense. It cannot be any mere equivalent for Messiah, it cannot merely mean a man who was like God in purity of nature and in closeness of communion. For the force of the analogy and the emphasis of that word which is even more emphatic in the Greek than in the English His own Son, point to a community of nature, to a uniqueness and singleness of relation, to a closeness of intimacy, to which no other is a parallel. And so we have to estimate the measure of the surrender by the tenderness and awfulness of the bond. Having one Son, His well-beloved, He sent Him.

Notice, again, how the greatness of the surrender is made more emphatic by the contemplation of it in its double negative and positive aspect, in the two successive clauses. He spared not His Son, but delivered Him up, an absolute, positive giving of Him over to the humiliation of the life and to the mystery of the death.

And notice how the tenderness and the beneficence that were the sole motive of the surrender are lifted into light in the last words, for us all. The single, sole reason that bowed, if I may so say, the divine purpose, and determined the mysterious act, was a pure desire for our blessing. No definition is given as to the manner in which that surrender wrought for our good. The Apostle does not need to dwell upon that. His purpose is to emphasise the entire unselfishness, the utter simplicity of the motive which moved the divine will. One great throb of love to the whole of humanity led to that transcendent surrender, before which we can only bow and say, Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

And now, notice how this mysterious act is grasped by the Apostle here as what I may call the illuminating fact as to the whole divine nature. From it, and from it alone, there falls a blaze of light on the deepest things in God. We are accustomed to speak of Christ's perfect life of unselfishness, and His death of pure beneficence, as being the great manifestation to us all that in His heart there is an infinite fountain of love to us. We are, further, accustomed to speak of Christ's mission and death as being the revelation to us of the love of God as well as of the Man Christ Jesus, because we believe that God was in Christ reconciling the world, and that He has so manifested and revealed the very nature of divinity to us, in His life and in His person, that, as He Himself says, He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. And every conclusion that we draw as to the love of Christ is, ipso facto, a conclusion as to the love of God. But my text looks at the matter from rather a different point of view, and bids us see, in Christ's mission and sacrifice, the great demonstration of the love of God, not only because God was in Christ, but because the Father's will, conceived of as distinct from, and yet harmonious with, the will of the Son, gives Him up for us. And we have to say, not only that we see the love of God in the love of Christ, but God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son that we might have life through Him.

These various phases of the love of Christ as manifesting the divine love, may not be capable of perfect harmonising in our thoughts, but they do blend into one, and by reason of them all, God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We have to think not only of Abraham who gave up, but of the unresisting, innocent Isaac, bearing on his shoulders the wood for the burnt offering, as the Christ bore the Cross on His, and suffering himself to be bound upon the pile, not only by the cords that tied his limbs, but by the cords of obedience and submission, and in both we have to bow before the Apocalypse of divine love.

**II. So, secondly, look at the power of this divine surrender to bring with it all other gifts.**

How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? The Apostle's triumphant question requires for its affirmative answer only the belief in the unchangeableness of the Divine heart, and the uniformity of the Divine purpose. And if these be recognised, their conclusion inevitably follows. With Him He will freely give us all things.

It is so, because the greater gift implies the less. We do not expect that a man who hands over a million of pounds to another, to help him, will stick at a farthing afterwards. If you give a diamond you may well give a box to keep it in. In God's gift the lesser will follow the lead of the greater; and whatsoever a man can want, it is a smaller thing for Him to bestow, than was the gift of His Son.

There is a beautiful contrast between the manners of giving the two sets of gifts implied in words of the original, perhaps scarcely capable of being reproduced in any translation. The expression that is rendered freely give, implies that there is a grace and a pleasantness in the act of bestowal. God gave in Christ, what we may reverently say it was something like pain to give. Will He not give the lesser, whatever they may be, which it is the joy of His heart to communicate? The greater implies the less.

Farther, this one great gift draws all other gifts after it, because the purpose of the greater gift cannot be attained without the bestowment of the lesser. He does not begin to build being unable to finish; He does not miscalculate His resources, nor stultify Himself by commencing upon a large scale, and having to stop short before the purpose with which He began is accomplished. Men build great palaces, and are bankrupt before the roof is put on. God lays His plans with the knowledge of His powers, and having first of all bestowed this large gift, is not going to have it bestowed in vain for want of some smaller ones to follow it up. Christ puts the same argument to us, beginning only at the other end of the process. Paul says, God has laid the foundation in Christ. Do you think He will stop before the headstone is put on? Christ said, It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Do you think He will not give you bread and water on the road to it? Will He send out His soldiers half-equipped; will it be found when they are on their march that they have been started with a defective commissariat, and with insufficient trenching tools? Shall the children of the King, on the road to their thrones, be left to scramble along anyhow, in want of what they need to get there? That is not God's way of doing. He that hath begun a good work will also perfect the same, and when He gave to you and me His Son, He bound Himself to give us every subsidiary and secondary blessing which was needed to make that Son's work complete in each of us.

Again, this great blessing draws after it, by necessary consequence, all other lesser and secondary gifts, inasmuch as, in every real sense, everything is included and possessed in the Christ when we receive Him. With Him, says Paul, as if that gift once laid in a man's heart actually enclosed within it, and had for its indispensable accompaniment the possession of every smaller thing that a man can need, Jesus Christ is, as it were, a great Cornucopia, a horn of abundance, out of which will pour, with magic affluence, all manner of supplies according as we require. This fountain flows with milk, wine, and water, as men need. Everything is given us when Christ is given to us, because Christ is the Heir of all things, and we possess all things in Him; as some poor village maiden married to a prince in disguise, who, on the morrow of her wedding finds that she is lady of broad lands, and mistress of a kingdom. He that spared not His own Son, not only with Him will give, but in Him has given us all things.

And so, brethren, just as that great gift is the illuminating fact in reference to the divine heart, so is it the interpreting fact in reference to the divine dealings. Only when we keep firm hold of Christ as the gift of God, and the Explainer of all that God does, can we face the darkness, the perplexities, the torturing questions that from the beginning have harassed men's minds as they looked upon the mysteries of human misery. If we recognise that God has given us His Son, then all things become, if not plain, at least lighted with some gleam from that great gift; and we feel that the surrender of Christ is the constraining fact which shapes after its own likeness, and for its own purpose, all the rest of God's dealings with men. That gift makes anything believable, reasonable, possible, rather than that He should spare not His own Son, and then should counterwork His own act by sending the world anything but good.

**III. And now, lastly, take one or two practical issues from these thoughts, in reference to our own belief and conduct.**

First, I would say, Let us correct our estimates of the relative importance of the two sets of gifts. On the one side stands the solitary Christ; on the other side are massed all delights of sense, all blessings of time, all the things that the vulgar estimation of men unanimously recognises to be good. These are only makeweights. They are all lumped together into an also. They are but the golden dust that may be filed off from the great ingot and solid block. They are but the outward tokens of His far deeper and true preciousness. They are secondary; He is the primary. What an inversion of our notions of good! Do you degrade all the world's wealth, pleasantness, ease, prosperity, into an also? Are you content to put it in the secondary place, as a result, if it please Him, of Christ? Do you live as if you did? Which do you hunger for most? Which do you labour for hardest? Seek ye first the Kingdom and the King, and all these things shall be added unto you.

Let these thoughts teach us that sorrow too is one of the gifts of the Christ. The words of my text, at first sight, might seem to be simply a promise of abundant earthly good. But look what lies close beside them, and is even part of the same triumphant burst. Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? These are some of the all things which Paul expected that God would give him and his brethren. And looking upon all, he says, They all work together for good; and in them all we may be more than conquerors. It would be a poor, shabby issue of such a great gift as that of which we have been speaking, if it were only to be followed by the sweetnesses and prosperity and wealth of this world. But here is the point that we have to keep hold of--inasmuch as He gives us all things, let us take all the things that come to us as being as distinctly the gifts of His love, as is the gift of Christ Himself. A wise physician, to an ignorant onlooker, might seem to be acting in contradictory fashions when in the one moment he slashes into a limb, with a sharp, gleaming knife, and in the next sedulously binds the wounds, and closes the arteries, but the purpose of both acts is one.

The diurnal revolution of the earth brings the joyful sunrise and the pathetic sunset. The same annual revolution whirls us through the balmy summer days and the biting winter ones. God's purpose is one. His methods vary. The road goes straight to its goal; but it sometimes runs in tunnels dank and dark and stifling, and sometimes by sunny glades and through green pastures. God's purpose is always love, brother. His withdrawals are gifts, and sorrow is not the least of the benefits which come to us through the Man of Sorrows.

So again, let these thoughts teach us to live by a very quiet and peaceful faith. We find it a great deal easier to trust God for Heaven than for earth--for the distant blessings than for the near ones. Many a man will venture his soul into God's hands, who would hesitate to venture to-morrow's food there. Why? Is it not because we do not really trust Him for the greater that we find it so hard to trust Him for the less? Is it not because we want the less more really than we want the greater, that we can put ourselves off with faith for the one, and want something more solid to grasp for the other? Live in the calm confidence that God gives all things; and gives us for to-morrow as for eternity; for earth as for heaven.

And, last of all, make you quite sure that you have taken the great gift of God. He gives it to all the world, but they only have it who accept it by faith. Have you, my brother? I look out upon the lives of the mass of professing Christians; and this question weighs on my heart, judging by conduct--have they really got Christ for their own? Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Look how you are all fighting and scrambling, and sweating and fretting, to get hold of the goods of this present life, and here is a gift gleaming before you all the while that you will not condescend to take. Like a man standing in a market-place offering sovereigns for nothing, which nobody accepts because they think the offer is too good to be true, so God complains and wails: I have stretched out My hands all the day, laden with gifts, and no man regarded.

It is only heaven may be had for the asking;

It is only God that is given away.

He gives His Son. Take Him by humble faith in His sacrifice and Spirit; take Him, and with Him He freely gives you all things.