

AD - 20090101 [#28]: Come Near to me

19/1/01

Author: Festo Kivengere
Place:
Date:
Event:
Theme: Come Near to Me (Grace and Guilt)
Text: Joh 8:1 ff.
Comment: Taken from Tape 53

Index:

p. 1 Poor in grace
p. 2 Devil is the accuser
p. 4 Not condemned
p. 6 Devil's Oppression
p. 7 Strong Redeemer
p. 8 Advocate - Jesus Christ
p. 10 Grace for all

2

John's
Woman Take
Adultery
Peter Guilt & Grace

Festo Kivengere Tape 53 Message: Come Near Unto Me.

John 8:1-

We should always speak about the Lord Jesus with an involvement. You can never speak about the Holy Spirit and get away with it, and therefore that is why we always prepare because it is in his graciousness that you receive it that we don't get away with it at all, and William and I can thank him very much that we are not getting away at all with it, and I hope that none here come here and unfortunately get away with it, we hope that you leave it in his hands, whatever it is.

If there is anything that we as Christians suffer from is being dry and poor in grace. Yes, in such a way that sometimes when the gospel is preached you feel as if there is a stone in your heart, that is not saintliness, brethren. Saints are always touched and melted by the gospel. Put them wherever you want, speak about the gospel and it is just like a perfume which goes through and through the soul.

This is because he is the son of God, there is nothing that melts the heart than to see Jesus in his graciousness. Last night as we were reading from the gospel in the Old Testament, we saw in that son of Jacob, Joseph, grace, drawing his guilty brethren and making them feel terribly ashamed, making as if the whole world was going to open its mouth and swallow them up and yet find the qualities of grace in Joseph as he said, "Come near unto me, I am Joseph your brother."

Of course, none but Jesus can say that, none but the Lord Jesus can speak to a guilty conscience peace, and there is peace where he speaks because he doesn't speak empty words, a preacher may give you wonderful sermon and perfect doctrine but not the Lord Jesus, he speaks through the Holy Spirit and perfect sacrifice, and when he speaks the Holy Spirit takes and draws aside the curtains and you see what the son of God accomplished for your guilty conscience. There is a song in song, there is music, there is forgiveness, there is reconciliation. There is a lifting of the burden where we would have been chewing some very good failing.

May we concentrate only on him, for I believe that it is him that you and I need.

Poor in grace

Indeed, I do not deny that there are many things you need, you may think you need gifts, you may think you need power in prayer, perhaps you need a deeper knowledge of the scriptures, all those things I don't deny, you need them, but brother you need him above anything else.

Pray for yourself, that the spirit of God is going to bring him in fullness into that heart of yours. Perhaps you are a tired saint, perhaps you are a worker rather feeling disappointed in yourself, and as you look back thirty, forty, and fifty years you see nothing but bits and pieces of blankness and failure, and you don't know what to do. Sometimes you remorse and wish that those years would come back, they can't come back, they are gone.

What are you going to do about it? The devil comes and accuses you, and shows you how you failed here, and how you failed there, how you failed in duty, how you didn't love as you ought to love, how you didn't preach as you ought to preach. Yes, he tells me these things day by day. After speaking he comes back and says, 'You didn't give the whole truth did you?' As if he knew the truth, Does he know the truth? He just comes to condemn me, then I look back and I find nothing, if it were not that when I see the empty world, when I see the failure, the stumbling about and the wobbling about, do you know what we do?

Then grace comes and covers those blanks, then I look back and I don't see anything I've done, I see Jesus. Saint Paul says, "We see Jesus."

Do you? As you look into the past do you see Jesus? As you look into your converts you'll be terribly disappointed, but I see Jesus.

I'd like to read to you just a few words of encouragement tonight. I don't know what your situation is like, I don't know what you've messed about with. I'm not even interested because I know there is one who knows about it, and he's the one you need to know. You know about it, and he knows about it, thank God.

Devil accuse

John 8 will be the basis of our themes tonight.

John 8:1 onwards. This is a very sad case. A person brought to Jesus Christ. Sometimes you feel as if you wouldn't like to read that. And he was sitting there teaching, and these callous, unfeeling, dry as bones, Pharisees, so called religious dry bones, and they took this poor object. Unfeelingly, they took her all the way and they brought this broken-hearted one and ushered her into the court of the temple. Absolutely unconcerned, not even touched, no pity, no compassion, except a legalistic, dry approach as if they had completely exhausted their humanity.

Thank God, we read here, and they put her case before him. Oh, how sweet. They put her case before him and they said to the Lord Jesus Christ, very unconcernedly, that this girl had committed a crime. They told him the whole story without any convictions and any burdens, no love at all, and as you read their words they are full of dryness and condemnation. And they said to him, "What is your sentence?"

I love two things about it. And God was embarrassed. The Lord Jesus as he looked, turned his eyes from the spectacle of mercy, and he turned round in utter embarrassment. I want to think that love has its embarrassments. On this particular occasion you see love embarrassed. He looked down and wrote on the ground. He never looked at her. They were all staring hard with unfeeling, waiting to condemnation, they thought they were very religious, very well disciplined, they gave the impression that they hated sin, they didn't like sin. Sin is never hated except through the light of Calvary.

They didn't hate sin. They were callous, unfeeling, unrealistic, actually living in sin, they were worse than this poor woman as far as grace was concerned. The master turned and wrote some words on the ground, I don't know what he wrote there, and he turned round again and said some words that

embarrassed them all. As it were, he turned away from the woman and he said to those who had brought her and asked them, "If there is anyone among you who has never committed such a sin lift your hand and stone her first."

They were all guilty, and they went one by one. Jesus was left alone with that woman standing before him. Two extremes standing together in a room. Purest purity standing against the darkest, the most guilty, the most downcast, the most guilty, most ashamed person. The holiest looking upon the filthiest, and both came together, and there stood the Lord Jesus.

Quickly, he turned to her and very graciously, I think this was the most difficult moment for her. Others might have said a lot of words to abuse her or to convict her, to condemn or despise her, but they would never make her feel convicted as when she was there, when she was left with the Lord Jesus in that room. Here was pure eye, too holy to behold sin, actually looking at sin. Here was the innocent, the holy one and in his presence stood a sinner, but she was the object of grace, she stood there, a Jewish woman, guilty by law, condemned by Moses, ashamed of herself, an object of mercy. There could never have been a better place for her than where she was that day.

Not condemned

And the Lord raised himself up and said to her, "Woman, where are your accusers? Where are they? Has no man condemned you?" And she replied, "No one Lord." And he said, "I do not condemn thee either. Go and sin no more."

What an object of mercy! Go home and sin no more. You could almost see her go. She hasn't said a thing except, "No one Lord." That's all. No pleading, no excuses, and she heard those wonderful words from the mouth of the Lord Jesus, "Go home and sin no more." Meet her along the road and I'm sure she would have been the best singer of hymn number 127, 'Amazing grace, oh how sweet the sound.' Wasn't it a sweet sound that moment?

"Go home lady, I am not condemning thee. I didn't come to condemn but to save." I think as she went along the road, Amazing Grace, oh how sweet it was. She was probably smiling with tears in her eyes because she got what she never expected. She was expecting to be stoned to death instead she was told to go home. Yes, perhaps there is one who is guilty, perhaps there is one who is feeling condemned by the devil, perhaps there is one whom the devil has been nagging saying, 'You're no good, you're no good. Look at your faults, look at your failure, look at you jealousies, look how critical you are, look how bad you are, as it were he has been printing 'Bad, bad, bad,' all over you. That's exactly what you are, he's not telling lies. All he is doing is exaggerating. Actually he's speaking the truth, he's not accusing you of what you are not. He knows you are like that that is why he is accusing you.

The devil is clever, he'll never tell lies about us, when he says you are jealous he means it, he sees you when you are jealous, but he makes terrific exaggerations. He says it is impossible, your case is out of control you have gone beyond the line. He is a liar. Let us encourage you tonight.

You stand an object of mercy. This woman, if she goes home everything she says is about how she met him and how she was pronounced free. Do you know that that is a wonderful God? How many people today in America need that God? How many people walk the streets, the paths, the roads, and in the nooks they stand alone, some leaning against houses tears running down thier cheeks with consciences almost broken down. What do they need? They need this gracious message, the gospel. They need this gospel of Jesus Christ. Oh, how sweet the songs, when a soul condemned by sin, guilty and ashamed of itself, when they hear those words go home, because I took it all for you.

Jeremiah chapter 50:33. Jeremiah was a prophet who prophesied in difficult times and he had a rough go for that matter, and he writes to God's people. 'If

Thus says the Lord God of Hosts, 'the children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together.

Oh, that word, that terrible English word 'oppressed'. Oh how the devil enjoys sitting on a pedestal and oppresses the consciences of God's people. Even when the gospel is being preached all that a person hears is nothing but accusations. The Spirit comes and says 'yes that is your sin,' and the devil starts there. He accuses you a hundred times more. Oppressed together is the right word to use. Homes oppressed together, husbands and wives oppressed together, church goers oppressed together, elders oppressed together, pastors oppressed together, children and parents oppressed together. Workers for God oppressed together.

*Devil's
Oppression*

This oppression comes from within. And he said, 'All that took them captive held them fast. They refused to let them go.' They determinedly refused, they tenaciously held on and refused to let them go, and this causes a struggle, do you know that struggle? When you struggle to let yourself loose from the habit and it refuses to go, it hangs on, it tenaciously holds on and many young Christians have given up the battle, thinking that they can't do it, it hangs on, they repent but it comes back and holds on, and they say, 'oh yes these wonderful, experienced Christians who go to the pulpit and say victory, victory, I wish they could come down from the pulpit and tell me exactly what they mean, because I have tried and tried and failed.'

These wonderful Christians, they don't understand and it is true. Many holding the Scriptures don't understand. You take a text from the Scriptures and it just goes by you without leaving a message. You give the impression

that you just press the button and you wonder up into the air. It's not all that easy, we are struggling in problems. We have a nagging devil following us around. We are realistic men and women.

Yet the prophet says, 'they hold on, they refuse to let us go until.. ' Verse thirty four, let us look at that. If we were to leave the battle there it would be a completely hopeless battle, you would simply strike and fail, strike again and fail until you try to make yourself believe it, and that is not what we are meant to live. We are not meant to live the sort of make-yourself believe it life. If it is like that then the cross of Jesus Christ has no meaning for me. No, we are meant to live a realistic life, a life made possible not through my knowledge, not through what I am, not through what I can be, but made possible through the miracle of the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary for me.

Strong Redeemer

~~Verse 34.~~ ^{But} Thier redeemer is strong. The Lord of hosts is his name. He shall thoroughly plead thier cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.

Put it on John 8 and see him standing, this strong redeemer, pleading the case of this poor woman thoroughly from A-Z, and give the rest to the land of the conscience of that woman and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon, they all went out one by one, made uncomfortable, but the lady's land of conscience was made at rest.

He has, at a place called Calvary my redeemer went. He took my case into his gracious hands. Oh, what a pleader. Follow him in Gethsemane and as he sweat that terrible blood, drinking the dirty cup of my transgressions and its judgement. He nearly wrung his heart so that he was bleeding sweat. Ask him, "Lord Jesus what are you doing here alone in the garden? Why perspirations of blood?" And the answer will be, "I am thoroughly pleading her cause. I have

taken on a difficult case. A case beyond remedy, angels cannot look into it as they shudder, so I have taken it upon myself to plead her case."

Follow him on, see him bound with his arms behind him. He looks guilty doesn't he, see his bruised face, he looks very guilty, in fact there is nothing to desire him says prophet Isaiah. There is no beauty, he has lost his beauty, he doesn't look like the fairest Lord Jesus, all the fairness seem to have gone. Why does he look like this?

I am thoroughly pleading his case. A difficult case. Then he goes all the way, not half-way. I love the way it is put here, 'He has thoroughly pleaded thier cause.' Not half but thoroughly, every corner, every point, when he takes a sinner's case he doesn't leave any corners unpleaded for. Nothing is left, its guilt, its condemnation, its cause, all the points. And as you see him standing before Pilate pleading nothing, and Pilate asks him questions and he nevers answers. He couldn't answer, what would he answer? Guilty, yes indeed.

In Cor 5:20 it says, 'God was literally in Christ Jesus, taking upon himself the sins. What a God. What a pleader. What an advocate. Can't you drop your case into his hands? No matter what it is, those old habits, those lingering guilty consciences. Can't you drop them into those wonderful hands?

Guilty Peter, that evening when the cock crowed, he turned and Jesus looked at Peter, and the look preached a sermon. And Peter saw in the eyes of Jeus what he couldn't explain except by weeping. That hard stout fisherman. You could spend all your life trying to make Peter weep and you would never succeed. A rough sailor, never will you get a tear from Peter's eye, but the look of Jesus did it, and later on when he was elderly, in his first letter, chapter 2, verse 24, he says that when he was accused and abused he wasn't frightened. He was innocent, guileless, guiltless, he stood there a

Advocate

spectacle. He pleaded my case.

Peter says, 'He himself in his ~~own~~ body bore the burdens of my sin and took them to Calvary.' Do you know where Peter learnt that lesson? At Calvary that evening, Peter saw that in the body of his dear Lord Jesus, he had actually carried the burdens, the guilt, the shame in his body, and he took it to Calvary and he pleaded Peter's case thoroughly. That is why Peter preached a sermon on Pentecost. Grace had prevailed. It is a wonderful thing to see him pleading. It is a wonderful thing to see him at Calvary taking your case pleading it thoroughly through and through. It doesn't matter how much you are guilty, if only you can take whatever it is, however sticky it is, the sin or the habit, take it to Jesus Christ, hand it over to him and let him plead it thoroughly for you.

Just take your hands off it and simply say to the Lord Jesus, 'Here I am, I am guilty, I am a defeated Christian, habit has overcome me, I try to love others but I can't. I hate them. Oh, Lord Jesus take it up.' And he will thoroughly tonight, as he stands before his father, presenting not your righteousness because when he pleads for me he doesn't say, what a wonderful chap Festo is. He never does that, he simply tells me I am guilty from A-Z, and then he says, 'Give it to me.' He then takes it up, and what I can never produce he produces, what I can never do he does, and what it beyond me is within his reach, and tonight I'd like to say, praise the Lord for that gospel. It is for you, it is for me, it is for your home. Do you know grace?

Grace is Jesus. Do you know what makes a man rejoice? Not the standard of righteousness which you have reached, all your righteousness is just filthy rags. You can't rejoice in that. What makes a saint rejoice is the finished work of Jesus Christ for him. What is a gospel? What makes a testimony sweet? Not what you put into it but what Jesus did for you and for me.

What refreshes a minister of the gospel? Not what he produces in his sermons but what Jesus does for that poor minister. What helps a church like this to rejoice? Not because it is full of wonderful saints who never commit a sin. Where are you going to get them? These wonderful people who lead consistent Christian lives from A-Z. Where are they? Are they in this church? It would be a wonderful church. Sometimes I don't think it would be wonderful, I doubt that it could be. You would all be angels, you would not be men, but I think you are men and women here not angels. You are in need of the touch of Jesus pleading for you tonight.

You have got things which make you uncomfortable at times. What do you do about them? You need to see the Lord Jesus pleading, covering, knitting, forgiving, then you turn around and say, 'Amazing grace, oh how sweet.'

You are not only to say this when you believed twenty-five years ago, that is a long story. That is too old a story to give your heart any rejoicing, and tonight remember that and praise God for that wonderful beginning, the day which fixed my choice on my Saviour and Lord. We are told not to forget it. In fact I don't think you can forget it, unless you forget yourself, but that is not enough.

It is immediate grace in the circumstances of your life. It is to see Jesus Christ sufficient for you today, for the sin which interrupted your communion, which broke your fellowship. It is that wonderful Jesus you need tonight. It is grace. It was grace for that woman, it is grace for and it is grace for me. Perhaps you are saying to yourself that it was very good for that poor lady, are we any better brethren? Don't you know that your thoughts have dethroned your master, have wounded him? For every sin that you have committed, and for every new sin you commit fresh wounds are inflicted on our Lord, and there is nothing which can meet it except the blood of the beloved Son of God.

Grace

The perfect, the precious, the all-sufficient blood of the Lord Jesus, and he has nothing to present to your father except that he finished your case. That was his final cry at Calvary, as he looked at the guilty world and as he looked at the dying people beside him and around him, and guilty Peter down below he was somewhere in the corner, and he said, "It is finished Peter, it is finished thou dying thief, your case is through you can go home and rejoice."

That is what he said to me twenty one years ago, but let me tell you the sweetest of all and that is what he has been telling me day by day in my little home, and I can't tell you, It is a gospel whenever I hear that whisper, 'It is finished.' 'That conflict between you and your wife this morning, it is finished, because I atoned for it.' 'That misunderstanding between you and your brother, it is finished now, as you look at me at Calvary you see me there with your case on my shoulder, you see me say to my father, yes he is guilty poor chap, but I took up the case for him. Forgive him, and it is done.'