

Experiencing Our Position

I want to start this morning in the fourth chapter of Hebrews.

One of the songs we sang this morning was “Let your power fall on me, precious Jesus.” It brought to mind a scripture where Paul said, “There were things that I gloried in that were gain for me, but I count those as loss and I glory rather in my afflictions that the power of Christ might rest upon me.” At the epic moment of Jesus’s life, just before he went to the cross, we have an insight into his prayer life, and he was in supplication to his Father out of great need. The power that Jesus had was not something inherent within himself, but it was the measure of his dependency upon Omnipotence. As strong as we might be, compared to God, when Isaiah saw the Lord, high and lifted up, his immediate response was, “Woe is me! I am undone!” The capacity that I thought I had... I mean, “undone” indicates I thought I was “tied,” but now I’m undone. I thought I was capable, but when I see His majesty, I recognize that this is going to take far more than my capacity to finish.

Hebrews 4 :2, “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” This is talking about the children of Israel in the wilderness – that although their provisioning was outrageous, they were in the wilderness because God had, through His power, brought them out. Never mind the preparation of the man for forty years before he stood before Pharaoh and said, “Let my people go,” but the events ensuing that are the ten plagues. Then, even further, the provisioning that as they left, it seems like the streets were lined with Egyptians saying, “Here, take this. Take this. Take this!” They were slaves; they were poor, and yet God had in mind that they would build the temple with silver and gold and brass and fine linen. They had to somehow gain these provisions and they were not going to get them in a store in the wilderness. Part of the definition of the wilderness was that it was uninhabitable land; that the scorpions dwelt there but no man dwelt there. They did not have the problem or the conflict of the Promised Land, trying to get the inhabitants to move over and give them room. They had a whole wilderness; it was theirs. Nobody else wanted it. The provisioning of God was not only to sustain them but to provision them with what they could offer so that the tabernacle of Moses could even be built. It was just given to them as they left Egypt. People were so glad to get rid of them. Somehow, God moved on their hearts to give them the

things that would later become the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat.

But the word that they heard, although it brought them out of captivity, although it brought them into a form of liberty from that captivity, it did not profit them. It seemed like there was a lot of profit. They built a tabernacle that someone could probably tell us the actual value of the materials in today's economy that were used to construct the tabernacle - to build a mercy seat and cherubim with wings just out of pure gold, a candlestick of pure gold. That is not even talking about the value of the other things that were represented there. Just the weight of the gold itself was significant. I think it would likely be in the millions of dollars. It seemed like there was a lot of profit.

But it says that the word that they heard did not profit them. They were provisioned by a rock that followed them, spewing water. Is that silly to anybody else? If you are thirsty, it is not silly, but a rock followed them. A pet, a puppy, I get that; but a rock? The rock followed spewing water – sufficient to water an estimated up to two million people and then their flocks and cattle. How much water had to come out per minute of this rock that was not connected to anything and followed them? It's outrageous! And that's just the water. Picking up food off the ground. Their raiment did not wear out; they did not have a clothing bank. Apparently, the kids that came out, because there were those under twenty still growing, and their clothes accommodated their growth. No patching, no darning, no.... outrageous provisioning!

But it said it did not profit them. I was thinking, "Why not? It seemed to be great profit." They lived a lifestyle of drinking water from sources that they did not have to dig. They ate food from a source they did not have to plant; and more importantly, they did not have to weed. They did not have to can, freeze, blanch – they just picked it up and ate it. But the word did not profit them. I do not get it. It seems like they were in great profit. They were not slaves. They got to worship God. They had a law whereby their sins could be forgiven unless they picked one of the bad two. (Pick your sins wisely!) If you committed murder or adultery, there was no lamb that atoned for that under the law. You had to die, but if you just did the lying, stealing, you know, those other not-so-bad sins, you could get those sins forgiven. The first covenant had a glory, but it did not profit them. There was no gain for them, and the context of the no gain was that it said that they died while provisioned by a miracle. The profit would have been not just food and water that would sustain their existence but a relationship with the God of the provision that

would actually bring them to a life, whereby they could enter into the promise – not just leave the prison but enter into the promise.

We see for a long time in Christian teaching and in the development of Christian thought, all of which we have experienced, that there are truths in the scripture that are positional truths. “Now are we the sons of God” – position, even though it does not yet appear, even though we do not look like that yet. Could we rephrase, and would that be OK? We have a position that we are sons of God even though we are not yet by experience what we are. So, we are the sons but there is still work to be done in order to experience the full aspect of what we have been given advantage of.

This is the children of Israel in the wilderness. They were given a great opportunity to have a relationship with God and many testimonies to His capacity to provide for them, but it says the problem that they had was that the word that they heard or the things that provisioned them... What was the gospel that was preached to them? I am your provision; I am your shield and I am your support. I am your comfort; I will sustain you in a life without you having to work for it. The problem was that the word and the gospel that they heard – picking up manna off the ground, drinking of a rock without drilling a well, their clothes not wearing out, the divine inspiration of the leadership of God in the midst of a pillar of cloud and fire; yet, they did not mix the provision they had with faith. It was not mixed with faith in them. It was a provision to them; it was what God did for them, but they would not allow Him to do in them. They drew nigh with their lips, but their hearts they held far from Him. They did not mix the word that they heard with trust in the One who spoke.

They believed that the manna would be there the next day. I am sure there were those who tried to pick up the food on Monday for Tuesday and Wednesday, and that did not work. It was a learning process. They believed that if the sun came up the next day, there was going to be manna on the ground, and if they picked it up, they would have food to eat. However, they were not changed because they never brought their hearts to Him. They never subjected themselves to the One who was providing for them in their natural existence to bring them into the fulfillment of His purpose, which was not just to sustain their natural lives. It was bringing them to the expression of the purpose for which He brought them into the land that was called the “wilderness.”

What do I look for in terms of my accountability to the word that God has preached to me? What is my relationship with the God of the message? The issue is not

“what is my understanding of the message itself,” but what is the characteristic of my relationship with the God who has spoken?

When the children of Israel received the law and Moses was going up, the mountain shook and there was rumbling and clouds and flashes of lightning. He said, “Come on! Let’s go. Let’s go up and see God and see what He has to say to us.” All of a sudden now, the Moses, who was ‘taking too much on himself’ when they came out of Egypt, all of the sudden was now their emissary. – Isn’t that funny? When we are in competition with leadership concerning will, we say, “They are taking too much on themselves;” but when there is something fearful involved, “You go; you hear what He says and come back and tell us.” It seems I am always interested in saving my life. – What was their accountability? “You go; you hear what God says and all that you say He says (we will trust that you will tell us what He said), we are going to do it. We are going to obey. Everything that you say He said, we are going to obey.” That is what they said. They were anchoring themselves in a performance of the word of God. As if! As if we can do the works of God.

Even Jesus said – after he came out of the wilderness making Satan blink – “I can of myself do nothing. The work you see me do, it is not my work. It is the Father that works in me.” These are in red letters in my Bible. This is Jesus’s testimony about his own capacity. Yet the Israelites in the wilderness, while holding themselves unaccountable to the God of promise, said, “All that He said, we will do.” The arrogance. The presumption. The ignorance. As if we can do the will of God. Jesus taught a parable concerning this using branches and vines. He said, “If you abide in me, and my word abides in you, you will ask what you will (as a result of abiding, you can ask whatever is there by abiding), and it will be done unto you.” It is still God who has to work. The presumption that we can do the will of God is an arrogance. “All that He has said shall we do.”

So, the word that they heard was not mixed with faith; it was mixed with performance. It was not mixed with trust. What did they end up with? They held to the law of Moses, the performance of the rituals. When Jesus came he said, “You have, through your traditions, destroyed and made void the power of God because you are working.” Yet a fully mature Son, within thirty-six hours of hanging on a tree for the sins of the world said, “Not my will.” He was not resourced in himself. This was not Christ doing a favor for God. The scriptures say that it was God in Christ reconciling. Therefore, will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon me; for when I am weak, His strength is perfected. This does not mean that He gets better at His strength if I humble myself. It just means that His

strength can be demonstrated through the work that He accomplishes in me as a testimony to the world of His capacity. This is a greater miracle.

Through whom and at what time has there ever been an expression of the power of God greater than what was exhibited through the ministry of Moses? I am talking about impact on the world – visible, tangible events. Ten plagues – and that is skipping past the whole hand in the bosom / leper, hand back in the bosom / clean, pouring water on the ground and it hits the ground as blood, throwing his staff on the ground and it's a serpent, picking it up and it's a staff again. Not even counting those three things – the ten plagues, the opening of the Red Sea, the provision for their safety and the same provision of their safety was the destruction of the Egyptian army. I mean, some majestic, unbelievable things!

But what God wants to do in us is so far greater than any outward testimony will ever be or has ever been. It is the fulfilment of the purpose and intent which He had from the beginning. It is the reason for which He created – that His name might be magnified. How is His name magnified by my work? Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” We know that one of the commandments that he gave to the disciples was “Love one another even as I have loved you. And the greatest of the commandments is Thou shalt love the Lord thy God and thy brother as thyself.” However, what were his commandments? I am not saying what did he give the disciples as commandments, but what was his testimony that “I have a command that I have received from my Father?” He told us. He said, “This is my commandment from God. This is what I live by.” He taught them in many other ways, but this scripture is very specific and it says, “I lay my life down and I take my life up again. This commandment have I received from my Father.”

If we want insight into the working of the life of Christ, we ought to take his testimony as evidence. If he had to live by laying his life down, we might consider that not being provisioned by the miracles for the sustaining of our existence but an evidence of mixing the word with faith would be to engage with his commandment. Did he not teach them and say, “If any man would seek to save his life, he'll lose it? If any man will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, he will find his true life and then life eternal.” We have to mix what we have heard, not with a confidence that we know, but with trust that the One who has spoken to us is the One who must perform it.

If I abide in him and he abides in me that will cause me to be “done to” not just “done for.” I need to be “done to.” I have been “done for.” There was a

substitutionary sacrifice that was offered for sin one time for all sin for all time – comprehensive. Wholesale. We have all benefited by that if we are born again, and we have imputed to us a standing before God that is called righteousness. That righteousness is ours without works – or we could say, regardless of works – because it is built on our sins not being imputed to us. Two blessings. First blessing – no imputed sin. Second blessing – imputed righteousness without works. This is a foundation that cannot be shaken. If you find that you are being shaken by your experience, fall back to imputation because it is there. He has extended it and He will not take it back.

We are the sons of God, whether it appears that we are what we are or whether it does not appear that we are what we are. We are. If we are going to be presumptuous, let's be presumptuous about taking ownership of what He says we are rather than be presumptuous that we can do.

The context of obedience in the Spirit is not the same frame of obedience in the natural. I had children; you had children; you see children. I was in a super market. You may not be on the exact same path of somebody if you are on alternate aisles, so you go down this aisle and somebody passes you coming up this way, then you go and pass again ... You can see the same people five or six times in the course of shopping. There was a baby screaming somewhere in the store. About the third time I passed this man, he said, "I want to slap that kid!" I said, "I want to slap that momma." The training of a child is "Do what I say." You train up a child to do, but God is not training us up to do. He is training us up to trust.

Obedience in the Spirit is not the same context of applying the word obedience in the natural. To obey what you hear is a natural performance; to trust what you hear is a spiritual obedience. We have a redefinition working here. We see in Hebrews, "Today, if you hear His voice... do what He says...." We all know it is in the Bible, right? No, it does not say that. "Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your heart." The children of Israel in the wilderness approached Him with their lips. What was their lips approaching God? "All that He has said will we do," but they "never brought their hearts subject to Me, in order to bring forth in them the capacity to perform." It is God – Philippians 2:13 – It is God who works in you both, first, to will... Wow! Have you ever found some unwillingness when the Spirit moves you?

The context of our arrogance is thinking that without humbling ourselves we can partake of grace beyond measure, that without an acknowledgement of our incapacity we can partake of the provision of God for more than sustaining our

existence. I really do not want to just to be provisioned for an existence. I have found that this world is not what it's cracked up to be. Solomon told me that years ago, but I did not see it as clearly as the way he was saying it.

Peter said, "There are a lot of things that Paul talks about that I'm not sure I understand; it is difficult to apprehend, but I do know this, suffice the time in our lives up until now to have lived to fulfil our own desire. Could we consider together living the balance of our life unto the will of God and recognize that if there is any opportunity we have to fulfill what He has called us to, it's going to be what He does to and in us, not just taking advantage of what He has done for us?"

We certainly have been provisioned in a position. Positional truth –this is something that still sponsors on-going debates in the church. We can think of phrases of positional truth: All things that pertain to life and godliness have been provided and given unto us; We are seated together with Him in heavenly places; We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Those things are true, but they are a position. They have been imputed to us because of what was done for us. But how about when it says that we should reign in life by Him? Reign in life, govern over this natural world as a result of His life in us so that there is now no more sin, so that we can get past the limitation of sin and begin to be invested in fulfilling the purpose for which that life was birthed in us.

Having our sins forgiven is where we start. Isn't that right? Jesus taught a parable on this issue. He said there was a rich man going into a far country and he gave three servants three different amounts of silver. Upon his return, he went to each of the servants and he wanted what was his. We know the first two servants said, "This is thine and here is what is gain for you." The third servant said, "I knew that you expected to reap where you had not sown, and I was afraid to lose what you gave me." So, he gave him back what he had been given when the master left. We know the end of the story, that of the three servants, he was accounted a "wicked servant." I take that to apply to me. I have been given something that has been given to me and imputed to me on the basis of what another man did for me. My sins are forgiven. The ones I did yesterday, the ones I might do next week; they are forgiven. There is no other sacrifice that is going to be offered for those. They are actually not black anymore; they are red. They are already dipped in the blood of the Lamb. God argued with Israel about this. "Though your sins be as scarlet..." And they said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa! You are getting ahead of yourself here. We know sins, and they are bad. We color them black." He said, "No, they are red."

I have been given a provision; I have been given a standing before the One who has created all things. As a result of that righteousness, I have an opportunity to trust the God who is giving the preaching, not just to hear the preaching but to trust that He will come in behind what I hear because I trust Him. He will build in me the existence and the life and the fashioning of that which He has spoken of so that the gospel is fulfilled which John wrote in his epistle, “Now are we the sons of God” and we look exactly like we were called to be. There are scriptures that have to pass in our rear-view mirror. They cannot be held in tension eternally. Are we OK with that? That we would actually fulfill the scriptures so that they are not relevant to us anymore. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and we do not yet appear....” But now we do appear.... That we fulfill that description, that we go past the framing of the letter of the word by the life that the word is talking about being worked in us through the Spirit. It is not through strength; it is not through knowledge. It is mixing the word with trust – not trust that God is going to but a personal anticipation that this is going to happen here, in me.

There are a couple aspects of holding ourselves accountable to this orientation. One is that we do not try to do what we hear. If we are still bound by the concept of obedience being that we do what we hear, we are not moving in a Spiritual frame. Obedience is trusting Him to do in us what He has spoken. Humble yourself before the mighty hand of God and He will lift you up when He is finished. The other aspect is to stop hanging out and lurking and lollygagging in this mentality of condemnation. If we fail, what is the testimony of our failure? That we were too weak? Or too strong? Too strong. For when I am weak, then is His strength made perfect. It is not that He gets better at what He is doing; His strength is made perfect in my experience. He can move in the greatest measure of grace in my life when I am humble.

There is only one of the parables that the disciples ever got right and did not have to have it explained to them. It was the one where Jesus said that there were two men in the market place. One had his thumbs under his suspenders looking down at the crowd saying, “Boy, I wish they were all as wonderful as I am.” The other was on his face, had torn his clothes, was throwing dust on his head crying out, “Oh, God, have mercy upon me a sinner.” Jesus asked them and said – this is a parable; they did not actually see this happening; he was telling a story, a parable; it was not announced as a parable, but it was a parable, nonetheless – They said, “We think the one who went home justified was the one who was on his face, depending on mercy not performance. And the one who did not go home justified

was the one who trusted in performance as being better.” Jesus said, “You have rightly discerned. This is good. I can leave now; you finally got one right.”

Hebrews 4:3, “For we which have believed” – do enter into a frenzied activity trying to perform and pull this off. Have we not in Thy name laid hands on thousands, hoping we would get one healed, so we would have some jewels in our crown when we get to heaven? – Entering into a trust of rest, a rest of trust, ceasing from our own works, joining Him in Christ. You all know that the rest of God is Christ. It talks about it as the seventh day, entering into the seventh day wherein God ceased from all that He had done, which was create. We all know what God did do on the seventh day. He “rested from” at the end of the sixth day, but on the seventh day it says He blessed and sanctified. I need to be blessed; I need to be made holy. I need the ongoing work of the Spirit of God, the circumcision of my heart without hands, not just the forgiveness of sin.

We heard in the prophecy, “I’m getting under the covers on this one. I’m not dealing with performance. Your performance is solved. If your performance is still your problem, it is an indication that your heart is not subjected to his working. Stop trying to control the appearance. Present your heart.” My inadequacy – John Cheever’s inadequacy today, as I stand before you – is not framed by what I do that is wrong. To me, it is not framed by that, and I am not saying by that I do everything right. We have testimony in here; I am sure there are ones who could stand up. But my need is framed in that I am not doing what He has called some to do, to manifest His name and fulfill what Jesus said to his disciples – and through them, as joint-heirs to us – that “the same works that I do shall ye do and greater.” The manifestation of Jesus did not deliver creation from the bondage of corruption. It was afterwards written in Romans 8, after Jesus died and ascended that they are going to be delivered from their bondage at the manifestation of the sons of God. That is my frame. That is my inadequacy. That is my presentation. It is not for what I do that is wrong; but it is for what I do not do that I am called to. There is my real need.

If you do what you are called to, you are not going to have time to do what you are not supposed to. You can try to resist what you are not supposed to do as a life obsession and fail horribly! Has anybody been successful with “I’m not going to do that again”? I do not mean just casually. I mean really, sincerely, maybe even speak in tongues while you are thinking it, “I’m not going to do this again.” Does it work? We have to be changed as what we are before we are going to manifest what we aren’t, yet.

The caution that we are given, and the place where we stand before God is that we have had the gospel preached to us. That is unquestionable. You would be amazed if somebody stood up and started a verse how many of us could finish the verse just based on the first four words of the verse being mentioned. We have had the gospel preached to us. The judgment is are we going to mix that which we have heard with trust. It is an obvious testimony from this fourth chapter that we can be provisioned by a miraculous intervention and upholding by the power of God. We can drink of Christ – that was the rock that followed them; we can receive the manna that fell from heaven when Jesus said, “I am the true bread, not as your fathers did eat in the wilderness and died. I am the true bread.” We have been provisioned in a more miraculous way than the manifestation of the power of God in the physical world thousands of years ago. The miracles we do not see are greater than the miracles that were seen, and the provisioning of what is provided miraculously has more capacity than the provision of just drinking water and eating manna so they would not die by Friday. They lived for forty years, sustained miraculously, and the best they could harvest out of that provision was death because they never humbled their hearts and mixed with faith the gospel that was preached.

I have an extremely high expectation for life. I actually am believing, and not just because it’s a doctrine (I don’t know if there is a way to convey this.), but I have a personal anticipation toward God that I am going to be clothed upon as opposed to the alternative of being unclothed first and then being clothed upon. The translation of that is: I hope. I am trusting. I believe in a personal experience that I am not going to come to a glorified body after physical death. I have a very high expectation in this life, but there is no capacity to even touch the hem of that anticipation without presenting myself to the work of God on a daily basis to form in me the reality of the gospel that has been preached to me. And it says it is by mixing with faith what we hear.

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