

'He has done something for me'. Bethesda meditation. 14 February 2010.

As many of you know, the Covenanters were 17th-century Scottish Presbyterians who opposed the interference by kings in the affairs of their church. When King Charles I decreed that he was head of the church and introduced the Book of Common Prayer to Scotland, those who refused to accept his claim signed a 'Covenant' to the effect that the only head of the church was the Lord Jesus. In so doing, they exposed themselves to fierce persecution – to suffering, torture, imprisonment and even death.¹

In one of his many books, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones speaks of 'a comparatively young' Christian girl who lived during that period. 'She was', he says (and I quote), 'going to attend a Communion Service held by the Covenanters on a Sunday afternoon ... the soldiers of the King of England were looking everywhere for people who were going to meet together to partake in this Communion Service, and as this girl turned a corner on her way she came face to face with a band of soldiers ... she knew that she was trapped. For a moment she wondered what she was going to say, but immediately on being questioned', in the good Doctor's words, 'she found herself answering: "My Elder Brother has died and they are going to read His will this afternoon ... He has done something for me and has left something for me, and I want to hear them read the will". And', Dr. Lloyd-Jones reports, 'they allowed her to go on'.²

Although I do not endorse this young girl's description of our Lord as 'My Elder Brother', I have to say that I am impressed, not only by the wisdom with which she answered, but by what she said concerning the Saviour: '**He has done something for me** and **has left something for me**'.

Certainly, when our Lord went back to heaven, He '**left something**' for us. Indeed, He left many things. For instance, as David Colman reminded us four weeks ago, according to the closing section of John 14, He left His peace for His disciples. 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you', were His words.³ In Psalm 17, King David wrote of 'the men of this world who have their portion in this life ... who *leave* the rest of their substance to their children'. And when Jesus said, 'Peace *I leave* with you', He used the same word as the Greek Old Testament did in Psalm 17. Jesus spoke then as if this was, in effect, His last will and testament. He had no earthly possessions to leave His disciples – no property, investments or wealth. But the legacy which He bequeathed to them (and to us) was of far greater value. It was His very own peace.

But not only that. He also left behind His example. In part this was, according to the apostle Peter, an example of patient suffering. 'Christ also suffered for us', Peter wrote, 'leaving us *an example*, that you should follow His steps ... who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten'.⁴ But the Lord left an example also, as Peter remembered well, of selfless humility. I refer to the incident in the Upper Room when the Saviour girded Himself with a towel (or slave's apron) and proceeded to wash His disciples' feet. 'I have given you an example', He said at the time, 'that you should do as I have done to you'.⁵

Again, it is no doubt true to say, as Melody Green suggests in the chorus of the hymn we have just sung, that He also left us the Holy Spirit.

But I want to focus, not so much on the young woman's words 'He ... has left something for me', but on her previous expression, '**He has done something for me**'. And that He unquestionably has – or we wouldn't be here this morning.

Scripture speaks much of the things which He *did* when here in the world. Wherever we follow His steps – whether to Sychar's well, to Gadara's tombs, to Bethesda's porches, or indeed anywhere – we find that, as the apostle Peter assured Cornelius in Acts 10, 'He went about (He passed through) *doing* good'. And we recall the words of the exceedingly astonished men by the Sea of Galilee after our Lord healed the deaf man with a speech impediment, 'He has *done* all things well'.⁶ So that, if Peter underscores what the Saviour did, namely 'good', Mark underscores how He did it, namely 'well'.

But we know that, in speaking of those things which Jesus did, the gospel accounts only scratch the surface. As the apostle John acknowledged in the very last words of his gospel, 'there are also many other things that Jesus *did*, which if they were written everyone, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written'.⁷

But, although we *don't* know all the things He *did*, we *do* know one thing He *never did*. For, with his eye on Isaiah 53, Peter said of Him in 1 Peter 2, 'who *did* no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth'.⁸ I have read that when Apelles, a famous Greek artist of the 4th century B.C., painted a portrait of Alexander the Great, he laid the Macedonian King's finger over an unsightly scar. But, thank God, there are no blemishes to conceal when beholding the face of our Lord Jesus Christ!⁹

We know, of course, that ultimately the Lord Jesus did all things in fulfilment of His Father's will, and for His Father's glory. 'I *do* always those things that please Him', were His words.¹⁰ It was, as He said, 'My food ... to *do* the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work'.¹¹

And yet it thrills our souls to consider the words of the brave Scottish lass, '***He has done something for me***'.

I suspect that the minds of most of us have already leapt to the end of Galatians 2, where Paul wrote of 'the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me'.¹² 'Loved *me*', he was saying, 'arch-persecutor of the church though I was,¹³ and that with a love which knows neither bottom nor brim'. What a Saviour is this! ... who, I can say with Paul, cared less for '*Himself*' than He did for '*me*' – who would rather *die* on a cross *for me* than *live* in heaven *without me*!

'... ***done something for me***'? Some understatement that!

Listen to the words of 1 John 3 verse 16, 'By this we know love, because He laid down His life *for us*' – 'He laid down His life on our behalf – in our interests', that is. But this not only 'on our behalf'. Listen to His own well-known words in Mark 10, 'the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom *for many*'¹⁴ – 'to give His life a ransom', that is, '*instead of many*, in the place of many'. Well do we sing concerning the 'Man of Sorrows', 'Bearing shame and scoffing rude, *in my place* condemned He stood'.

'He has done *something for me*'. Oh yes ... 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law', we read in Galatians 3, 'having become a curse *for us*'. For *He* became what *He* was not that *I* might become what *I* was not.¹⁵

Oh yes, He most certainly 'has done *something for me*'.

Twice over in his first letter Peter said, 'Christ suffered *for us*'¹⁶ And what a price He paid!

'Oh, to see the pain', we sometimes sing, 'written on your face, bearing the awesome weight of sin'.¹⁷

'Done something *for me*', did the young Presbyterian girl say?

Yes indeed. And, thinking of our purpose in being here this morning, we can do no better than 'ponder anew'¹⁸ our Lord's own words as recorded by Luke ... 'He took bread', Luke says, 'gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given *for you*" ... Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed *for you*". 'Given *for you* ... shed *for you*'. Truly, in the words of hymn 640 in our Praise! book, our 'places at this feast were *dearly bought*'!

The brave Presbyterian girl certainly had it right ... 'He *has done something for me*'.

And I can safely leave the last word with the returning exile who wrote Psalm 126, 'The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad'.¹⁹

Footnotes

¹ The Covenanters were those in Scotland who signed the National Covenant in 1638 to confirm their opposition to the interference by the Stuart kings in the affairs of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The Stuart kings harboured the belief of the Divine Right of the Monarch. Not only did they believe that God wished them to be the infallible rulers of their kingdom; they also believed that they were the spiritual heads of the Church of Scotland. This was the nub of the entire Covenanting struggle. The Scots were, and would have been, loyal to the Stuart dynasty but for that one sticking point, and from 1638, when the Covenant was signed, until the Glorious Revolution - when Prince William of Orange made a bloodless invasion of Great Britain in 1688 - a great deal of suffering, torture, imprisonment, transportation and executions ensued.

² D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 104–105.

³ John 14. 27.

⁴ 1 Pet. 2. 21-23.

⁵ John 13. 15.

⁶ Mark 7. 37. Which inspired the close of the first verse of Fannie Crosby's hymn, 'All the way my Saviour leads me': 'For I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well'.

⁷ John 21. 25.

⁸ 1 Pet. 2. 22.

⁹ Based on C. H. Spurgeon's comment in his sermon 'Altogether Lovely', preached on 23rd July 1871: 'When Apelles painted Alexander, he laid the monarch's finger on an unsightly scar; but there are no scars to conceal when you portray the countenance of Immanuel'.

¹⁰ John 8. 29.

¹¹ John 4. 34; cf. John 17. 4.

¹² Gal. 2. 20.

¹³ Gal. 1. 13.

¹⁴ Mark 10. 45.

¹⁵ Based on something Martin Luther once wrote to a friend: 'Learn to know Christ and Him crucified. Learn to sing to Him ... "You became what you were not, so that I might become what I was not"'. From ... www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/a/atonement.htm

¹⁶ 1 Pet. 2. 21; 4. 1.

¹⁷ 'The Power of the Cross', Stuart Townend and Keith Getty.

¹⁸ An allusion to the fourth verse of Joachim Neander's hymn 'Praise to the Lord, the Almighty':

'Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee.

Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
If with His love He befriend thee'.

¹⁹ Psalm 126. 3.