

A Mighty Fortress

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IS OUR GOD

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“Thank you oh my father for giving us your Son”

By Joe Graber

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Psalm 2

This Christmas season, we should take some time to meditate on why we are thankful and grateful to God and how we express our thankfulness and gratitude. This passage in the Psalms is a fascinating passage which gets to the heart of our thanks before God, both why we are thankful and how we express our thanks to God. We will look at our Thanksgiving before God via Psalm 2:12.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Psalm 2:12

This verse is located at the end of a chapter which is both a stern warning and a wonderful promise. We are told that the rages of the heathen, the devices and imaginations of men who exult themselves against God are nothing. God laughs at them in derision. He will destroy His enemies with literally no effort whatsoever. We are then told that God's people don't have to fret or worry about their earthly possessions or worry about those who plot evil against them. There is a two fold message: One of terror and one of comfort: Terror to those who exult themselves against God and comfort to His children. Even this very verse tells us to kiss the son for two reasons: First, so that we will not perish under His anger. Second, so that we will be blessed.

Submission

We kiss the Son for two reasons which are not really that similar but which are not opposed to one another. We kiss the Son out of (1) submission and out of (2) love. These are quite different, but this scripture brings them together.

We kiss the Son out of humble submission. The idea here is that we are ushered in before the almighty ruler over heaven and earth, and we kneel before Him. We tread softly into the majestic throne room with it's long, narrow approach to God. On the sides are the angels, martyrs, and others who have gone before us, as we draw near our Lord. He holds out His hand and we kiss the ring.

This is something we can all understand. It is an act which recognizes this king's authority, His power, his might. It also is a public declaration that we are placing ourselves under his authority and under his care. As we kiss the Son, we are declaring his glory, his power, his authority over not only our lives but the whole earth, and we are at the same time submitting ourselves to that authority.

Unworthy Partakers

The sense that we get isn't just the sense of a subject coming before the king, but it is actually the sense of a criminal who is guilty of the most treasonous crimes worthy of death, and we are begging clemency. Remember that we are all sinners. We were born in sin and conceived in iniquity as David said in these

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very Psalms. We have treasonously exulted ourselves as judge above our benevolent king as we sought to do things our way. We have looked to the one who has given us all we have and who even wills our existence, and we have nonchalantly brushed him aside as we have done whatever we have pleased. In a most insulting manner, we may have even thanked our God and King for his benevolence as we thumbed our noses at his law and proceeded to set ourselves as the ultimate judge of right and wrong. We have all broken God's law word in a most despicable manner, and we kiss the Son as we throw ourselves at His feet in a state of hopelessness knowing that we deserve death. It is only by His grace that some of us are saved.

So the first aspect of kissing the Son is kissing the ring of the almighty ruler of heaven and earth in humble submission to him as a subject of his who is wholly dependent upon His grace and mercy.

Love

We also get another wholly different sense of kissing the Son from this passage. We also kiss the Son out of love and adoration of the Son. This type of kissing of the Son is seen when a two close friends reunite after a long while. They may rush to each other and throw their arms around one another in an embrace. We see a similar instance of an embrace and a kiss when the prodigal son returns home and is met by his father. They embrace and kiss. The son is overjoyed that the father has been so good to him and the father is overjoyed that his son has been returned (Luke 15). As husband and wife we show affection to one another through kissing. As family, it is customary in some areas and in some families to show affection by a kiss. Why do we love God? We understand all that He has given us. We understand that in our helplessly sinful state, he does accept us because of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. It is this embrace and kiss of love, affection, adoration, and emotion that is the other aspect here.

So the second aspect to kissing the Son is the embrace of friends, family, even lovers in deep emotional and heart-felt passion and love for each other.

Juxtaposing Submission and Love

Now, remember that this verse brings these two ideas together. We do humbly and fearfully bow and kiss the ring of our sovereign creator God, and we embrace our God in a deep passionate love and emotional

adoration of him. We embrace the immanent God with us who comforts us, loves us, gives us peace, gives us hope, and we respectfully kiss the ring of the transcendent God above us who demands our obedience and who rules every molecule in the universe. These we do at the same time. It is sort of like when (in the old days) the father came home from work. The children rushed to him in love and adoration for his benevolence, but they also embraced him in a respect. They knew the fathers love, but they knew the father was also the authority which demanded obedience and punished disobedience. There was the fear of punishment and the love of the benevolence there.

This is the sense in which we kiss the Son. We fear the wrath of God, but we approach him in love because he first loved us. We look to Him for all things including the parameters and rules by which we should govern our lives. We look to him in blessings and we look to him in punishment. We glorify God in all things. We kiss the Son lest He be angry and we perish in our way and we are blessed because we put our trust in him.

Obedience

As we kiss the Son out of submission to His rulership and out of love for him, what must be the expression of our kissing the Son? Christ tells us very clearly what the love of Christ looks like. He says that if we love Him we will keep his commandments (John 14:15, 23). Love of God looks like obedience. It doesn't necessarily feel like something, although it should be very emotional and passionate at times.

What does submission to a ruler look like? My mother used to have a great, albeit non-sensical, saying when I would say that I was sorry for disobeying her. She would say, "No you're not. If you were sorry, you wouldn't have done it." Now, this makes no sense because if I hadn't done the dastardly deed I wouldn't need to be sorry, but the point is that she knew that obedience is the sign of submission. Not confession or apologies. God says that obedience is better than sacrifice (any kind of sacrifice: praise, prayer, money). God's requirement for our Christian lives is simple: obedience to His law word.

So from both aspects, love and submission, kissing the Son looks like obedience. If we love God, we obey Him. If we are submissive to God, we will obey Him.

Faith

We should look at the basic prerequisite. In order for us to kiss the son, we must have faith that the Son, Jesus Christ, is truly the Son of the Almighty, Jehovah God. We must understand that no one will kiss the Son unless he or she has faith that the Son is who He claims. If we take a moment and think about it... If Christ is who He says he is, and we faithfully accept this, then we must accept the entirety of scripture on faith. If Christ is the divine Son of Jehovah God, then God would certainly not lie to us in the rest of scripture. Scripture itself states that God is not a man that he could lie. So we come to what is always the fundamental question: "Is Jesus Christ who he claimed to be?" Answer yes, and you have a duty to kiss the Son. Answer no, and you cannot kiss the Son.

Kiss the Son is a command word from God. We are commanded to kiss the Son and we are invited to kiss the Son. When we kiss the Son, we are truly then telling God, by our words and by our deeds thank you. Thanksgiving isn't about mouthing our thanks to God for all he's given us once a year. Thanksgiving isn't about kissing the Son on a daily basis. It is about obeying God in everything.

Thanksgiving

When we kiss the Son through our submissive and loving obedience to the scriptures given to us by Jehovah God, we are declaring publicly the awesome abundance, the awesome grace, the awesome power, and the awesome wrath, goodness, mercy and sovereignty of our God. We are declaring before the world that not only are we obeying Him, and we are glorifying Him before the world. If we say we love

him and don't obey Him, the world watches and sees. They know that we are liars. This Christmas season we should be thinking about how it is our obedience to God's word that is truly our thanksgiving every day, and it is our disobedience which is truly our affront.

Let us be a people who obeys God in every thing. We will all glorify God, even the sinner burning in hell glorifies God, but let us do it voluntarily and through submission and love of God in obedience.

We are called to proclaim the gospel to every creature, and I want to look at how we can declare our thanks before the world.

Obedience

In Romans chapters 6, 7, and 8, Paul is talking about his ever-continuing struggle to obey God in both word and deed. Let us note first that Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapters 6 and 7 that we do not belong to ourselves to do with as we please, but rather we were bought as slaves by Christ. We were slaves to sin...remember the unregenerate can do nothing in God's eyes but sin...but Christ purchased us in our slavery and made us free from that bondage to sin. What does He require of his purchased servants? Obedience.

So then, in Romans 6, 7, and 8 Paul is talking about us, servants (i.e., slaves) of Christ who wish to obey him and want to please Him. We desire to kiss the Son in adoration, but the difficulty it seems is the submission. These three chapters instruct us to cast aside our old ways and live in submission to the Son. Paul gives us a vivid description of the difficulty involved though. In Romans 7:21-23, He writes:

We don't interpret scripture by what the world around us looks like to our puny little humanistic brains, but rather we interpret the world by scripture.

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

God has regenerated Paul, and us, and given us the Holy Spirit and the scripture to guide us, but we still have the old flesh and bone body that likes the licentiousness, lusts, and debauchery. We struggle to put down our selves and our own desires in favor of God. This is the continuing struggle of sanctification that every Christian must be engaged in. This is our duty of self denial.

Our Duty of Self Denial

As servants of the Almighty Jehovah God we are to deny ourselves, our self centered goals, aims, passions, and life as John the Baptist said, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" (John 3:30). We deny ourselves in favor of Jehovah. This is really the essence of faith lived out and the essence of love lived out. Paul tells us in Romans 12 that we should love one another and we should prefer our brethren above ourselves. How much more should we prefer our Creator and His designs above our own.

In what sense do we deny ourselves? We deny ourselves as we deny our conceit and self-righteousness. We deny ourselves as we deny our sinful passions and ungodliness, and we deny ourselves as we deny our life.

Denying Our Self-conceit

Chrysostom said that self-conceit is the "mother of hell".

As Christians who have faith in Christ, we believe that the scriptures are the inerrant, infallible, inspired word of Jehovah. We don't interpret scripture by what the world around us looks like to our puny little humanistic brains, but rather we interpret the world by scripture. We deny our reasoning when it exalts itself against Christ. How do we, without faith in the scriptures as our primary guide, reason our way to an understanding of the Trinity, the Incarnation, or the Resurrection? How reason our way to truths like Proverbs 19:11...*"It is the glory of a man to pass by an offense"*? We deny our ability to reason outside of Christ because the *"fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."*

We deny our will. As Paul shows in Romans, we struggle to deny our bodies the sinful desires as we struggle to put down our will in favor of Christ. We exalt Him not ourselves. We have no confidence in ourselves, but rather in Him who saves us. We are not even confident in our own decision to accept Christ, but rather His regeneration and first act of love toward us. It is this denial of all of our own righteousness of filthy rags that leads to our denial of our own tendency toward self-conceit. We love to love ourselves and place ourselves as preeminent, but God alone deserves preeminence. We pray that God would crush our will, our confidence in ourselves and our self-conceit that He may be glorified. In thanksgiving and submission we kiss the Son by putting aside this idolatry and self-worship.

Denying Our Sinful Passions

As faithful Christians we set aside our physical and emotional passions and ungodliness. We deny our appetite. We deny our tendency toward ease and sloth. We deny our carnal, illicit instincts. I love my wife, and as husbands we all should be working to set aside our illicit instincts and carnal tendencies. If I say I love my wife and that I am grateful to her for all she has done for me and yet I continue to merrily cavort with any and every woman I meet, what does this say about my love for her? What does this say about my bodily submission to her? The one area where the woman has authority over the man just as the man has authority over the woman is the physical and especially sexual relations. The husband's body is his wife's just as hers belongs to him as well.

Actually, our bodies don't belong exclusively to ourselves or to our spouses. They are gifts entrusted to us by God and we should show our gratitude and thanksgiving for God benevolence by: not over indulging in anything, not being slothful, not giving ourselves over to all kinds of licentiousness, and not worrying about our own selfish aims over the dominion mandate of the cross.

Denying Our Life

Finally, we have the most difficult aspect of self denial. We are to deny our relations, our estate, our life. When Christ says take up your cross and follow me, he doesn't mean follow me in every area that your family approves. He doesn't mean that we are to boldly preach the gospel to everyone except our blood relatives.

Sometimes we find ourselves holding back the more offensive parts of the gospel in order to make peace with our relatives. What is the most offensive part of the gospel?... its exclusivity. No one comes to the father but by way of Jesus Christ! All others are damned. Should we forsake our duty to preach and proclaim the good news of the cross because our non-Christian relations don't want us to impose our values upon them? I must proclaim the cross or I despise the incredible gift from God...faith.

This may sound like an overreaction... but some of you have been there. If...If the question is: do I serve God hating relation...for fear that I might offend them...or do I serve Jehovah God? I can have only one answer: May God have mercy on their souls, but as for me and my household we shall serve the Lord!

If the question is my wealth or God, again the answer must be...Jehovah. If the question is my life or God, the answer must be God. Many will assent to this, but in reality how many of us try to espouse two

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Gods? Or more? How many try to serve their relation and God? How many try to serve wealth and God? How many try to serve politics, recreation, food, prestige, big cars, big houses, etc... and still have Jehovah as God.

Our God does not take our attempts to rival him with other gods lightly. He says that we are not to bow our knee to any thing that is a likeness of anything that is in this world. In Deuteronomy 5 (and in Exodus 20) he tells us that He is a jealous God. Does God have a right to be jealous? He owns you and I yet we continually disobey Him and subject ourselves to his enemy.

I know that in my own life I continually try to serve my flesh, my life, my relations, my will, my reason, my sinful passions... and I pray constantly as I fail and fail to truly serve God and only God... I pray for mercy. I am truly thankful for His incredible mercy to me. If I am truly thankful, I will deny myself and take up the cross to follow Him. We will strive to obey Him and grieve mightily when we fail. We will adore Him. We will honor Him. We will *"Kiss the Son....lest he be angry and we perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are they who put their trust in him."*

Let us be a thankful people. Let us be an obedient people.

God help us to be a people who say, "Thank you oh my father for giving us your Son." As we on bended knee and with joy unspeakable honor and embrace the son in thanksgiving.

Obey the Son... Kiss the Son.