

The Immutable Mercy of Jesus Christ by Thomas Adams (1583-1652)

Hebrews 13:8

I. The Text Opened

A. Hebrews 13:8

1. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," (Heb. 13:8).
2. By the name of Jehovah was God known to Israel, from the time of the first mission of Moses to them, and their manumission out of Egypt, and not before.
 - a) For, God says to Moses, 'I appeared unto Abraham, and to Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them,' Exod. 6:3.
 - b) This I AM is an eternal word, comprehending three times: 'that was, that is, and is to come.'
3. Now, to testify the equality of the Son to the Father, the Scripture gives the same eternity to Jesus that it does to Jehovah.
 - a) He is called Alpha and Omega, primus et novissimus, 'the First and the Last: which is, which was, and which is to come,' Rev. 1, and here, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.' Therefore he was, not only Christus Dei, the anointed of God, but Christus Deus, God himself anointed; seeing that eternity, which has neither beginning nor ending, is only exclusive and proper to God.
4. The words may be distinguished into a center, a circumference, and a mediate line, referring the one to the other.
 - a) The immovable center is Jesus Christ.
 - b) The circumference, that runs round about him here, is eternity: 'Yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'
 - c) The mediate line referring them is, *o auton*, the same: 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. DOCTRINE: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever because Jesus Christ is God.

1. The center is Jesus Christ.
 - a) Jesus was his proper name, Christ his title.
 - b) Jesus a name of his nature, Christ of his office and dignity.
2. Jesus, a name of all sweetness.
 - a) As Bernard said, "Honey in the mouth, music in the ear, joy in the heart."
 - b) He is a Reconciler, a Redeemer, a Saviour.
 - (1) *When the conscience wrestles with law, sin, death, there is nothing but horror and despair without Jesus.*
 - (2) *He is 'the way, the truth, and the life;' without him, there is error, deception, and death.*
 - (3) *Bernard: If thou writest to me, thy letter doth not please me, unless I read there Jesus.*
 - (4) *If you converse, your discourse is not sweet, without the name of Jesus.*

(5) *The blessed restorer of all, of more than all that Adam lost; for we have gotten more by his regenerating grace than we lost by Adam's degenerating sin.*

3. Christ is the name of his office; being appointed and anointed of God a king, a priest, a prophet.
 - a) This Jesus Christ is our Savior: of whose names I forbear further discourse, being unable, though I had the tongue of angels.
 - b) But of all names given to our Redeemer, still Jesus is the sweetest.
 - c) Other, Bernard says, are names of majesty; Jesus is a name of mercy. The Word of God, the Son of God, the Christ of God, are titles of glory; Jesus, a Savior, is a title of grace, mercy, redemption.
4. This Jesus Christ is the center of this text; and not only of this, but of the whole Scripture.
 - a) The sum of divinity is the Scripture; the sum of the Scripture is the gospel; the sum of the gospel is Jesus Christ; in a word, there is nothing contained in the word of God, but God the word.
5. Nor is he the center only of his word, but of our rest and peace.
 - a) "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Cor. 2:2.
 - (1) *Augustine said, "Thou hast made us for thee, O Christ; and our heart is unquiet till it rest in thee."*
 - (2) *It is natural to everything to desire the center.*
 - (3) *But 'our life is hid with Christ in God,' Col. 3:3.*
 - (4) *We must necessarily love, where we must live.*
 - (5) *Our mind is where our pleasure is, our heart is where our treasure is, our love is where our life is; but all these, our pleasure, treasure, life, are reposed in Jesus Christ.*
 - (6) *"Thou art my portion, O Lord," David says.*
 - (7) *Take the world that pleases, let our portion be in Christ.*
 - (8) *'We have left all,' Peter says, 'and followed thee,' Matt. 19:27; you have lost nothing by it, Christ says, for you have gotten me.*
 - (a) *He is too covetous, whom Jesus Christ cannot satisfy.*
 - (b) *Let us seek this center, Augustine says, Let us seek him till we have found him; and still seek him when we have found him.*
 - (i) **That seeking, we may find him, he is ready; that finding, we may seek him, he is infinite.**
 - (ii) **You see the center.**

B. The referring line, proper to this center, is Always the Same.

1. There is no mutability in Christ; 'no variableness, nor shadow of turning,' James 1:17.
 - a) All lower lights have their inconstancy; but in the 'Father of lights' there is no changeableness.
 - b) The sun hath his shadow; the 'Sun of Righteousness' is without shadow, Mal. 4:2; the sun turns upon the dial, but Christ hath no turning. 'Whom he loves, he loves to the end,' John 13:1.
 - (1) *He loves us to the end; of his love there is no end.*
 - (2) *Time will be brought to a close, but mercy will never be ended.*
 - (3) *His mercy shall be perfected in us, never ended.*
 - (4) *'In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer,' Isa. 54:8.*
 - (a) *His wrath is short, his goodness is everlasting.*

(5) *'The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee,' ver. 10.*

(a) *The mountains are stable things, the hills steadfast; yet hills, mountains, yes the whole earth, shall totter on its foundations; yes the very heavens shall pass away with a noise, and the elements shall melt with heat,' 2 Peter 3:10; but the covenant of God shall not be broken.*

(6) *'I will betroth thee unto me for ever,' God says, Hos. 2:19. This marriage-bond shall never be cancelled; nor sin, nor death, nor hell, shall be able to divorce us.*

(7) *'His mercy endureth for ever,' Ps. 136.*

(a) *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.'*

III. The Text Applied

A. As this meditation distils into our believing hearts much comfort, so let it give us some instructions.

1. Two things it readily teaches us: a dissuasive caution, and a persuasive lesson.
 - a) It dissuades our confidence in worldly things, because they are inconstant.
 - b) How poor a space do they remain, 'the same.'
 - (1) *The world may seem to stand thee in some stead for a season, but at last it irrevocably runs away, and carries with it your joys; your goods, as Rachel stole Laban's idols; your peace and content of heart goes with it, and you are left desperate.*
 - (2) *You see how quickly riches cease to be 'the same:' and can any other earthly thing boast more stability?*
 - c) Honor must put off its robes when the play is done; make it never so glorious a show on this world's stage, it hath but a short part to act.
 - (1) *Pleasure is like lightning: heard, it dies; sweet, but short; a flash and away.*
 - (2) *All vanities are but butterflies, which wanton children greedily catch for (as Anselm said).*
 - d) O then do not set your hearts on these things: they are to be tread upon, as Jerome observes on Acts 4. 'They that sold their possessions, brought the prices, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet,' (Acts 4:35).
 - (1) *'The world passeth,' 1 John 2:17, and God abides.*
 - (2) *'They shall perish, but thou remainest: they all shall wax old as doth a garment and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail,' Heb. 1:11,12.*
 - (3) *Therefore, 'trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God,' 1 Tim. 6:17.*
 - (4) *And then, 'they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever,' Psa. 125:1.*
- (a) *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*
2. This persuades us to an imitation of Christ's constancy.
 - a) Let the stableness of his mercy to us work a stableness of our love to him.
 - b) And howsoever, like the lower orbs, we have a natural motion of our own from good to evil, yet let us suffer the higher power to move us supernaturally from evil to good.
 - c) There is in us indeed a reluctant flesh, 'a law in our members warring against the law of our mind,' Rom. 7:23.
 - d) Irresolution and unsteadiness are hateful, and unlike to our master Christ, who is ever the same.

- (1) *'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways,' James 1:8.*
- e) The God of constancy would have his to be constant.
- (1) *Steadfast in your faith to him.*
- (a) *'Continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel,' Col. 1:23.*
- (2) *Steadfast in your faithfulness to man, promising and not disappointing, Psalm 15:4.*

B. We now come to the circumference, in which is a distinction of three times; past, present, future.

1. The times change, the circumference wheels about, but the center is 'the same for ever.'
 - a) We must resolve this triplicity into a triplicity.
 - b) Christ is the same according to these three distinct terms, three distinct ways:
 - (1) *1. Objective, in word;*
 - (2) *2. Subjective, in his power;*
 - (3) *3. Effective, in his gracious operation.*
2. 1. Objectively. Jesus Christ is the same in his word; and that (1) Yesterday in pre-ordination; (2) To-day in incarnation; (3) Forever in application.
 - a) (1.) Yesterday in pre-ordination.
 - (1) *So St Peter, in his sermon, tells the Jews, that 'he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,' Acts 2:23.*
 - (2) *And in his epistle, that 'he was verily preordained before the foundation of the world,' 1 Pet. 1:20.*
 - (3) *He is called the 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' Rev. 13:8.*
 - (4) *Much comfort I must here leave to your meditation.*
 - (a) *If God preordained a Saviour for man, before he had either made man, or man marred himself, -as Paul to Timothy, 'He hath saved us according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,' 2 Tim. 1:9; -then surely he meant that nothing should separate us from his eternal love in that Savior, Rom. 8:39.*
 - b) (2.) To-day in incarnation.
 - (1) *'When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman,' Gal. 4:4.*
 - (2) *'The Word was made flesh' John 1:14.*
 - (3) *He was yesterday God before all worlds, he is now made man in the world.*
 - (4) *So he is the same yesterday and to-day, objectively in his word.*
 - (a) *That which was in the old concealed, is in the new revealed.*
 - (b) *Yesterday prefigured in the law, to-day the same manifested in the gospel.*
 - c) (3.) For ever in application.
 - (1) *He continually does this by his Spirit in applying to our consciences the virtue of his death and passion.*
 - (a) *'As many as receive him, to them gives he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name,' John 1:12.*
 - (b) *'By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,' Heb. 10:14.*
 - (c) *His wounds are as fresh to do us good, as they were to those saints that beheld them bleeding on the cross.*
 - (d) *The virtue of his merits is not abated, though many hands of faith have taken large portions out of his treasury.*

(e) The river of his grace, 'which makes glad the city of God,' runs over its banks, though infinite souls have drunk hearty draughts, and satisfied their thirst. But because we cannot apprehend this for ourselves of ourselves, therefore he hath promised to send us the 'Spirit of truth, who will dwell with us,' John 14:17, and apply this to us forever.

3. 2. Subjectively, in his power the same; and that (1) Yesterday, for he made the world; (2) To-day, for he governs the world; (3) For ever, for he shall judge the world.
 - a) (1.) Yesterday in the creation. 'All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made,' John 1:3.
 - (1) *'Before Abraham was, I am,' John 8:58.*
 - (2) *We owe, then, ourselves to Christ for our creation; but how much more for our redemption?*
 - b) (2.) To-day in the governing. 'He upholdeth all things by the word of his power,' Heb. 1:3.
 - (1) *Has God care of fowls and flowers, and will he not care for you, his own image? Matt. 6:26-30.*
 - c) (3.) For ever: because he shall judge the world.
 - (1) *'God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained,' Acts 17:31.*
 - (2) *'In the day that God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ,' Rom. 2:16.*
 - (3) *Let the wicked flatter themselves that all is but talk of any coming to judgment.*
4. Here is matter of infallible comfort to us: 'Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh,' Luke 21:28.
 - a) Here we are imprisoned, martyred, tortured; but when that great assize and general jail-delivery comes, 'There shall be no more death nor sorrow, but all tears shall be wiped from our eyes,' Rev. 21:4.
 - b) 'For it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you. And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels,' 2 Thess. 1:6, 7.
 - c) We shall then find him the same.
5. Effectually in his grace and mercy. So he is the same, (1) Yesterday to our fathers; (2) To-day to ourselves; (3) For ever to our children.
 - a) (1.) Yesterday to our fathers.
 - (1) *All our fathers, whose souls are now in heaven, those 'spirits of just men made perfect,' Heb. 12:23, were, as the next words indicate, saved, 'by Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and by the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.'*
 - b) (2.) To-day to ourselves.
 - (1) *His mercy is everlasting; his truth endures from generation to generation.*
 - (2) *The same gracious Savior that he was yesterday to our fathers, is he to-day to us, if we be to-day faithful to him.*
 - (a) *To-day he is yours, if today you will be his: yours tomorrow, if yet tomorrow you will be his.*
 - c) (3.) For ever to our children.
 - (1) *He that was yesterday the God of Abraham, is today ours, and will be for ever our children's.*
 - (2) *As well now 'the light of the Gentiles,' as before 'the glory of Israel,' Luke 2:32.*

(3) I will be the God of thy seed, saith the Lord to Abraham. His mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation,' Luke 1:50.

6. In this way, as 'grace and peace are from him which is, and which was, and which is to come;' so glory and honour be to him, which is, and which was, and which is to come; even to 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,' Rev. 1:4.