

Practical Exercise #6 -- Is this Christian?

Sermon

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15).

"And when Thou makest up Thy jewels in Thy Kingdom, Lord, grant that these children may be there, and may be Thine" - thus the Church prays for her sons and daughters in view of the end to come. This prayer rests on Scriptural foundation. By the prophet Malachi the Lord of hosts has said to the believers in Israel: "They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Among the official attire of the Jewish high-priest, there was a golden breastplate studded with twelve precious stones. On each stone the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel had been engraved. This breastplate the high-priest wore, whenever he entered the Holy of holies to make atonement for the people, and thus all Israel was constantly placed before God in a significant manner, as a treasure which the Lord should hold dear, cherish, remember, and guard with jealous care.

Israel's high-priest was a type of our great High-Priest, Jesus Christ. He bears on His Savior's breast all the tribes of the children of men. As their representative He has entered in once into the holy place, before God, the just Judge, and has made atonement for them. For His beloved Son's sake God holds a redeemed soul dearer than all the treasures of the earth. Believers are jewels in the breastplate of our High-Priest, and the death of a believer adds lustre to the glory of our exalted Redeemer.

To this truth utterance is given in our text, which I desire to apply to the death of our little Marguerite (which means "pearl"). Let me show you . . .

Our Comforting Assurance That The Death Of This Child Is Precious In The Sight Of The Lord, And . . .

- 1) What assures us of this fact;
- 2) Why this assurance affords us comfort.

I.

Little Marguerite was born a sinner; flesh born of flesh, she, too, had come short of the glory of God. The crown of perfect righteousness, which the Creator placed on the head of our first ancestors, when He created them in His own image, did not adorn her brow when she entered this life. In this state she was not fit for the kingdom of heaven, and had she died in this state we should have to leave her present state in the world to come undiscussed. Whatever we should feel like saying of her endearing simplicity and her childlike innocence could not offset her natural depravity.

That we can say of her to-day that she is a jewel in our Savior's crown is due to her new birth in Baptism. Christ has made her a jewel. With His entire church Christ loved also this child, and gave Himself for it; that He might cleanse it with the washing of the water by the Word, and that, with all His glorious church, He might present also this child to Himself, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So Scripture teaches us in the fifth chapter of Ephesians. And this, in short, is the basis of our assurance that the death of this child is precious in the sight of the Lord.

When little Marguerite was carried home from the baptismal font, she had become to her Savior what that name, there give her, signifies, a pearl. Christ had in Baptism bestowed upon her the precious ransom which on the cross He paid also for her. She has been redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from her vain conversation received by the tradition from her fathers; but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. She was bought with a price. The full value of her Savior's merits was written over to her when she believed and was baptized. Out of worthless dross that saving flood of regeneration made her sterling gold; out of the filth of this world she was picked up by the hand of mercy to become a sparkling ruby of pure radiance with not a fleck in her.

As a precious heirloom Christ has ever since regarded her. Like in the days of His flesh He has taken her up in His arms and blessed her. When she said her prayers she was spiritually in the Savior's lap speaking to Him as her friend. Angels of heaven were detailed for her guardians to minister to her as an heir of salvation. Yes, in view of His own work for her, Jesus placed a great value upon her, and her death now is precious in the sight of the Lord. Jesus has clasped this pearl of faith to His heart, and adorns Himself with her as with a jewel.

II.

The comfort which lies in this assurance, beloved parents, requires not so much a mind and tongue to draw it out and set it forth, as rather a believing heart of faith to receive it. Do you not believe it? How shall I interpret the tears that glisten in your eyes? I will take them to be tears of sorrow over your own misfortune, - if there is room at all for a thought of misfortune in the fullness of your daughter's glory. God has honored you in thus honoring your child: you have become agents on earth for the increase of our Savior's wealth in heaven. No more grateful appreciation of your parental care, to bring up your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, could have been accorded you than this, that Christ, for Whom alone you reared your Marguerite, has taken her from your hands and placed her whither you wished her to be guided. That is the chief honor of fathers and mothers that through their labor and care heaven is peopled with saints. The death of a Christian child, therefore, reflects honor upon the parents. Nor will Christ forsake such parents in their hours of sorrow. The very children which they have give up to Him, constantly put Him in mind of them. Whatever is too hard for their flesh to bear He will give them increased faith to bear. He will not purchase joy for Himself at the expense of their pain, but will make them to be sharers in His joy, and will do for them what He has done for their children, viz., regard also their death in the faith precious, and with their children place them, too, in His heavenly crown of glory.