

A SON'S GRADUATION. Hebrews 5:8,9.

Many years ago I heard a sermon from this text by a great preacher who was my professor of theology, Dr. R.A. Webb. I remember only four words of that sermon. As written in the margin of my Bible these words are "learner, lesson, school, degree"—sufficient to suggest our subject.

1. The Son Who Graduated.

At commencement time our interest centers largely in the personnel of the graduating class. The text points to a Son who graduated nearly two thousand years ago. He was the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. This eternal Son of God was appointed heir of all things. It was to this Son that God the Father said, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession: He is Son, Heir, Creator, and King of the Ages, higher than the angels, higher than the heavens, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

In a vision which changed his whole life Isaiah saw Him "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain He covered His face, and with twain He covered His feet, and with twain He did fly. And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

The appearance of the same Lord of Glory, who was crucified, to Saul of Tarsus was the means of changing this persecutor into the preacher. From this experience he went forth under the power of the Holy Spirit and proclaimed that Jesus is the Son of God, and he wrote to the Romans that this Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. From the instant of the first vision of Him when he said "Who art Thou, Lord?" Paul took his stand on the deity of this Son, and he never moved from this foundation.

2. The Lesson He Learned.

"Though He was a Son, yet learned obedience." Let us not tarry long on the theological question raised by the fact that the Son who always did the will of the Father, and was without sin, learned obedience." Suffice it to remember in the words of another that "His learning obedience led Him not from disobedience or debate to submission, but from obedience at the present stage to an obedience at an ever deeper and deeper cost.--- The Son obedient upon the throne must exercise the practical virtue of obedience upon the earth." In Gethsemane His perfect obedience was gloriously portrayed "when in full view of the meaning of Calvary, the obedient disposition was crowned, and the obedient divine-human life" was completely surrendered to the Father as He said "Not My will but Thine be done." "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the Cross." His obedience was joyful, voluntary, continuous, complete.

True obedience, filial obedience to our heavenly Father, is a lesson sorely needed today. This lesson can only be learned by a true conception of this Lord of Glory who was crucified.

Isaiah after he saw the Lord sitting upon the throne, high and lifted up, after he had seen the King, heard His voice saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then came the obedient reply of his surrendered will, "Here am I; send me."

When Saul of Tarsus had his experience on the Damascus road there came to him not only a recognition of the Jesus whom he was persecuting as the risen Christ, Son of God and Savior of sinners, but also a surrender of his will to Him as he said, "What shall I do, Lord?" He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. How significant is the fact that thereafter Paul, in urging the duty of obedience upon his Christian hearers, in nearly every case appealed not to the law of Sinai but to the Gospel of Calvary. For instance, in the church at Corinth there were live and pressing problems, the same problems as we have today. Paul's answer to them all might be summed up in a line from one of James Montgomery's hymns, "Then let us gather round the Cross." As a great teacher once said, "Love generated by the Cross is the only true and adequate motive of Christian service."

3. The School He Attended.

Think of the school which God's only begotten Son attended. He learned obedience in the school of suffering. "Though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered. He suffered being tempted. "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." He was "compassed with infirmity." "Surely He hath borne our sicknesses and carried our sorrows." He was made perfect through suffering.

In the verse just preceding the text we have a suggestion of what must have been something of His agony in Gethsemane. With strong crying and tears He prayed unto Him who was able to save Him from death. A suggested explanation of this prayer of Jesus is something like this: "In Gethsemane our Lord was about to die, there and then; He prays to His Father, begging that this cup of immediate and impending death might pass. He prayed for life in Gethsemane that He might die on Calvary. The cup was death in the garden. There and then; He was heard and answered; that cup did pass; His human nature was bolstered by angels and He lived to be crucified the next day on the Cross of Calvary."

The next day on the Cross, near the close of three hours of darkness, He did not cry for deliverance; but there did come from the broken heart of the Redeemer, from the depth of His suffering soul as He felt Himself regarded as sin, though sinless, that cry of desolation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" What a climax to the things which He suffered, when love paid the ransom! "And He died for all, that they that live shall no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again."

4.

The Degree He Received.

What degree did God's Son receive from the school of suffering? What goal did He reach? What were the consummation and crown of His course? The text tells us: "And having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation." What a perfect degree He received!- "A Son perfected forevermore." What a matchless goal He reached! "When He had made purification of sins He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." What a glorious crown was placed upon His head! "Because of the suffering of death He was crowned with glory and honor." He became the author of eternal salvation.

The word "author" in this epistle as used in the two different senses is most instructive. For instance, Jesus is spoken of as being the Author and Perfecter of Faith. In this passage the meaning is that of captain, leader, trail-blazer, pioneer, forerunner, one who stands at the head of a column and leads. The Son of God is truly our great Captain and Leader. As we run our race we must look unto Him, "the Author and Perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the Throne of God." In the text the word "author" is used in another sense. Here it means cause. He is the great Cause of our eternal salvation. On earth He died for us, and in Heaven He lives for us. On earth He removed the barrier between us and God. In Heaven He intercedes for us in the presence of God. "Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

This Son perfected forevermore, this great High Priest ever present upon the Father's Throne, King of kings and Lord of lords, is just the Savior and Friend we need today, and every day, and all the days. His sympathy and support and salvation are available to them that obey Him at each moment of temptation and need. He sits upon a Throne of Grace exercising sovereign power and sympathetic love. Will you not give your very best allegiance to such a Savior and such a Friend?