

The Word Made Flesh

Ellet J. Waggoner

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“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.” John 1.14

God in the Flesh —We have already learned that the Word was in the beginning with God, “and the Word was God.” Therefore when we are told that “the Word was made flesh” we know that it is the same as though it said, “God was made flesh.” This is most sacred ground, and no one should presume to think of it, much less to speak or write of it in any other language than that of the Scriptures itself. Untold evil has resulted from the attempt to define and explain God in human creeds.

Which Flesh? —“All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes.” 1 Corinthians 15.39. Of course there is no chance for thought that the Word was made any other flesh than that of men; but the point to be noted is that there is but one flesh of man, so that when the Word was made flesh, He took a nature common to all man, high and low, rich and poor. He was “made of the seed of David according to the flesh.” Romans 1.3. He is “the Man Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 2.5

The Nature of the Flesh —“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.” Galatians 5.19-21. No man has any reason to despise another. Whenever we hear of a brutal crime, or see a man grossly degraded by sin, we may know that it is simply the natural working of the flesh, which we share in common with him. It needs this view before us, to enable us to comprehend the wonderful love that would lead the pure and holy God to come into such flesh. But this was the very flesh which the Word was made.

“Yet Without Sin”—Although the Word was made flesh, even our own sinful flesh, He was “full of grace and truth.” He was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Hebrews 4.15. God made Him “to be sin for us,” yet He “knew no sin.” 2 Corinthians 5.21. He was made to be sin, yet He “did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.” 1 Peter 2.22. It is these two things combined that make Him a sympathizing Saviour, in whom we may freely confide. No one can sympathize with another’s failings, if he has not been tempted in the same way. Moreover, those who are guilty of any sin are the quickest and fiercest to condemn others for the same sin. Sinners excuse sin, but have no sympathy for fellow-sinners. It is only those who are cleansed from sin, who can exercise charity for the erring. Christ was tempted to the uttermost, and was always pure from the slightest taint of sin; therefore we may trust Him as one who knows and who cares.

Able to Help —“In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.” Hebrews 2.17,18. And He is “able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him.” Hebrews 7.25

People sometimes imagine that because Christ never sinned, He cannot so fully sympathize with us in our sin; but that is just why He can. He knows the strength of temptation as no one else does, for He felt all the power of Satan. The one upon whom the enemy exerts all his power in vain, knows the extent of that power more than the one who yields to it. The man who pulls against the tide knows its strength better than the one who floats with it; and the man who successfully breasts the current knows its strength better than the one who is swept back by it. So Christ not only knows all our need, and cares for it, but He is able to deliver.

For Whose Benefit? —It is quite commonly assumed that the Word was made flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth eighteen hundred years ago, in order that He might learn man’s condition and needs, and thus be able to sympathize with and help them. That this is a mistaken idea can be seen by a moment’s reflection, as well as by plain statements of Scripture. The Psalmist says, “He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.” Psalm 103.14. Again, “O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising. Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether.” Psalm 139.1-4. It is He upon whom men must depend for a knowledge of themselves. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins.” Jeremiah 17.9. “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” Jeremiah 10.23

All this was as true eighteen hundred years before Christ as eighteen hundred years after. God knew men as well, and sympathized with them as much, four thousand years ago as He does to-day. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, “in all their affliction He was afflicted.” Isaiah 63.9. The prophet could say of a truth, seven hundred years before Christ, “Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” Isaiah 53.4. God was in Christ, not that He might know men, but in order that man might know that He does know them. In Jesus we learn how kind and sympathizing God has always been, and have an example of what He will do in any man who will fully yield to Him.

Still in the Flesh —“Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.” 1 John 4.2, 3. To confess Christ, it is not enough to believe that He once lived and suffered and died and rose again. We must confess not merely that He did come in the flesh, but that He “is come in the flesh.” He is a present Saviour. As in all the afflictions of the Israelites of old He was afflicted, so now “we have not an High

Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” Hebrews 4.15. He still feels everything that touches us, for He is still in the flesh. Even in the heavenly places. He is still “the Man Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 2.5. He is our forerunner, that is, one of the brethren who has gone before to prepare a place for the rest. When He comes again, He will come in the flesh for His flesh did not see corruption and the same flesh that went into the grave also ascended to heaven. “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things.” Ephesians 4.10

In Every Man—The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, literally, “tabernacled in us.” But since all human flesh is the same, and Christ took the flesh common to humanity, to show how closely God is identified with the human family, it follows that He is in all, just to the extent that any will allow Him. Remember that “the life was the light of men,” and that it “lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” “He is not far from every one of us,” which means that He is very near to every one of us, so near that “in Him we live, and move, and have our being.” Acts 17.27,28. The demonstration of the fact that the Word is in all flesh, is seen in that all know themselves to be sinners, and that even the wickedest men have at times prickings of conscience, and desires and even determinations to live better. This is the work of the Spirit, Christ’s representative, striving with them.

Still further, we have the words of Moses, in Deuteronomy 30.11-14, quoted by the Apostle Paul in Romans 10.6-8. From these two texts we learn that “the Word” of which Moses speaks is Christ, the same Word of which John writes. So we read, “The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.” Romans 10.8. This is not spoken to those who are perfect, but to those who are being exhorted to hear and do the commandments of God. “The Word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.” Deuteronomy 30.14. It is not there because we have done it, but in order that we may do it. Therefore it must be in every man, since God is no respecter of persons, desiring that all shall repent and live.

Yet again we read, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobate?” 2 Corinthians 13.5. The reprobate is the one who is rejected as worthless. But God does not reject anyone who has not first rejected Him. He will never leave any man who has a desire for His presence. He does not leave men to themselves until they drive Him away. Christ, therefore, the Word who is God, is in every soul that comes into the world, lingering there until ordered out.

Confessing Christ —We have read that every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. Now read once more Romans 10.6-8, which tells us that the Word, even Christ, is very nigh us, in our mouth, and in our heart, and read onward, “that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” To confess Christ, therefore, is to acknowledge that He is in us with power, even the power of the resurrection, and that He has a right to be there, having purchased us by His death; and that means to yield ourselves to Him fully (for He will not use any force), that His life may be manifested in us in its perfection, and not fitfully in the intervals when we do not

repress it. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3.6. Then we may say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Galatians 2.20

Free Course for the Word —We have read that the Word is very nigh us, in our mouth and in our heart, waiting for recognition. What is wanted is that Christ may dwell in the heart by faith. Ephesians 3.17. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Romans 10.17. If we hear the Word and believe it, then Christ, the Word, dwells in the heart by faith; and in those who believe it works effectually. But in spite of the fact that the Word is living and active, powerful, it can do nothing in us contrary to our will, because it is love. Therefore upon us depends whether or not the Word shall work effectually in us. So the Apostle Paul asked the brethren to pray for him and his companions, that the Word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified, even as with them. 2 Thessalonians 3.1. The Word is living water, and must be allowed unhindered flow, or else it ceases to be life to us.

Holding Back the Word —In Romans 1.18 we read of men who "hold the truth in unrighteousness." That does not say that they merely have the truth in unrighteousness, but that they hold it. It ought to be allowed to run; they hold it back. If that repressing is persisted in, the Spirit of the Word will finally be driven out, and the light that is in men will become darkness. But if we confess our sins, as the Word shows them to us, the Word of God will grow mightily, and prevail. See Acts 29.18-20

The Practical Result —We have seen that Christ, the Word who is God, is inseparable from the written Word. If we believe the Scriptures, Christ dwells in the heart by faith. The mystery of God made flesh is to be repeated in us. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1.27), is the mystery of the Gospel. Since Christ is in the Word, when it is received in faith, we have the Word made flesh, even our flesh, by yielding ourselves to do all the requirements of the Word. Christ said, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40.8. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Hebrews 13.8. Therefore if He dwells in our heart by faith, He will render in us the same obedience to the law that he did of old. The righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in us. We shall be doers of the Word, and not hearers only; its precepts will be things of life, vitalizing our flesh; and we shall live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.