

# Victory In The Ascended Conqueror

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**Bible Text:** Psalm 68:18

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## Grace Particular Baptist Church

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Let's go right to our text this morning. Our text is found in Psalm 68:18, a Psalm of David.

18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.

Let us pray.

*Dear heavenly Father, how glorious thou art. O Lord, I pray that as you have gathered us here this morning, I ask, O Lord, that thou would gather us here in one spirit and that it be thy spirit, O Lord. Lord, instruct us in thy word. Lord, how glorious this passage is this morning to see thee reigning, to see thee high and lifted up. O Lord, may you give us a view of thy ascension this day. May you show us what it means to us and, Lord, may we be given the faith to bask in the reality of what you have done for thy people. O Lord, glorify your name this day and may thy anointing be upon this message for thy glory. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

The first thing I am struck by when I read this is what a clear view David had of the Lord Jesus Christ. We just came out of the time that we looked at the Reformation and their motto, "The just shall live by faith," and as I instructed the kids in school, I talked to them about the one faith, the one faith the unites all of the people of God. And it is no different here that as David wrote this Psalm, of course, it was many years before the Lord Jesus Christ would come. That speaks to me about this gift of faith. It was given to David to see, not only in many other places where he spoke about the Lord's death, he spoke about the Lord's resurrection, but in this passage, he is given a clear understanding of the ascension and for you and I today, I pray for the same faith. I pray that the Holy Spirit would give us a much needed view of our ascended Lord.

This passage speaks very deeply on what the ascension means. I pray today that the Holy Spirit speaks to us about what the ascension means and in the first part of this verse, we have the ascension looking us right in the face when David says, "Thou hast ascended on high." What a glorious doctrine for the children of God, and I use the word "doctrine" in the same terminology, in the same way that John used it in John 2. He said the people of

God have this doctrine, it's called the doctrine of Christ. As the Lord has revealed what true doctrine is to me, it must all come from the head. It's not from man's theology. It's not from who man says God is, but doctrine is really Christ. It's who Christ is to his people. It's the experiencing Christ in the soul. And the ascension reality for the child of God, we can't really jump to the ascension without knowing how the Lord got to ascend and so we immediately are taken to the stable. We think about the birth. We think about a miraculous birth that came forward and how the Lord came in time; how he came from heaven to save his people from their sins and in this perfect plan of salvation, the Lord was humbled. He humbled himself and he came down and he was born in the likeness of our flesh in a stable.

A very humble birth and the people at the time were looking for this kingly birth and they were looking for this one that would be this great king and they looked and you know they had to be looking where the kings ruled and where all the rich people were and where all the high pomp and circumstance was and then here's the Lord coming in a stable. And how glorious that is for the child of God to see what the Lord brought himself down to for you and I and what a great birth that was. As we look at the birth and, of course, we see his ministry here on earth that culminated in the laying down of his life, the laying down of his life for his people and for them alone.

We have beautiful realities as the Holy Spirit reveals to us in the Scriptures that he laid down his life for the child of God and how personal salvation is for you and I today. What has the Lord saved you from? When the Lord breathed out those words, "It is finished," and then he dismissed his Spirit, what does that mean for you and I today? What does it mean that Christ came and he walked this earth and he taught and he healed and he cast out devils and he always was setting forth the kingdom of God? This is truly what the kingdom of God is. Man would come up and man's religion would say, "No! This is what it is. This is what the law says. This is what Moses said. This is what Abraham said." But the Lord would always be fortified in the truth, the one Lord, the one faith, the one baptism and that's what unites the people of God today. One faith.

Then as we follow him to the cross and we see the laying down of his life, we see the great triumph of being resurrected and death could not keep him in the ground and all of Satan's plans and everything of plans of man and all of false religion that day was contriving this plan that they would put Christ in the grave and he would never be risen again. You and I know the great Gospel as the Holy Spirit preaches it to us that he is not here, he is risen and the Lord is risen and not only has he risen, but that brings us to the reality of this passage: he is ascended on high. The ascension and what does that mean for you and I today? That's what I hope the Holy Ghost leads us into this morning.

What does it mean for you that our Lord is a reigning Lord? That he's sitting on high, making intercession for his people? Is that an important thing for you? I've had discussions this week with some in my family and one of them said to me, "Dad," which tells you it wasn't my wife, "life is hard." I said, "Yes, it is. Life is really hard." Could you imagine a dead piece of wood or a dead rock or anything, all the idols that we

contrive in our mind, if that's all we have, if that's all the hope that we have, we are most miserable.

But that's not what the child of God has. He has an ascended Lord. Paul put it this way in Romans 8:34, he says, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." He is making intercession for us. I don't know what that means for you. I get up in the morning and sometimes I'm so burdened by what I have to do, what's in front of me that day, all the things I keep thinking in my mind, "This is what I have to do. This is what I must do. These are the things I must accomplish today." And until the Lord shows me that he's my intercessor, that he has interceded for me, that he continuously is interceding with the Father for me, my prayers are my prayers unless the Lord Jesus Christ shows me that he is interceding on my behalf. He knows what's best for me. He maketh me to lie down in the green pastures of his intercession. His intercession.

That's what Paul says here. He's at the right hand of God. I think so vividly now, right now in the view of my thoughts, I'm thinking of Stephen's last moments here on earth and as he's being stoned and as they are rushing up upon him and they're gnawing on him and it's such a horrible death, but the Lord was interceding. He was standing watching him, interceding with his spirit, took Stephen's spirit away from everything. Took him away from what was going on.

This is the power of our interceding Lord. It's not a flippant statement. That's why I said I wonder how much we realize and I know we only can realize it when the Lord brings us to see the heavens and what he's doing on our behalf. Sometimes I think we make the mistake when we hear, "It is finished," and we say, okay, the Lord, he's done everything, which is true, so he's not watching over me. He's not interceding for me. But that's what intercession is. He is continuously there making intercession with the Father, speaking to the Father. Not only in this ascension do we see him as an intercessor but also a mediator. How can we, such a sinful group of people and you'll see that in this passage, he did this for the rebellious. That's the beauty of this. This isn't for clean people down here, this is for the rebellious. This is what the Lord has done for his people as a mediator, joining us with the Father. The Father sees his Son.

We are joined to the Father through Christ and Christ alone and is that a present reality to you today? That's the whole special point in this text is that we have the glorious ascension before us, how useful that is for the child of God today. Is that a useful doctrine? And I know maybe that's not a word you're used to hearing, but me reading the old authors, they use it a lot. It's a useful doctrine. Useful of what? Is it something I can just pull out of my pocket? It's what the Holy Spirit uses for his children. Many times in this life I'm beaten down by the burden of sin. I'm beaten down by the things that I do, the things I don't want to do, which we'll talk about in just a minute. But we have this ascended Lord that brings me to the throne and shows me what he's done on my behalf; what he has put away on my behalf; what he has cast away.

The burden of sin has been rolled off my back because of him and unless he is interceding for me over and over, revealing that to me over and over, how would I know? I mean, I've heard it before. I've heard it from the pulpit. I've preached it from the pulpit, but unless it is lived out every day, that's what the Holy Spirit reveals to us. That's Christ in us. "This is what I've done. This is what I continue to do for the child of God."

John said it this way in 1 John 2:1, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." I love this passage right here because if it was cut off right there, you and I would be sitting there going, "Uh-oh, that we sin not." We're in trouble, but then immediately he says, "And if any man sin," because John knows we are fallen. John knows that we are going to sin daily. "If any man sin, we have an advocate," we have one pleading our cause. We have one standing there presenting his righteousness to the Father, not yours and mine. His merit and what he has done. That's the gloriousness of our ascended Lord that is interceding on behalf of us.

"We have an advocated with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Jesus Christ the righteous one. I hope you don't look today at yourself and sit there and start to think, "Well, there are a lot of things that make me righteous. I came to church this morning. You know, I got up and I prayed this morning. I read my Bible this morning. I've done all these things and these are really righteous acts." And if that's what makes you righteous, it will lead you to a most miserable life because there are going to be many days that you don't do those things because do you know what? You're not faithful. You're not faithful, but the Lord is faithful. This is what he does on behalf of his children on a daily basis, he makes intercession. There is no moment of any day that the Lord is not interceding for his people.

Now, you think about that. We've all been children at one time in our life and we always like when our parents took care of us, when they gave us meals and they took care of us and they were constantly there waiting on us hand and need and taking care of us that way. We all love that. We all love that when our loved ones do that for us. Well, you think about that: our Lord doesn't take any time off. He is constantly there interceding for the child of God. That, to me, is a really peaceful concept. "Lord, I'm not faithful." That's okay, I am. I am faithful.

It seems as though the burden of sin in this life really does burden a child of God and I have to go over to my old favorite here because every time I read it, I spend a lot of time in Romans 7. I spend a lot of time there. A lot of time in my thoughts, a lot of times in my meditations, because I can identify with Paul. When I went there this morning to Romans 7 before I came here, I looked at the top of my Bible and you know how they have those little sayings at the top on all the pages? Mine is labeled this way, "The Struggle Against Sin." The struggle against sin and that just ministered to me. I said, "Yes, Paul, you know that struggle. You know the things that you want to do, you can't do. You know the things and the desire because of the seed of Christ in you, that you desire to love Christ. You desire to do what's right, but you find something in you that doesn't desire it."

So when we go to the end of Romans 7, this burden of sin he says in verse 24, "O wretched man that I am!" I wonder if that's your testimony this morning? Can you stand with the Apostle Paul, one who the Lord knocked off his horse and revealed himself so mightily to, but yet stands here in this passage and says, "Listen, I have this great struggle with sin, against sin." It is a mighty, mighty foe.

"O wretched man that I am!" I think about that. When I read that this morning, the Holy Spirit just spoke to me and said, "Yes, you are. Yes, what a wretched man you are. Let me explain to you how you are. Let me show you how far short you come to the glory of God." He convinces me of sin. He convinces me that I'm a sinner. "O wretched man that I am!" But he doesn't leave me there. The call of the Spirit is to call out for the Lord who salvation is in. The Holy Spirit testifies of him. The two are God.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It's not a question that is left unanswered. It is, it is the cry of the child of God when we're left there and we're sitting there and we're saying, "Yes, Lord, you're right. I am guilty. I have done this. I have thought these thoughts this weekend. I have thought these hard thoughts this morning. You're right, Lord, I'm not trusting you right now."

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Then Paul is brought to the ascension reality, the resurrection power of life reality, the life of Christ reality, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind," what mind is that? That's what he says later, "Let this mind be in you, the mind of Christ." "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Listen, if we stayed right there, I mean, it's glorious but then it's burdensome because you look on the glorious side and you say, "Oh, thank the Lord that I have a new man. That I have one in me. I have the seed of Christ that loves the Lord. That follows the Lord. That doesn't sin." But then you look at the other side and you go, "Oh no, but I also have this horrible wretched self in me."

If you ever get a moment and on a side note, I read an excerpt from one of the books, "A Feast of Fat Things," and it was Gilbert Beebe and it was called "The Riddle" and it's about the new and the old man moving into the same body; the old man who had lived there many years and then the new man moved in. It's a great dialogue. It's beautifully written about the struggle that goes on in the child of God and that's why he called it "The Riddle" because when he got to the end of it, he asked the reader, "Is this a riddle to you? Do you know anything about this struggle? Is it just something that you've just read and you just sit there and go, 'Wow, that's very strange how he wrote that,' or is it something that you live every day?"

How true that is. That's what verse 25 leaves me to. It leaves me there to see both sides warring, but verse 1 of chapter 8 says, "There is therefore now," this is our state here but guess what? "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Eternal vital union. Those who are in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation for them. None. You say, "Oh, well I've got this warfare going on so there must be condemnation because sometimes that old nature rises above. He moves in ahead and he puts that guy, the other

one, he makes him go down in the basement." That's what he said. The new man moved into the upstairs but then when the old man started beating on him he said, "No, you go down to the basement," and he had to live down in the basement because the old man was exalted. It's beautifully written, like I said. I can't do it justice up here.

"There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." There is no condemnation for the child of God because he has Christ in him, the hope of glory, and praise be to God that that's in you. Praise be to God that that's an ascension reality, that he is reigning, because do you know what? What we're going to talk about here in the next section which we're getting to now, if we go back to our text in Psalm 68, the next section says, "thou hast led captivity captive," and in the Hebrew it says, "thou has led a multitude of captives captive."

What does that mean? It means he has taken and thrown into captivity all of our enemies. All of the ones that would take us captive. And that's that old nature I was just talking about, that sin which...the burden of sin, I can't even do that justice to what a weight that is for the child of God until the Lord rolls it off his back by revealing to him Christ in him, Christ's finished work, Christ putting it away.

He has bound them all up in chains. That's what it says right here. "Thou hast led captivity captive." Remember when David wrote this, the Lord's not even here yet, but he said, "Listen, in your ascension, you are taking all of the enemies and you have bound them up, you have put them under your feet. You have defeated every one of them. You have bound them in chains." We're going to talk about that.

When he ascended up into heaven, he ascended as a conqueror. He is the ascended conqueror. He has ascended and he has conquered all of hell; he has conquered sin; he has conquered death; he has conquered self. We're going to talk about in a minute why we still feel those things.

He has chained every one of our enemies that assail us every day, that harass us every day. 1 John 3:8 says, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." For this purpose. He was manifested, he came, he died, he rose again, he ascended into heaven, to put down the works of the devil.

Now, we all know 1 Corinthians 15, right? If you don't want to turn with me, that's fine but I'm going to read it for you. 1 Corinthians 15 at the end, verse 55, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" You and I in our carnal thoughts, we think the grave always wins. Death is undefeated, man says. "Oh, death will get you. It is appointed to all of you to die." What you don't understand and I hope the Holy Spirit impresses upon the children of God today, is that death has been defeated. For the child of God, he passes to life, life in eternal happiness with the Lord.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." These are all the things. "But thanks be to God, which

giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." That's an ascension reality. Our Lord has conquered those enemies. He has brought those enemies captive with him and if you don't think they're captive, just read the first part of Job. It will show you that that enemy, that enemy Satan, could do nothing without going to the Lord for permission and that might be hard for you to sit there and understand today. It might be hard to look this sovereign God in the face and say, "Why would you do such a thing? Why would you say to Satan, why would you say to him, Have you considered my servant, Job? He's upright. Why would you do that, Lord?" And maybe that's the thing that we sit there and we draw back in our seat today and we say, "Oh my goodness, Lord, don't do that with me." Well, I've got news for you: if you're a child of God, the Lord does do that. There are allowances made in this life for those enemies: Satan, sin. But why? Why? What was the end of Job? What did the Lord bring Job to see? That Christ is his all in all. That Christ is his life.

Sometimes in this life we become so burdened with this life that we start to cooperate with God. We start to think that we have some kind of say or some kind of presence in this life that's going to help us along or help us in religion. That has to be stripped and you might not like the way this sovereign God does it. Our flesh definitely does not like the way he does it, but the new man does because the new man knows how powerful this enemy is inside of you. We know how powerful this enemy is inside of us that has to be put down and how does the Lord do that in the child of God? He reveals how wicked it is.

Do you flee from your old man? I guess I should say that better, do you want to flee from your old man? Do you want to get as far from him as you possibly can? Do you want Satan out of your life? Do you desire that sin is not something that burdens you every day? If you do, it's because the seed of Christ is in you. If you don't and you don't give any thought to that, you're in trouble. You're in big trouble because you're just right in the pot with all the religious world today, that it's a head knowledge and that's all I need to have today, is I just need to know that God is a Savior. I don't need to know that I have to have salvation, I just need to know that he's a Savior and I'm going to go out and I'm going to live my life any way I want to. But the child of God can't and he won't because of the Lord's presence in his soul and the Lord's means that he uses to humble the child of God and bring him to him and praise be to God that he does because you and I left to ourselves are not going to humble ourselves, and we're not going to seek the low seats, and we're not going to think of others above ourselves. We're not. We prove it out every day.

Listen to what David says in Psalm 142:7, "Bring my soul out of prison." David, you're a king. David, you're one after God's own heart. What prison? You've never been put in prison. What are you talking about?

"Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name." What? We can't praise him unless the Lord brings our soul out of prison. The burden of sin puts our soul in prison. Our old nature puts our soul in prison. We need a deliverer. We need an ascended deliverer who is interceding for us.

"Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me." Listen to that, one end to the other, small verse, "Bring my soul out of prison," and ends in, "thou shalt deal bountifully with me." Do you know what? His prayer was answered in the same verse because you're not going to see that the Lord deals bountifully with you unless your soul is brought out of prison, unless your soul is brought to see this Lord who has ascended up on high and he has led captivity captive.

But I've already said and made allusion to the fact of how those enemies come into the child of God on a daily basis. All throughout this word we see the Lord using metaphors of fire, how the child of God must be tried in the fire. How everything must be tried in the fire, in fact, Isaiah 31:9 says this, "And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the LORD," now listen to this ending, "saith the LORD, whose fire is in Zion." Zion, that's the people of God. "Whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace is in Israel." Why would the Lord need a fire and a furnace among the people of God? Well, Paul said it this way when he said in 1 Corinthians 3:13, "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." And praise be to God that he does, that he tries that fire. "Is this my work, Lord? Is this my wood, hay and stubble? Or is this your work, Lord? The rubies, the gold, the silver, the precious stones?" Which one is it? Do you want to know today? Do you want to know before this Almighty God where you stand and who you stand in? If you stand at all, it must be in this eternal vital union in Christ who has stood for us. Who stands for us in his righteousness.

We must be in him, in his holiness, in his righteousness. That's what his presence in us is, it's such a beautiful union. Peter said it this way that, "The trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth." Is the trial of your faith more precious? That's what happened with Job. Job was brought to see that. Job was brought to put the hand on his mouth and say, "Lord, I shouldn't have spoken all this time. Speak to me, Lord." And when the Lord revealed himself, the depth of what he did in the soul of Job, Job cried out in thankfulness. But that wasn't Job's work. That was the Lord trying him in the furnace, the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth. I can't tell you that. Is it more precious to you to have the Lord try that faith whether it's real or not, or is it the things of the world that are more precious to you? I know. I've been there. I've sat in the seat, I've curled up and I've said, "No, Lord, I don't want it. Can't there be another way? Can't there be another way?"

Okay, I've got to put in one more plug for the book "The Feast of Fat Things." There is another story in there called "The Celestial Railroad." If you've read "Pilgrim's Progress" it's a pickup on "Pilgrim's Progress," but it's years later and now they have put in a railroad. They have put in a railroad that goes and takes you to the Celestial City so you don't have to have the pilgrim walk anymore. That's false religion and that's the whole purpose of this beautifully written story again. I'll tell you what, it was a great week for being fed. Fat things. It was a feast. But how beautifully it was written and all through this time he's on this railroad because he wanted the ease. He saw the pilgrims running out there and walking just like Pilgrim was and he says, "I don't want to go there. It's a lot easier on this train." And we went to Vanity Fair, we made the Delectable Mountains and

we went through all this and he just stayed on the train. By the way, the captain of the train was Apollyon and that should tell you all that you need to know.

All those riders said, "Oh no. Let's make fun of those pilgrims out there. Let's make fun of them. Look at them, they're trying to stay on the straight and narrow. Oh, it's a broad way. Let's go down this broad...look how beautiful this train is. Look at all the men. Look at all the gold. Look how easy it is." Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.

How good is our Lord to reveal that to us while we live here? And that's the thing. The pastor preached last week about the rest and that's the end of all of this. The Lord reveals everything to us here and what we fight against, but when he reveals his Son, that's where rest is. How could we not have that here? How could we not taste of Christ's finished work here? If we didn't, it would be a never ending job to reach heaven, which was another story in that book called "The Never Ending Task For Arminians," which was written by Gadsby. As you know by now, I'm plugging the book. You should get the book and may the Lord bless it.

But what a blessing it is to see our ascended conqueror, our ascended Lord. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men." Thou hast received gifts for men. Now listen to the Hebrew translation. I mean, this one is fine, but the Hebrew translation of this is, "thou hast received gifts in the man." All the gifts that we receive is in the God-man, is in Christ Jesus. I thought about the Scriptures speak everywhere about what Christ has done for his people.

Where am I going to go? Where am I going to go? The Lord took me to Colossians. Let's go to Colossians real quick. Colossians 1, let's just start in verse 12. Now remember, we could sit up here, I could speak to you about the gifts that he has given. I could speak to you about the fruit of the Spirit, I could speak to you about all that but I wanted to focus in on this. Listen to this starting in verse 12, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness." Who has delivered us. These are the gifts. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have," here are the gifts, "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created," here are the gifts, it's all given to the child of God, "that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things," I don't see anything left out of that, "all things he might have the preeminence." Everything is his. I hope you understand that early in your life that everything you have is not by your hands. If you're a child of God, everything you have is from him. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."

Now, just go over to 2 real quick to verse 13, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him." What gift is that? Quickened his life. It's life in Christ. "Quickened together with him having forgiven you all trespasses." Can you think of a better gift? If you've been aware of sin, you can't. You can't think of a better gift. If you're under the burden of sin, you understand what a great gift this is. This is the unspeakable gift.

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us." He fulfilled the law. He took that sting of the law out. The have to, the must do, you've got to do, the duty. It's gone. It's swallowed up in him. That's what it is finished for the child of God. That's the gifts that he has ascended up on high. That's what he intercedes on our behalf. That's what he's revealing to his children today. No more can ye.

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." That's the gifts the Lord has given. That's what he's done. He's made an open triumph in his ascension. That's what I hope the reality is to you today. He has defeated these enemies. They are under his feet. They are for his sovereign use and to cast them away when he's done with them for the glory of him and for the good of his people, his church.

Now, I hadn't planned on this, but while we're over here let's just turn over to Ephesians 4 real quick. Ephesians 4 is where this is mentioned again. This passage that is our text today, Paul mentions it in Ephesians 4 and the reason I bring this up now is because Paul in verse 8, he takes the gifts and he talks about what the Lord has given the church, so listen to this, verse 8, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? " That's what we've talked about all day, the Lord thought it not robbery to leave heaven and to come down here to save his people from their sins. The same one that descended is the same one who ascended up into heaven.

"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." This is him reigning. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry," this is more gifts. I told you we could go all over the Scriptures and see what Christ has left and done for his people. He has made everything. All sufficiency is in him. The child of God may wander in this world trying to go outside of Christ to see what the world has, but he can't. He may be suffered for a while but the Lord brings him back and says, "Why? Where else can you go? Where else can you go? Everything is in me," and he brings the child of God to banquet at his table and do you know what? The Lord is enough. He is my portion. He is my all in all. That's what all in all means. There is nothing deficient in him but the Lord has to show us that and he has to show it to us because we are stubborn sheep. We're going to be wayward sheep. We're going to keep going, "Well, maybe Christ will be over here and maybe we can find

something better over here." Contentment is in Christ alone. Godliness with contentment is great gain. That godliness is Christ in you.

Now let's go back to our text. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also." That's the beauty. That's why I love this. You say, "Here is how I merited these gifts. Here's what I did to earn these gifts." Nope, "for the rebellious also." Paul said it this way in 1 Timothy 1:15, he says, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief." The Apostle Paul, "I am a sinner. I am a sinner. I'm a rebellious one." Jesus said it this way in Matthew 9:13, "But go ye and learn what that meaneth. I will have mercy and not sacrifice for I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." What does that mean? Do you know what it does? It magnifies the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It magnifies grace. What Christ has done magnifies grace. It takes the creature out of it, it takes all the merit of man out of it and puts it down and it magnifies and gives a preeminence to Christ and Christ alone who is the head of the church where the proper crown is to be put, on the head of the church.

Of course, we know Ephesians 2. I'll read it real quick. Ephesians 2:8-10 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." That's what "for the rebellious also." It has nothing to do with you and me. Are you rebellious? Or do you think you're not rebellious? Because if you're not rebellious, I don't know what to tell you. Have a good life. Live above everything. I mean, I'm happy for you. I just don't think it's true. I think the child of God must be convinced of sin because if he's not, he's not going to need a Savior. He's not going to want a Savior. He's not going to desire a Savior.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship." I could read these verses all day long. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Is that not all of him? I hope it is to you.

Then the last part of our text this morning, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." That's particular. That's discriminating grace, that the Lord God might dwell among them. The ascension reality in the child of God, do you want to know what it produces? I won't tell you but Isaiah will. Let's go to Isaiah 57:15. Do you want to know if you have Christ's work in your soul? Here's what Isaiah 57:15 says, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him," listen, "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." What Christ has done on the cross does not make you proud and haughty. What Christ has done on the cross for you humbles the child of God and makes him dependent upon the Lord who is everything for him.

"I dwell with them. I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite

ones." Interceding. That's what he does. He revives us and revives us again and reveals himself to us over and over as he sees that we have need of. I don't know about you, but that's every day for me.

Finally, finally we end today in 2 Corinthians 6. You say, "Why? What's the point we're trying to make?" That the Lord God might dwell among us. It is discriminating grace that he dwells among his people. He does not dwell, dwell meaning abide, dwell meaning relationship with those outside of him. I know that sounds weird to even have to say it but sadly we have to say it. Verse 14, chapter 6, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living Go," now here's the part we're getting to, "as God hath said, I will dwell in them," discriminating. Did you not hear that whole part that there are believers and there are unbelievers and he doesn't dwell with the unbelievers? And he tells the people of God, "You shouldn't be either." There is no communion with light and darkness, with Satan and Christ. There is just none. It doesn't matter what you say, this is how the Lord has pronounced it.

"God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." There is union. "I will be their God." What more? I can't answer that for you in that seat today. What more could you ask for? What more could you need in this life? The Lord says, "I will dwell with you." Is he enough? Is he enough?

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." What is the unclean thing? Well, he just told you, the unequally yoking. That's the unclean thing and that's in his eyes. Once again, I'm not talking about what's in our eyes and how we try to make it clean, I'm talking about his eyes.

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." Wow. So the Lord's grace is discriminating. It's particular and it's glorious.

"And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." What more do you want?

Back in our text one more time, Psalm 68:18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." May he dwell with each one of his people now in power and in peace in your soul.

*Dear heavenly Father, most precious and holy Lord, add thy power and thy clarity, remove any error, for the praise and glory of thee. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*