

Ian Hamilton Gospel Shaped Life 1 20190215c

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Preacher: Ian Hamilton

[0 : 00] Let me read a few verses, first of all from Isaiah chapter 62, the first five verses and then one verse in Romans 6, verse 17.

! Our doctoral students asked me after an evening service, what is it about John Owen that you so like?

And almost without thinking, I replied, he takes me into another world. So, there will be some of Owen tonight, hopefully not over much to overwhelm you, but enough, hopefully, to whet your appetite and make you go back and call the banner of truth a Monday and buy the 16 volumes of his collected works.

Or at least the first three volumes, and then volumes 6 and 7, 10, 13, 15 and 16. The rest you can leave until later.

Isaiah chapter 62. For Zion's sake, I will not keep silent. And for Jerusalem's sake, I will not be quiet until her righteousness goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a burning torch.

[1 : 34] The nation shall see your righteousness and all the kings your glory. And you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give.

You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed forsaken.

And your land shall no more be termed desolate. But you shall be called, my delight is in her. And your land married.

For the Lord delights in you. And your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you.

And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. And one verse in Romans 6, verse 17.

[2 : 40] But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard or pattern or mold of teaching to which you were committed.

Over the weekend, tonight, tomorrow and on Sunday, five occasions, we'll be looking at what I've termed the gospel-shaped life.

And I thought that would be a helpful heading for the weekend. Because every Christian believer is being shaped and styled inexorably by the gospel.

We don't become clones of one another. But in our own idiosyncratic humanity, we are to betray a pattern.

Paul speaks in Romans 6, 17 there, about God's people being committed to a pattern, literally a type or mold of teaching.

[4 : 06] It's a word used in classical Greek for the imprint of a fist. A fist would smash someone in the face and would leave an imprint. Or someone would take a piece of metal and press it on another piece of metal and it would leave a discernible pattern or outline or mold.

And Paul is saying to us in Romans 6 that the gospel comes to shape and mold us into a particular pattern.

And I hope throughout the weekend we will see that principally that pattern is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's ultimate purpose does not concern you or concern me. His ultimate purpose concerns His Son Jesus Christ.

And so in Romans 8, 29 you'll know those words well, I'm sure. Where Paul says we have been predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son.

[5 : 16] That if you like is God's proximate purpose in salvation. To conform us to the likeness of His Son in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

God's ultimate purpose in salvation is the glory of His Son. We are His proximate purpose. And the Lord Jesus Christ is God's ultimate purpose.

And so I hope over the weekend we will be learning together what it means to be shaped and styled by the gospel increasingly from one degree of glory to another into the likeness of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Let me begin by asking you a question. What do you think at this moment is the greatest hindrance to you in your Christian life and experience?

What is it that you think most hinders you from going on with Christ as you would want to? What most hinders you what holds you back more than anything else from being the Christian you want to be and from being the Christian that God Himself wants you to be?

[6 : 42] What is the greatest hindrance in your Christian life? John Owen wrote about that and he said this our greatest hindrance in the Christian life is not our lack of effort but our lack of acquaintedness with our privileges.

Our greatest hindrance in the Christian life is not our lack of effort but our lack of acquaintedness with our privileges.

And what the New Testament I think probably more than anything else is seeking to say to the people of God behold your God and the great privileges that He has lavished upon you in His Son Jesus Christ.

Behold your God and the lavishness of the privileges that He has made over to you in your union with Jesus Christ.

And chief amongst those privileges I think is learning taking to heart what it is that God says about us because of our union with His Son Jesus Christ.

[8 : 15] We read those words at the beginning of Isaiah chapter 62. They're remarkable words.

Every time I read them I almost wonder can this really be true. You might think that's a silly thing to say.

The Bible is wholly true from beginning to end. Absolutely. But there are truths in Scripture that are so out of this world so beyond all imagining that you have to almost pinch yourself to believe them. Listen to what we read again. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord. Speaking of the remnant the people of God the faithful the true who have remained steadfast and whom ultimately God will bring to glory in his son Jesus Christ.

He says you are a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord. You are a royal diadem in the hand of your God. This is what you are if you belong to Jesus Christ here tonight.

you shall be called my delight is in her. God delights in his people.

[9 : 35] As a young man marries a young woman so shall your sons marry you and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride so shall your God rejoice over you.

God rejoices over his people. The prophet Zephaniah puts it even more strikingly when he speaks of God not only rejoicing over his people but singing over his people.

Singing with joy and with delight. John Owen in volume 2 of his collective words communion with God picks up this idea of his truth and he says this now Christ delights exceedingly in his saints.

As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride so shall thy God rejoice over thee Isaiah 62 5 listen to this God's heart is glad in us without sorrow and every day while we live is his wedding day.

Thoughts of communion with the saints were the joy of his heart from eternity. I can still remember the day I first read those words.

[11 : 03] I had to stop reading. I could hardly take in intellectually far less spiritually what Owen was saying. Thoughts of communion with the saints were the joy of his heart from eternity.

Our greatest hindrance in the Christian life is not our lack of effort but our lack of acquaintedness with our privileges. And chief amongst those privileges is how precious believers are to their God. He rejoices over us. He delights in us without sorrow. And you think can that be true? Is Owen not overstating the case?

Surely we have the capacity to grieve God. Ephesians 4.30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Absolutely says Owen. But even as we grieve God and even as he is grieved with us by our grieving him and disciplines us and chastens us he never stops loving us cherishing us delighting in us.

John Owen is noted for many things but perhaps one of his greatest contributions to experimental heart religion is the way in the second volume of his collected works communion with God the way he highlights how believers have communion with God communion with the Holy Trinity communion

with the Father communion with the Son and communion with the Holy Spirit love is the benediction in 2nd Corinthians 13 the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you and from that starting point Owen shows us that remarkably in the New Testament in particular love is almost always if not always predicated of the

[13 : 33] Father grace is almost always if not always predicated of the Son and comfort is almost always if not always predicated of the Holy Spirit and Owen goes on to show that in particular and unique ways the believer has communion with the Father in love communion with the Son of God in grace in his personal grace and in his purchased grace as mediator and we have communion with the Holy Spirit and comfort now Owen is too much of an Orthodox Trinitarian not to realise that some people would have been asking but how can that possibly be surely what one person in the Godhead does they all do and Owen recognises that there was a famous Latin tag *opera ad extra trinitatis indivis* assumed meaning the works external to the trinity are done by each of them and all of them together they are indivisible in what they do and Owen recognises that believes that teaches that but he says notwithstanding that there is an eminency that's Owen's word there is an eminency whereby love is predicated of the father God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that's the father in this is love not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins that's the father now he's not saying that we don't have communion with the son of

God in love the son of God loved me and gave himself for me Galatians 2 he's not saying we don't even have communion with the Holy Spirit in love James chapter 4 verse 5 the spirit who yearns jealously within us with that burning jealous love that will brook no rivals he's not saying we don't have communion with the son in love or with the spirit in love but he's saying by way of eminency it is the father who is set before us and the same with grace it's the son that's set before us and with comfort it's the Holy Spirit who is set before us and Owen develops this in really stunning ways if I could encourage you to read anyone book it probably would be communion with God in the preface Owen says I think in writing this book I'm doing what no one else before me has ever done and that's a huge claim he writes it in 1657

I think and he's saying that for the previous 16 centuries no one has ever done what I'm going to be doing and I think he's! probably right and I want to focus just on one little segment of what Owen teaches in that volume 2 the major section of volume 2 is communion with the son there are 27 pages on communion with the father in love there are about nearly 50 pages on communion with the holy spirit and comfort and there's 157 pages on communion with christ in grace 27 with the father in love 157 with the son in grace and almost 50 with the holy spirit you think it's a strange imbalance not at all season because we only ever have communion with

God in union with the mediator it's the mediatorial work of christ that centers stage so even as we have communion with the father in love it is because of our mediator Jesus Christ in whom we are and through whom by whom and in whom we come to the father but there's one area in Owen's exposition of communion with the son in love that I simply want to reflect on in the limited time we have left he says we have communion with the son of God in his personal grace he is the love he the fair the son of songs he says we have communion with

[18 : 51] Christ and the beauty of his person he is the altogether lovely one he is the fairest of ten thousand and he elaborates quite remarkably I think but quite biblically on the winsomeness the attractiveness of the person of the God man but then he looks at Christ's purchased grace as the mediator who by his incarnate life by his saving substitutionary atoning death and by his bodily resurrection and ascension has secured an everlasting redemption for the people of God and as he comes to the climax of his exposition of communion with the son in his purchased grace Owen says we have communion with Christ above all else in the grace of privilege before

God the highest of which is adoption it's very Calvin the greatest privilege we have before God is the privilege of our adoption as his sons and daughters in Jesus Christ remember the words of Owen at the beginning what is our greatest hindrance in the Christian life it's not our lack of effort but our lack of acquainted with our privileges answers Owen the summit of our privileges the omega point of our privileges the highest peak of all our privileges is our adoption in Jesus Christ and so Owen writes the privileges we enjoy by Christ are great and innumerable to insist on them in particular were the work for a man's whole life not a design to be wrapped up in a few sheets I shall take a view of them only in the head the spring and fountain whence they all arise and flow this is our adoption all the privileges we have all the blessings we enjoy the unsearchable riches

that have come to us in our Lord Jesus Christ flow out of our adoption as his sons and daughters and as Owen comes to the end of his remarkable movie you know Owen writes in long complex Latin and co-ordinate sentences and at times he can be a little dense I don't think I've ever read Owen on volume 2 volume 1 or volume 3 in particular and not been moved to tears and what he does at the end as he seeks to draw his exposition of communion with the sun to its climax he tells us that in the adoption that we enjoy in our union with

Jesus Christ we have communion in six significant areas of life let me just mention them in the few minutes we have left first of all we have communion or fellowship in name in name we are says Owen as he is sons of God sons of God that is what you are Owen is saying are you grasping it are you living in the joy of it in the good of it in the blessing of it and it has a remarkable cash value if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children said Jesus in Luke 11 how much more will your father in heaven give his good gifts even the Holy Spirit to those who ask him you are his!

[23 : 33] he has adopted you he is your father you have fellowship in name because you belong to Jesus Christ sink your life into that own saying allow that privilege to grip you embrace you entrance you I don't know about you but I would guess most of you are much like me I constantly and probably that's not an overstatement I constantly speak to myself and I'm saying Ian how can you be so unmoved by this wonder of wonders that you who were once a child of God's wrath deserving of everlasting burnings are now a son of his love you know we we sing about amazing grace but what's so amazing about grace when were you when was I last overwhelmed by the inexplicable wonder that once we were the children of God's wrath but by his grace we are now the sons of his love and so

Owen says we have fellowship in name but more than that secondly we have fellowship or communion in title and right he quotes Romans 8 17 we have in our adoption become co-heirs with Jesus Christ joint heirs together with Christ of the glory of God you know if it wasn't in the Bible you wouldn't believe it I'm talking to Paul and Claire I'm just not into fantasy I'm just not into fantasy I'm just not into fantasy I remember when Lord of the Rings came out in the cinema a girl in our church in Cambridge called Arwen from Chicago emailed me Lord of the Rings has been in the cinema four hours have you seen it yet and I replied no but I've read War and Peace twice of you he said no I haven't but there is nothing more fantastic out of this world almost unimaginably unbelievable that the dust of the earth fallen dust are by the grace the adopting grace of God joined heirs together with

Jesus Christ of the glory of God I don't know about you I can't get my head around that I think every time I've preached on those verses in Romans 8 I've had to confess I don't know what to say now I don't really know what that means I can parse the sentence I can parse every word in the sentence I don't really know what it means it's just out of this world we have fellowship or communion in name fellowship or communion in title and right thirdly we have fellowship or communion in likeness and conformity we are predestined to be like the firstborn of the family if you are a Christian if you have come in self abandoning trust to Jesus Christ laid hold of him as he is freely held out to us pleadingly by God in the gospel you are being conformed patterned after the likeness of the firstborn of the family God has saved you to make you like his son and if anyone ever says to you what are you doing with your life you can say well the significant thing is not what I'm doing with my life but what God is doing with my life and at our lowest moments as well as at our highest moments when life is going well with us and when everything is turning to dust and ashes in our hands we have this confidence God has predestined us from times eternal to be like the firstborn of the family that's why

I think the New Testament is relatively unconcerned about how people come to faith in Jesus Christ I think the Bible as a whole really is unconcerned but what deeply concerns them number one is that people come to Christ and in coming to Christ become increasingly conformed to Jesus Christ and then one says fourthly we have fellowship and honour if someone usually it's in America people will say to you what's your favourite text well what day is it and what time of the day is it but there are two or three texts that I would usually default to one of them is Hebrews 2 verse 11 in the own quotes here fellowship and honour he is not ashamed to call us brothers he is not ashamed [29 : 51] I don't think that's my totemus I don't think it's he's actually proud to call us brothers I think the writer to the Hebrews I have a sneaking suspicion actually it was Paul but we'll pass that by these Hebrews were disinherited they were despised they were marginalised the world would look

down on them as the offscouring of the world and the writer is saying this world despises you but the son of God is not ashamed of you it's like when Romans 1 16 17 I'm not ashamed of the gospel I don't think that's like totes I don't think Paul is saying really I'm actually proud of the gospel I think he's saying you Romans live in a world where the gospel of the son of God is despised but I am not ashamed of the gospel and here the Lord Jesus Christ says I am not ashamed he's not ashamed to call us his brothers his sisters you know there have been days

I've lived in the good of those few words I just find some of these texts these golden texts bewildering it's like when I first read Owen thoughts of communion with the saints were the delight of his heart from eternity I remember thinking are you serious the son of God looked forward with joy to having communion with me is it not enough Lord just to be saved from hell and brought to heaven that would be a wonder wonders to spend the ages of eternity marveling at but you look forward with joy communion communion he he is not ashamed to call us his brothers that puts a string in your step and firstly we have communion of fellowship and sufferings just as our Lord Jesus learned obedience by what he suffered Hebrews 5 made and every son is to be scourged that is to be received so part of our privilege in adoption is to have the spirit who first replicated perfect holy humanity in the son of God to bring that pattern of replication and to lay it on our lives because it will be with us as it was with him no cross no crime we have fellowship in his sufferings Philippians 3 10 and that's part of our privilege God is conforming us to his son and as he learned obedience by what he suffered so it's inescapable that likeness to the Lord Jesus will involve us in the crucible of affliction compared to many in this world I've known nothing of affliction I'm almost embarrassed at times to say I've ever suffered compared to what my brothers and sisters in some parts of the world are experiencing but in the partisan providence of God whether there or here there is a crucible and those who are going to reign with him have to suffer with him sometimes I read in the Psalms and the thought initially comes when God's people are suffering and they're crying out and saying Lord what have we done I almost think the Lord is responding by saying you've actually done nothing I'm just conforming you to the likeness of my son and then the sixth thing Owen says we have communion with Christ and his kingdom we will reign with him we will reign with him we'll be seated on thrones with him what Owen is seeking simply to do is to say do you understand are you grasping are you beginning to begin to grasp the privileges that are yours in your union with Jesus Christ I'm sure it's true to say and I wonder if it's true for you as I believe before God it's been true for me that nothing more helps me to resist the devil nothing more helps me to refuse to watch internet pornography nothing more helps me to seek poorly perhaps to be faithful and obedient to my saviour than a growing appreciation of just how blessed and privileged

[35 : 32] I am in Jesus Christ I wonder how Joseph would fill out the content of those words in Genesis 39 how could I do such a thing and sin against God I'd like to ask him one day Joseph what was in your mind when you spoke those words how could I blessed of God kept by God saved by God how could I do such a thing and sin against God I was saying this maybe yesterday or the day before I can't remember when you look at say Paul's letter to the Ephesians and look at the grammatical landscape you can see something quite stunning in the first three chapters there's a ratio of indicatives to imperatives of forty to one there's only one imperative there in the first three chapters of

Ephesians I wonder if you can think what it is but in the second three chapters there are forty imperative there's a forty to one ratio of indicative to imperative in chapters one to three and there's a one point eight to one ratio of indicatives to imperatives in the second three chapters you know what Paul is saying before I tell you how you have to live let me tell you what God has done for you in his son give me leisure or leisure for you who come from across the point give me leisure to just let it out and so you have a two hundred and two word sentence in the first chapter verses three to fourteen two hundred and two words in the Greek text because he wants them to to become better acquainted with their privileges so the mold of teaching into which we are being poured is a mold that predominantly is shaped and styled by the privileged blessings that God has lavished upon his people in his son

Jesus Christ so our great need tonight mine and hopefully perhaps yours as well is to become better acquainted with our privileges we'll pray