Luke - Commentaries by Frederick George Patterson

Words of Truth: Volume 2, Christ Known to the Soul

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The first thing for a soul to know is that Christ is absolutely for it. When it learns that He is absolutely for it, then it learns to be absolutely for Him, and never till then. It is what most people are looking for at the end of their lives, on their death-beds, and so they never really are Christians in the true, full sense, till then. When a person who makes a certain amount of profession is not devoted to Christ, the cause is, they have not yet learned what it is to know Christ in such a state of exigence that none other could avail but He. Christ being absolutely for me means this, that I have learned to realize that He was the only one when the thick darkness of a dread eternity was pressing itself upon my sin-stained soul—when none else could have reached a hand which would then be of any avail but His; that He stretched out His arm and grasped me in His mighty hand, and brought me to Himself—then I am His, and His forever! But souls have not come to that; they are religious and devoted, but they have not learned that Christ is absolutely for them.

It is Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, whose conversion is related here, and who, we find, was so absolutely a debtor to grace. May we learn what grace does. What is the use of looking at a thing, if I do not see what it does for me?

Now, I ask, what has grace done? You may say, it has relieved my conscience of a burden. That is, surely, a part of what it has done, but is only a part of the whole. Grace not only relieves me of a burden, but it links me with the Son of God. What love does for me is this—(benevolence does a favor for a person who needs it, and has done with them when the favor is performed); love does a favor, and is more interested in the person than ever! The very time that love enjoys itself most, is when it has done all it can do for its object. Love enjoys itself most when the object wants nothing at all. It only uses need as an opportunity to express itself. A mother is devoted to her sick child, but surely that mother will not enjoy her child less when he is well, and does not need so much. I want to show souls what the grace of God effects for them; not only does it remove an intolerable burden, but it bestows upon you the life of the One who has relieved you of that intolerable burden. When you know this, and that the Lord is absolutely for you, you then learn to be absolutely for Him, in this evil world.

Now see what the Lord does here. He sees two ships by the lake, He enters into one of them, and tells Peter to thrust out from the laud, and then sat down and taught the people out of the ship. Peter was a well-disposed man, and did much more for the Lord than many of whom there is good hope at the present moment. I think Peter did a good deal—very few would give both their time and their means to Christ. That was really what Peter did (a fisherman's boat was surely his time and his money); if you did not get the rest of the chapter you would say Peter was a devoted saint. Doubtless, he took a certain interest in Christ, but what I have plainly before me is, that persons may do all this, and yet never have learned that Christ is absolutely for them. Peter had still to find that there was one to stand between him and the living God who could first, having awakened the fear in his heart, take the fear out of that heart forever! God grant it to be the history of every one of my readers. May everyone of them learn to say, "He has taken the fear out of my heart, I know He is absolutely for me, and I am absolutely for Him." Grace takes all the impediments out of the way and brings you into everlasting union with Christ; and the effect of it all is, as we shall presently see, to lead the soul to forsake all and follow Him.

Now, if you had been standing by that lake, and had seen Peter giving up his ship, which was the only means of his support, in pious obedience to the Lord's wishes, you would have said, "Well, that's a true man; he has a heart for Christ." It was as much for Peter to give his time and his ship as for the greatest man in the land to give his money. But what the Lord wants is to bring his soul into the consciousness of its own state before God to bring it into contact with God Himself, for it will never otherwise understand what God has effected for it.

The Lord is about to teach Peter two things. First—The insufficiency of all temporal blessing; and, secondly—What he, as the one sent from God can be to man, in the hour of the sinner's greatest exigence—in that soul-searching moment when the soul first finds itself in the presence of the living!

Christ brings him into the presence of God, by manifesting the power of God. While, on the other hand, He had given him the temporal things he desired-he had his ship full of fish—what can all this avail for a sinner before God! What could fish do for him there? What could temporal things do for a soul when it has to look into that interminable night of eternity, and face the living God? Souls have to learn what Christ is to them, when no hand but His, no power but His own, can succor them—when they have no hope from any other quarter whatever. A death-bed brings this truth out beautifully. On a death-bed a saint finds that everything is gone. The ship is gone —fish gone, as it were, and what remains? Nothing but Christ! Oh! what delight if a soul could say, everything is gone but Christ. How happy every one of my readers would be, if each could say, "All is gone but Christ!" But, as in the picture before us, you may have got your ship as full of fish as you can; what will you do if your ship sinks? What is the state of a person when brought to this? What do we find out now? That while a person can go on in service for Christ, religious, devoted—giving both time and means to the Lord, all the time the soul has never yet learned what it is to face the interminable future—to face God, and know the power of Christ to take away fear from the heart. What then has hindered the soul from learning this? The hindering cause is, that you have not got rid of everything but Christ. You may ask, do I mean you are to lose everything. I say, yes! And will any soul say, "I have lost everything, but I've ONLY got Christ? If you lose everything and get Christ, it is gain, not loss! There is not one soul who will go to glory but must go through it. God gave His Son that He might bring you to Himself! The apostle Paul says, as it were— "I have lost all, and I'm glad of it. I count them but dung!" You perhaps think if you go to these lengths you don't know what you will come to. I know where you will come to when everything is gone. Even to have nothing but Christ! Do you call that an unhappy position? It is what every soul must come to. He is calling upon us to accept nothing short of it. The Spirit is setting it forth, but. people are limiting it to suit themselves.

Many make a fair profession, and give confidence that they are on the Lord's side, who have not learned Christ in His value. What joy to His heart when a soul finds out His value. There was one spot on earth where His worth was known; one spot to which He could retreat. That spot

was Bethany. What joy to Him to feel that there was one little family at Bethany who knew His worth. You do not find them coming to the cross or to the grave. Does your heart thus long to know the worth of Christ?

Take the case of Jonah as an example of how God teaches the soul that He is for it. He was a prophet of God; true, but willful; but God sees the fact that Jonah had never yet thoroughly learned what it was to have God for him. There is no way to bring about devotedness but by learning how fully God is for you. When we see a man giving his whole life to Christ, it is not that he is a better man, but it is because he has found out more than others of the worth of Christ! Jonah is cast into the depths. What a mercy of God to put him there, to teach him the worth of His salvation. Who could succor him now? No one but God! Do you think you know the depths to which you have gone down? Has it stung you to the heart that the flesh you bear about in you is what the Son of God agonized for and died to put away? I know for myself nothing that gives me greater pain. Nothing is to me more dreadful than to be conscious that I carry about in me a thing for which the Son of God died. That I have that evil nature about me which the cross of the Son of God could only deliver me from. God lets Jonah go down to the depths of the sea, and he there says, “I will look again toward thy holy temple.” Who but God can be for Jonah now? And so he learns it. Some of us have to find this out still. Oh! blessed moment when his soul discovers that it is God’s own Son who has liberated him from himself. What does Peter discover? “I am a sinful man, O Lord.” “Depart from me, I am not fit for your presence.” Peter had not yet learned what it was to be in the presence of God, and to have a Saviour in that presence; but it is the same Saviour who has awakened him by the manifestation of His power, who says, “Fear not!”

Dear friends, are we speaking of these things as a mere form? Is there reality in the things of God? Is it a fact that a soul must be brought to find this out? The truth is, not that death has been merely stayed off, that I may go on in the scene. I am delivered out of it altogether. I have got to know that Jesus is “the resurrection and the life;” he that believeth shall never die. Souls never get into true full obedience to Christ till they have, learned this. In reality they have only then discovered the worth of Christ! Can anything arouse me to more unmistakable devotedness than to find I have nothing but Christ, and that HE IS EVERYTHING! If everything were lost but Himself it would be an easy thing to follow Him; but if a man gives up everything for Christ you hear it said, “What an eccentric man that is!”

Many a one who has a great respect for Christ, and interest and feeling about him, has not yet learned he has been raised out of the darkness of sin and all about him in the life of the Son of God! The necessary consequence of knowing it would be, that having found Him entirely for you, you would find your easy action would be to be entirely for Him. Like Peter, and those with him, who when they had brought their ships to land forsook all and followed Him.

Then, you ask, are we to give up everything to follow Christ? Yes; everything! But you may tell me there are some things you would not have to lose. Well, if you can follow Him with them it is all right. But, unless “a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” Then, you say, what a strange world we should have! We should not have the world at all, we should have Christ and heaven!

And now, in conclusion, I want to know what souls are going to do. Are you waiting for your deathbeds, till God brings you into some such strait that you must learn it? Would you like the glory of God to shake you from everything of earth to bring you to heaven? Where, then, is your love to that blessed One now in heaven? Where is your devotedness? Where is the chivalry of the heart? Have you not yet got such a sense of the loathsomeness of yourselves, and the wonderful work of Christ for you, that you would think nothing too great a sacrifice for Him? If you have learned to know what Christ is for you, you could not but follow Him, and find your only joy in giving up all for Him. God never asks people to give up for Him; but do I not see every day I live, proofs of love giving up for others? Children giving up for parents, parents for children, wives for husbands, husbands for wives-and does love think of the sacrifice it makes? If it thinks of it, it is not worth having. I do not believe Peter, and James, and John, thought of what they were doing when they left all and followed Him; they were thinking only of Christ! Do you think if I have learned that Christ has come to deliver me, when there was not one who had a pitying eye for me, whose help could avail but His own blessed self, and He has delivered me that I could be for anyone or anything but Himself? Am I going to cling to the paltry things of earth? No; Christ becomes the engrossing object of the heart, and the effect of the grace is, “They brought their ships to laud, forsook all and followed Him.”

I press it—if you know He is for you, you must be for Him. “A friend in need, is a friend indeed.” I have to learn that in myself I am a poor, wretched loathsome shiner; so much so, that no one would put out a finger to help me, or could, but He, and He alone. He has done so, and how then could I be for anyone or anything but Him, having learned that He is absolutely for rue? “We love Him because He first loved us.” We read, “Her sins which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” This is true devotedness to Christ.

Words of Truth: Volume 2, Have You Simeon's Faith?

There was no expectation from earth in the word of the thief on the cross when he said, “Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” But you will say he was leaving this world, and therefore it was nothing in his eyes. But here we see that Simeon—Jew as he was, had obtained such a view of Christ that everything in the world went before it even in life. “Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” As though he said “now everything in this world is as nothing to me; I’ve got a superlative thing, and in its light everything else has gone out.” In a similar view, but a more exalted one, Paul could say, “I long to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.” Stephen too, could look up to the opened heavens, indifferent to the cry and rage of the multitude.

Simeon had true ideas as to what this salvation was—He calls it God’s salvation— “Thy salvation.” Man’s idea of this salvation is that it is according to human want—God’s idea of it is,—His own excellency. To effect it, He sends His Son to be the missionary of His heart-its exponent. The blessed God descends, touches the weakest point in nature, becomes a babe. Let us give God credit for His character—let us have a good opinion of God. Do not let us limit His salvation, although some of us may not enjoy it. He met the penalty for sin, which is death and judgment. If I were to have met it, I should have sunk. If a creature merely human had gone to that cross, there would have been an end of them. They would never have risen out of it again. He connected Himself with us—with flesh and blood—died under the penalty, and rose again out of the judgment.

Now faith sees things which are invisible. Faith believes that God is; and that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him out. (Heb. 11:6.) The word “diligently” is not a correct expression here. The true idea conveyed, is that of singling out: for instance, searching among coins for one of special value. He is the rewarder of the one who makes Him their object. Faith, then, has a good opinion of God-faith seeks Him out, and He rewards the one who does so. You never hear of a worldly person rewarding importunity. The nearest simile to the thought of rewarding importunity, is that of a mother detained by her child, rewarding by caresses the love that cannot part with her. Now faith is simply a good opinion of God. Do you consider God’s love to be as great as Himself? If so, then trust His love—rejoice in His love. For love will do its utmost for its object. Believe His love then to its fullest extent. Love and obstruction cannot exist together. The necessity of love is that it will allow of no obstructions. God’s love which is perfect, allowed of none. Love is stronger than death. Do you believe this! If so, is He then your supreme object? Is He far better than the joys of earth? Do you see an excellency in Christ which puts out the lights of earth? God has moved everything out of the way for you except Christ; and do you want this scene, now that you have got His salvation?

Here I come to deal with the obduracy of the heart—my heart, and your heart. Is it to you (saved people) nothing to depart, and to be with Christ? Is all here not counted loss to you, to win Him—to be found in Him? You say, “But am I to have no natural affections? Yes, you are, but they are put upon quite another ground. You have been taken out of this world by the death of Christ, and sent into it to live Christ. Do you indeed realize what you are saved from, and do you really wish to connect yourself with it? It is true that Simeon had no desire to leave this scene until it all at once paled before him on the superior light of a revealed Christ! With the Christ of God in his arms he could say, “Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” We hear of such things at a death-bed-a longing earnest craving to depart for that which is at length beheld. Is it then, only when every link on earth is broken, that I can say, “Now I can go to you?” Is this all that is known of the excellency of Christ.

I have seen some people on death-beds. One I remember specially when the only anxiety was the fear of one moment’s interruption of what was going on between the soul and Christ. Is it possible that God has to reduce my system—to take away everything from me until I can say, “And now that all is gone, I can go to you?”

Paul was not on his death-bed when he had a desire to depart and to be with the One with whom he held such unutterable communion. Do not mistake me; I am not preaching that people should long to be out of this world: but I am preaching the superlative excellency of the glorious One for whom Paul could count all else but dross and dung.

Is it the case with you, that you are so invested with the dross, that until God removes it all, and leaves you like a dismantled tree—flowers gone—leaves gone—divested of everything; that at last you perceive the excellency of my blessed God?

As did Hezekiah, do you drive him to this? “Hezekiah” said the Lord (so to speak) “you must die and come to me.” “I cannot die,” said Hezekiah. Then God made everything he gave to Hezekiah, as you will observe. Now, do you drive him to do this also? I would rather the to everything than have everything die to me. I would rather be Paul. Are the joys of death higher, and more real than the joys of life? Do you think that the Prodigal wished to return to the husks? The thief on the cross to the world? Noah out of the Ark? No, never; although the raven might. The Prodigal knew the Father. I’ll go to Him, he said; I’ll say “Father”—I know Him now. Do you think that the Israelites saved by blood feasting on the lamb wished to go outside? And the Lamb, is He not enough for you? Suppose you were dying, then Christ would be everything to you: and why should He not be so now? You say, “But if I gave up all like that, then He would take all my Isaacs from me.” Then I see you have not a—good opinion of Him—of that heart which loves in all the might of its strength. You think possibly, that it is dangerous even to desire such things—you think God will do something terrible to you—you fear to trust Him, you don’t know what it would come to. Oh! this is stopping the way for you. Surely the saint ought to live in his own native air!

Words of Truth: Volume 5, Peace Be Unto You

It is a blessed thing a beloved friends, when one can come with distinct authority from God, and say, “Peace be unto you.” It is the more striking because the Lord, unless anticipatively, never said it before He died and rose again, because He had not made peace.

The word peace is a very full and perfect word—far more so than joy. I may have joy, and yet many things may come in to trouble me at the same time; but if I have peace, there is no trouble. When God speaks peace, there is no disquiet left at all. Trouble there must be: “in the world ye shall have tribulation.” The disciples were in a great deal of trouble, they were losing Him who had said, “Fear not” and “let not your heart he troubled.” He was full of grace, tenderness, and mercy, but still He could not speak of peace till the time of His departure; but as soon as He was going away, His word was so full and complete, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,” 1and when risen from the dead He comes and speaks of it as a present thing—peace with God, and peace from God; and remark, there was no ignorance in Him as to God’s requirement, no deception as to man’s state. He could say, “no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven.” He could tell to the full what heaven and God’s nature required, as well as what was in man; and knowing all perfectly, He could come to the poor ignorant disciples, and pronounce, “ Peace be unto you,”

It is a great thing to have it directly from the Lord Himself—not merely grace and loving-kindness, but peace.

Many souls have tasted the graciousness of Christ, and been attracted by it, who could not say they have “peace with God.” He sees all that we are—everything—our thoughts of course, long before—sees us thoroughly and completely, and yet we are in His presence without a veil!

Under the law such was not the case: then there was a veil—that which hid God from man; even the priests could not go into the presence of God, “the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest.” (Heb. 9:8.) The high priest alone went in once every year.

There was a law come out from God which required from Man, what man ought to be, hut God was hidden behind a veil. That is the state of the unconverted now; but many a converted man has still the thought that he has to look to the state he is in, and that there is a time coming when he will have to stand before God, and will then know how it will turn out with him. That is judgment, but not present peace. God does not now prescribe a course of conduct which will be judged when we come to Him; but reveals a present blessing, so as to bring the soul into His presence through the work of Christ.

It is not help I want—when I find my conscience in the presence of God, and all things naked and opened before Him. If I get there, I am there; and help will not do me then. The question is, what I am before God when I am there, and how I can stand before Him? We are all sinners, we have not kept the law, I speak now of the conscience in the presence of God. God knows everything about you: are you still insensible to your sin, still unawakened? You have not kept the law; it was made for the unrighteous, the law prohibits you from having a single evil desire. Do you love your neighbor as yourself? You know you do not, you do not feel the loss of your neighbor's fortune as your own. Well, says the law, you are under a curse, that's all! you are not loving your neighbor as yourself. Not one who reads this can say he is. This world. would be a kind of paradise, if men loved their neighbors as themselves, but they are not doing it.

The law tells you to love God with all your heart, but nobody loves God with all his heart—it is all a delusion to think it, and you do not love your neighbor as yourself. We have coveting in our hearts. The law comes and says, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Ought I not to love my neighbor as myself? of course I ought. Conscience cannot reject the thing when it comes home to it, but it makes me understand that I am rejected for not doing it!

The more we look into this and at ourselves, the more we shall see that there is not a folly in the world we do not prefer to Christ when He is presented to our hearts. Every idle vanity set up to attract one in a shop, or in the street, has more power naturally over one's heart than Christ; but Christ had to suffer for it all; and we have to learn to see that. I am speaking of the state of the hearts of those who call themselves Christians—not of those who outwardly reject Christ.

Take another way of looking at it: let an unawakened man be alone for two or three hours, and he will think, it may be of his cares, it may be of his pleasures; but he never thinks of Christ—never! Christ has no place at all in his heart.

When God is revealed the sinner sees there is a judgment coming, and says, How shall I get off? A person will often toil and labor to be better, but with all his toil he finds that evil desires are in his heart. He finds " to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." If he has got sin, and no strength, it is a bad look out for judgment! The question then is, not simply what he is, but what God is—he realizes God—the sinner brought into God's presence sees God's eye resting upon him, and has the consciousness that he must have what will cleanse him and make him fit for God.

It is no use looking for help, if I come to God: I want righteousness— not help. I have done too much sin in God's presence to be helped! That is where God brings a man. I must have the matter settled with God—I must have a present righteousness.

The sinner sees God's eye resting upon him, and if he has learned what he is in himself, he knows that he must have that which will cleanse him for God, and will give him peace in His presence, without lowering one bit the standard of God's holiness. It is impossible he could say, or would wish to say, I wish God was less holy, that I might get to heaven—he has to do with God; he must be fit for God's presence as He is. The effect of all this experience and exercise of heart is to bring him into God's presence as a sinner, because he is one; and as a sinner to get peace with a God who will not have sin.

You must get to God just as you are. Whatever defilement there is in your heart God sees it all. It was so with the prodigal—when he set out on his journey he knew he was unfit to be owned as a son—what was the effect? He got into his father's presence in his rags! It was not a question of help—he had been helped; but he was now quickened and awakened, and it brought him to his father just as he was—in his rags

This is always the case. The question now is simply this, How could he be in his father's house, when he had wasted his substance in riotous living? Are you fit for God's presence where He is, and as He is? If not you cannot have peace. You cannot cloud God's nature and enter His presence if your conscience knows there is sin upon you—it cannot be. I do not say it ought not to be, but it cannot be.

The Lord knew, and understood the whole question, and He could come here amongst them, and give His disciples present peace because He had made it. They had been with Him—His companions. "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." Peter had confessed Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and the Lord had said to him, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;" but still they had not peace. He comes in preaching peace to them; He does not keep it in His heart. Ought these disciples to have taken Him at His word, and said, Then it is peace? Of course they ought. It is evident when He said peace, they ought to have had peace. Not peace without God—no one ever had that, but peace with God, as He is, and known.

We are bound to believe it, because Christ has declared it—bound to believe it, because Christ has made it. Now let us see how He assures their hearts: it was a terrible moment to them, they had not understood His cross, all their Jewish hopes were dashed to the ground. It might have seemed all well when Christ was with them, to say, peace, but now He has gone. Yes, but He is risen from the dead, and it is blessed to see the gracious tender love of Christ, as well as His perfect work, to see how the risen Christ is as gracious, as tender, as near as He was when walking through this world. There might be a difference as to His having accomplished the work, but there is no difference as to His ways.

If you look at Christ here below, that which characterized Him was that He did not look for anything from the world; if He did so He might have stayed in heaven. He, looked for sinners, and there were plenty of them to be had in the world. He came, bringing the love of God into a world that had departed from God I He did not wait to come into the world till the day of judgment, because of what men were; but coming into a world of sin because of what they were. Christ came after God had turned man out of paradise, where God had set him, and he could not be with God where God is; therefore Christ came to find man where sin had put him. "To seek and to save that which was lost." He never gives up that character—the very accusation his enemies brought against him was, "this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them," but He said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

In the 15th of Luke when they charged Him with this, He triumphantly insists that God will act in love in spite of man, and in three parables shows out that it was God's joy to have the sinner back; it was the shepherd's joy to get back the sheep; the woman's joy to get back the money; the father's joy to get back his son. The elder brother may complain, but he will do it for all that.

You learn this blessed truth, that (though the hour of judgment will surely come,) God always did and always will act in grace towards the sinner in the day of grace, let man scoff at it as he may. God will be Himself, let man be what he will.

Therefore in looking at the life of Christ on earth, that is what you see. The poor woman, in John 4 who had been using her energies seeking happiness, and finding misery, comes to draw water all alone borne down with sin, misery, and care, but finds at the well one person more lonely in the world than herself. There was not one so isolated; so without sympathy as the Lord Himself—there was not one heart that answered to His, even among His disciples. Still He was always thinking of them, because His love was ever ready to sympathize. And so He says to this poor woman, “if thou knewest the gift of God.” He told of the gift, and of the Giver” if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink”—who it is that has come down so low, as to depend for a drink of water (though He created it) on a woman like you, you would have “asked of him and he would have given thee living water.” Then He opened her heart and conscience, as He always does; and when her conscience was reached, and she began to think of all, He then said, “I that speak unto thee am he,” and she ran off and told her neighbors, “ come see a man which told me all things that ever I did!”

He comes down to the sinners condition, and presents Himself in grace, where there is truth of heart to receive Him, you could not have met Christ without meeting goodness and holiness itself—He was holy enough to carry love to the most degraded without being defiled.

Well, the disciples were “terrified and affrighted,” but “He said unto them, why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.” I am just the same as to grace, “it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have, and when he had thus spoken he showed them his hands and his feet.” What He is pressing on them is I am the same Jesus now—just as gracious as ever I was.

If I can follow Christ through this world and see His goodness, seeking and saving that which was lost; well, I say, He is just the same Jesus now. He tells me, “handle me and see that it is I myself.” As to His person He is just the same, the same pierced side and wounded hands. I have got the same Christ I had all through, but now His work is accomplished, and this it is that gives peace.

What Christ seeks is the confidence of your hearts. He is winning back the confidence of man’s heart to the. God that man has wronged. It is exceedingly hard to trust the heart of one we have dreadfully wronged, therefore, you find Christ in the patient goodness that belongs to God alone, going in and out to get men to trust God.

Do you dare to trust in God thoroughly? Is your heart saying, I have sinned and wronged Him, but there is always love in His heart, I will go and confess to Him? Does your heart trust Him enough to tell Him every evil thing you can think of yourself, and to believe in His love and goodness Have you believed Him enough to say, I can trust Him, and tell Him everything?

The woman we read of in the seventh chapter of Luke, did not know when she came to Him that she was forgiven; but she loved much. Simon had a fine house, and thought he would invite the Lord to dinner, but he gave Him no water for His feet, and no kiss. This poor woman hears that Jesus was in the house—He was the One who had laid hold on her heart, and had eclipsed to her heart all the rest of the world. She did not know she was forgiven, but, she knew that the grace of Christ had won the confidence of her heart; and she had business there. She could not look up in the face of any honest man, but she could look into the face and trust the heart of the Son of God

If all that is in our hearts was brought out, we should be ashamed of ourselves; but there is One to whom we can tell everything, and trust Him, and that is the Son of God!

Have your hearts been brought to this? Can you say I have not loved my neighbor as myself, I have not had one right thought, I am a vile sinner, but I can go to Him—the risen Christ—as this woman went to the living Christ. He is just the same; “It is I myself.” I can go into His presence and trust Him, when I can trust no one else! That is the effect when once He is known in grace.

Now we get another truth; He has died upon the cross, He was made sin for us before He said peace, He died to make peace! He has lived and manifested God to sinners; He has died before God for sinners. If He comes to win the confidence of our hearts in grace, it is because He has Himself first put away sin from us, and established righteousness.

Where was God’s hatred of sin shown out so awfully and solemnly as at the cross? Not even the righteous judgment of the wicked will show it as the Son of God drinking that dreadful cup, and so drinking it that He nor we can never taste a drop of it more! On the cross the—whole thing was settled with God. “Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Heb. 9:26.) The bearing of sin was on the cross, He cannot bear sin now, the heart must get hold of that. No christian can say Christ has to do anything to put away sin now—He made peace by the blood of his cross; no wonder therefore we have peace! There is no possible hiding of sin now, no allowance of it, no screening of sin; and what is true now regarding the believer? He stands before God in virtue of the work of Christ, and is as white as snow!

He has not, to wait for, judgment, to know how it will be. Then he would have to cry “enter not into judgment with thy servant.” He has anticipated judgment, He has seen and known what the love of Christ is, and the cross itself is the proof of it. How the highest act of God’s grace testifies of our state, “God so loved the world that heave his only begotten Son.” Was not that God’s judgment against sin, the plainest testimony that God cannot bear sin? He has dealt with sin in putting it away. There was no allowance of sin on the cross—no hiding of it. God’s judgment against sin has been manifested. God does not hide sin, but judges it on the cross. The whole question as to sin, and in the truth of it, has passed between Christ and God there, according to God’s holiness and righteousness.

The sinner comes under the effect of that, and therefore Christ can say “Peace be unto you.” He knows that He has made peace, for He has borne the sin, and put it away; God has raised Him from the dead, and that is the witness and seal that He has accepted His work; and now he said, “Peace!” Here I am alive again, “Handle me and see that it is I myself.” He ate and drank with them with gracious consideration, to show them that He was just the same Jesus only with this difference, that since they lost Him, He had made peace with God!

“Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the scriptures, and said, thus it is written, and, thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” He sent them out to preach the gospel, because peace was made.

When I get conviction of sin, I see what an awful heart I have, and find that in my flesh dwells no good thing. But then I find He has made peace, and gives me rest of conscience with God.

Have you got rest in your soul with God? Not a rest that death will tell the tale of very soon; but rest in His love? How do you know the love of God? “Because he laid down his life for us,” that is the way I know it! Am I to doubt the efficacy of Christ’s work? Could you dare to say that God has not accepted it, and that your sins are neater than the value of the blood of Christ?

One word here. Many a soul will say, I do not doubt that Christ’s was a blessed work; but I doubt whether I have accepted it. It is all a mistake, the soul that says that, really has accepted it; but his misapprehension hinders peace. What wins the heart is the love of God that gave Christ; what gives peace is the righteousness of God that has accepted His work.

Suppose I had offended one of you, the person whom I had offended must accept my satisfaction, before I am forgiven. Has God accepted Christ’s satisfaction? I do not ask, have you accepted it? A simple soul who is anxious will say, I am only too happy to accept it, and will thank and praise God for it; but many souls are not simple, but very unsimple! The thing that gives peace is, that God has accepted Christ’s satisfaction; and the proof is, that He has set Him at His right hand as Man!

The apostle reasons in Heb. 10, that under the law the High Priest was standing offering sacrifices for sin; next year came round, and again a sacrifice because the sin was there, but Christ is seated. “This man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God.” That word “forever,” is full of strength—it means constantly, uninterruptedly—He sat down in perpetuity—He is always appearing for us—He is constantly our righteousness in the presence of God; so that we have no more conscience of sins.

There is no question then as to sin upon me, when I look up to God I see Christ sitting at His right hand. I cannot go to God without finding Christ there; I cannot find Christ there without knowing that I am cleansed from sin, and that I have been made “the righteousness of God in him.”

I say my heart is so bad there never was such a heart. God says, it is as white as snow! the effect of this is to raise the standard of our walk. If you are in the light, now walk according to that into which you have been brought. Let the world see Christ in you, you are not called to be the epistle of innocent Adam, or of lost Adam; you are “the epistle of Christ,” Christ is your life as well as your righteousness, and that is for your everyday walk.

A word here to show where Christ leaves us, while He has gone up on high. He showed the disciples that it was He Himself in the same grace as before, and told them “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem.” “And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.”

The Holy Ghost has come to be a power in us, and with us here; our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost; we are the sons of God; and He is the earnest of the glory. The presence of the Holy Ghost gives energy, wisdom, power. He is come; “I will send him unto you,” has been fulfilled. The Holy Ghost came when Christ went up on high—and never before—and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

“And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them; and it came to pass while be blessed them he was parted from them and carried up into heaven.” Mark the kind of association I have with Christ, the Man I have handled is now gone to heaven. Man? much more than man surely—God over all, blessed forever! but Man too! and I am looking unto Jesus, and what is He doing? why, blessing me! just there! with His hands stretched out in the act of giving the full blessing upon them, showing that He is for them, I have One in heaven who has made peace, a divine person, but a Man with His hands stretched out in blessing.

Blessed Mediator, shedding blessing, and giving me blessing, after peace is made: and while He has gone to heaven, I have to walk upon earth; that is where that Blessed One has left us. I am glad He is there, though longing to see Him. I depend on Him for grace as a living Saviour, there, because I believe in the peace that He made as a dying Saviour, here!

Do you believe He has made peace? Does your heart trust in His love? If I go to God, Christ is there; and I see Him with His hands outstretched to bless me, and I am only waiting, as He is waiting, until He comes to receive me unto Himself.

The Lord give, you to have your eyes upon Him, and to understand the ways of God in grace and blessing to you, in the blessed Son of Isis own love. Amen.

Words of Truth: Volume 4, Savior to Die or a Nation to Perish, A

There are two thoughts of immense moral power in these words, “one man should die”... “that the whole nation perish not,” they bring before the heart the great truth of man’s ruin and God’s salvation in a striking way.

Caiaphas, the high priest, (in this the unconscious mouth piece of the Holy Ghost,) gives expression to it in the above words: viz., “It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people;” and as you read those words and ponder them, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ come to your mind, “ought not Christ to suffer”— “it behooved Christ to suffer.”

Let us now examine a little together, wherein consists this “ought not” —this divine moral necessity, if I may thus reverently speak.

It was because of what God in His own being is, and ever was, a righteous, holy, sin-hating God; and at the same time gracious, merciful, long-suffering God, who would spare sinners; a God of love?

In the second place it was because of what man was, and is, a self-willed, rebellious, sin-loving creature. God had made the world, and all was very good; last of all He made man in His own image; placed him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it, surrounded him with the tokens of God’s care, and restricted him from eating tire fruit of one tree, viz., the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Here in this garden where everything was a perpetual reminder of the interest and care of his Creator, man willingly believes the lie of Satan harbors in his breast a slander against God, and acting under its influence, sets up his own will; and in the exercise of it appropriates to himself what God under penalty had restricted. What a picture! the creature of the handiwork of God, in opposition to the will of his Creator, has acted for himself, and has forfeited the place of blessing in which God had placed him, and the life in which he was to enjoy the blessing given him there. He has

subjected himself to the penalty which God has announced, and is driven out from the presence of God-a fallen man.

We now have man, the head of God's creation, outside of Eden, in the wide waste of this world, having a nature at variance with God, and with only a forfeited life between him and the judgment, which ends in being cast into the lake of fire! What a scene! What a desolation!

What now is to be done? On whose side would you say the first movement towards reconciliation should take place? Of course on man's; because it was he who brought about this distance from God. It was man, therefore, that was bound in every way to repair the breach; which, the following his own will, had introduced between him and his Creator. Instead of this, from God Himself in His wondrous rich grace, super-abounding grace; from God, the offended One, the first movement comes! He discloses that He desires not that the breach should continue; and as man would not, and. still further cannot repair it, the blessed God undertakes to do so, and hence it becomes necessary that the Divine requirements should be met, and the penalty which man had incurred should be borne. Hence the blessed God gave His. Son, who was perfect and spotless, to be chargeable with His people's guilt: and He, the Lord Jesus Christ, bore the judgment, endured the sinner's penalty in grace, gave up His own life, that the love of God, who gave Him to die, might travel out worldwide to all!

Now we can understand the "Ought not Christ to suffer, and enter into His glory." The expediency that one man should die? What a penalty, and with what a price was it not paid! God's dear Son laying down His life for us: and more, that He might read to us the heart of the living God!

How can we then allow the will and nature for which He had to die! No! It is the very sequence of love; the answer of heart to His is, that we must hate that nature and will, out of which, and from which, His death alone could save! —T.

Words of Truth: Volume 6, Thoughts on Sacrifices 9: The First Saint in Israel Who Offered No Sacrifice for His Sins

In the history of the crucifixion as given by Matthew all is dark-unrelieved by the faintest streak of light—till after the Lord Jesus had given up the ghost. In the history of what then took place as revealed by Luke, there are rays of brightness at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of that wondrous hour.

In Matthew we have no utterance of our blessed Lord recorded, from the time that He stood before Pilate and acknowledged that He was the King of the Jews till He cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani." But in Luke we read of what He said to His Father, and the words which He addressed to the thief, and these sayings it is which shed a gleam of light and sunshine on what is otherwise a picture of midnight darkness, enwrapped in the murky clouds of human wickedness and brutality. In Matthew, as Emmanuel and as Messiah, He is seen rejected but suffering for men; in Luke, as Son of Man, He is presented, suffering as Man, yet caring for men. Thus we read in Luke, how on His way to the cross, He took notice of the company of the women which bewailed and lamented Him, and bid them not weep for Him but for themselves and their children, for the consequences which would follow His cutting off as Messiah. With the cross before Him He was concerned for the sufferings, justly deserved indeed, of those who would be visited for the great crime about to be perpetrated. For, if Bush things were done in the green tree (Himself), what would be done in the dry (the Jewish nation, fruitless, sapless, fit only for the burning).

On the cross the same spirit was displayed when He interceded with His Father for His murderers, and assured the penitent thief of the immediate future before him. It was others He thought of, commiserated, prayed for; or announced the welcome news of companionship with Himself in paradise. From Matthew we learn what God thought of the sacrifice; in Luke we discern who it is that suffered, for He could speak to God as His Father, and yet hold intercourse with the convicted thief. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, yet one with whom the thief would be that day in paradise. He accepted the prayer of the man dying by His side, and granted him more than he had asked. He prayed, and yet answered prayer. He prayed to the Father as the Son, and answered prayer as God. He prayed for others, "Father, forgive them," and spoke to the Father about Himself, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." God and yet man, the Son from all eternity having life in Himself, yet surrendering up life on the cross, in obedience to the Father's will, He died in love for sinners-He entreated for them forgiveness. Where before had such language been used? —where had such a spirit been manifested? The Jews might righteously ask for judgment on their enemies—He sought divine forgiveness for His, for a new epoch had commenced on earth, and a spirit very different to that which was consistent with Judaism was now displayed.

If anything could have softened man's heart, or stopped him in his mad career, surely we might have thought that this prayer for His murderers would have had such an effect. But they gave Him hatred for His good will, hating Him without a cause.

They heard His prayer, yet paused not in their course, for we read in the sentence following it, "and they parted His raiment, and cast lots." The evangelist, by this manner of telling what took place, brings out, in striking contrast, the difference between His spirit and theirs. He had thought of others; the soldiers, intent only on gain, concerned themselves with their share of His garments; and the chief priests and people availed themselves of the opportunity to display the bitter enmity of their hearts.

They were ignorant of the heinousness of their guilt; but He interceded for them, and by His intercession showed His sense of the enormity of their crime. For why ask forgiveness if they had never needed it, why pray for them if they could have procured it for themselves? His act testified of their sin; and His words told of His relationship to God, against whom they had offended.

They were ignorant of what they were doing, therefore He prayed for them; yet their ignorance was no solid plea for acquittal in God's sight, so that the Lord's intercession was needful: God does show mercy to those who sin grievously in ignorance of that which is pleasing in His sight. Witness Paul, who thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. "I obtained mercy," he writes, "because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." God could be gracious, but He could not gloss over his iniquity; so with them who crucified His Son. And the Lord, by His prayer, showed what their guilt was, whilst He offered up Himself as the true sacrifice, and petitioned the Father for their forgiveness.

Besides addressing His Father, He gave ear to the penitent thief. Had we only His communication to the thief apart from all else, the grace He therein manifested must have struck the most cursory reader but, reading it in close connection with His prayer to His Father, its value is enhanced. He had rightly gauged the measure of their sin who then took part against Him, amongst whom must be classed the thief, now

penitent, but lately a reviler, for which, as for his lawless acts, he had need of divine forgiveness. A trophy of grace, when the chief priests and people were still deriding the Lord, and the other thief reviling Him, he stood out before all, in the very agonies of death, as a disciple of the crucified and rejected One, by his side. He rebuked his companion, acknowledged the justice of their sentence, but fully justified. the Lord. “We receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss.” And turning to Him, he owned Him as no common man, even the only One who had a kingdom on earth, of which death could never deprive Him. “Lord, remember me, when thou comest in thy kingdom.”

What words were that day uttered at the cross? The Lord interceded for His persecutors, and the dying thief acknowledged his sin, yet desired to be remembered by the King in His Kingdom. Had he been innocent, such words would have been natural, but being guilty they must have sounded strange to any who heard them, for in the presence of his future judge he was not afraid to confess his guilt, nor desirous that it should lie in merited oblivion. How completely was he at ease with the Lord, of whom naturally he had every reason to be afraid. He was a sinner, and he acknowledged it. Where, then, was the sin-offering which, according to the law, he ought to have offered up to have his sins forgiven? Not a hint have we that he thought of it, and under the circumstances a sacrifice was impossible; for he could not have taken the offering to the altar, nor laid his hand on its head. And this service none could discharge in his stead. The sinner’s hand itself must be laid on the victim’s head. There was something, however, in the Lord which gave the thief unbounded confidence in His presence. He did not ask for any sacrifice to be offered upon his behalf, his prayer tells us that he did not feel the want of it, and the Lord’s answer shows us there was no need of it, “Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom,” not into, but in it—i.e., in the royal pomp and power which belonged to Him who was then and is still the King. The thief looked on to a future day, and assuredly that prayer will be manifestly fulfilled; but the Lord, in answer, spoke to him of that day. “Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Nothing had been done by the dying man to put his sins away. On the cross he had added to the sins of his past life by reviling God’s well-beloved Son. But ere he breathed his last, and indeed immediately after he had given utterance to that petition, the communication was made to him to set at rest forever all doubts about the future, for the real sacrifice was being offered up by his side, and the effect of it to himself the Lord made known to his heart. “Today shalt thou be with me.” The convicted thief was in the company of the Saviour, and never should they part. But observe the language. There was a difference between them, and He would have the man know it. He did not say, “We shall be together,” but “Thou shalt be with me.” With Him was the portion of the converted soul, and in paradise. Here, then, we meet with the earliest possible example of the fruit of the atoning work applied to an individual, and the example is a fine one. Of the man’s guilt there was no doubt, of his everlasting blessing there can be no two opinions. His confession tells us of the one, the Lord’s words assure us of the other. In Gen. 4 we have the earliest possible teaching as to the standing before God of one born in sin; in Luke we have the earliest possible proof of the value of the sacrifice to a sinner, of which Abel’s lambs were types. So perfect was the work, so all-sufficient the sacrifice, that forever and ever this converted thief shall know companionship with the righteous One then by his side. What a public testimony this history is to the sufficiency of the Lord’s atoning work to make a sinner meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light “with me.” Not merely saved, not simply a hope of heaven, but with Christ the Holy One of God.

“In Paradise.” There had been one on, earth, and Adam had walked in it. In the Old Testament, however, it is spoken of as connected only with what is past; in the New Testament we read of it as present and future. “With me in paradise,” were the words of the Lord to the thief that day; “To eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of my God,” is the same gracious Saviour’s promise to those who shall overcome now. Ceasing to be found on earth, there is a paradise elsewhere, and the redeemed—not the innocent—shall enjoy it forever, eating of that tree in its midst which would have entailed everlasting misery on. Adam and his descendants had he partaken of it after the fall. The dying man was to enter it that day—Paul has been caught up into it, and the heavenly saints will one day be in it. Forfeited for himself and his descendants by the first Adam, it has been won, and is forever secured to the saints above by the obedience unto death of the. last Adam.

Are we wrong in saying, forever secured? It is true that the Lord did not say this to the thief. He spoke of the end of that day, but did not speak of the morrow. “Today,” were His words. He told him when that blessed condition would begin, for it must have had a beginning, but He spoke not of a time when it was to end. Cannot each one who reads that history draw the conclusion? He spoke not of its ending, for it never will end;—forever and ever will that believer be with His Lord, a witness of the exceeding riches of His grace, a vessel fitted to tell out His praise.

Singular must this soul ever be as the one who was converted when crucified by the side of the Lord. Yet his portion with Him is not peculiar to himself; it is for all, and will be shared by all, who like him shall have confessed. God’s Son during the time of His rejection on earth.

Words of Truth: Volume 1, Thief on the Cross, The

It has been said by someone, referring to this scene, “There is but one case of death-bed repentance in the Bible, that man may not despair; but there is only one, that man may not presume.” But how much the savor of the self-righteous human heart betrays itself in these words. The latent self-righteousness of the human heart, which would like to add some little atom of its own wretched “doings,” to the perfect work of Christ for the soul. And yet when we come to examine this wondrous scene, we find that all must be saved as was this thief! I speak not now of the period at which such a work is wrought in the soul, but of the fact that all must be saved just as he. And if this be the case, Why not, my reader, now? Why not believe, and know the joy and blessedness of an interest in the saving work of Christ, before another day is past, that your soul may be filled with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit?

There is an absolute necessity for an entire and total change in the sinner, before he can even see the Kingdom of God. A man may be at the pinnacle of a religious reputation in the world; his name may grace the lists of benevolence—may be held up as a model for the imitation of others; and yet never have undergone this mighty change. It is a sad and humiliating fact, that possess as he may, piety, or rather that which looks like it, before his fellows; and the deepest learning, an amiable nature, a benevolent mind, all these qualities, and many more besides; and yet he may never even have seen the Kingdom of God. This is a hard saying, who can bear it? Still, it is an absolute necessity that a man must be born again. He must be renewed from the very sources of his nature, thoughts, affections, feelings, heart, conscience, actions. He must be what the Lord Jesus told the man of the Pharisees-the teacher in Israel—the ruler of the Jews-Nicodemus; he “must be born again.” In

this man's case, the lesson was but slowly learned. He had much to surrender. It was painful for him to be told that his whole life was wrong; his efforts and energies, sincere, as doubtless they were, had sprung from a wrong basis; and that the whole man must be changed from the very roots, before he could enter into the Kingdom which God was setting up. Painful, it must have been, to think of what gave him weight and authority, and for which he was held in esteem by his fellows, only came under the sweeping sentence from the divine Searcher of hearts, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." (John 3:3). Painful for him to learn, that, if he would enter God's Kingdom, he must consent to do so as the vilest sinner, stript of all that would put him in advance of others, and give him a precedence there. And yet, this entire, complete, and total change, is absolutely necessary to enter into the Kingdom of God; necessary for the vilest, necessary for all. It levels all distinctions; puts men, in the light of its solemn truth, on an even ground before God, so that no flesh may glory in His presence. Have you, my reader, experienced or undergone this mighty change? Or do you occupy the same platform on which you were introduced amongst the sinners of this world? Important question! May the Lord enable you to answer it honestly in His presence!

The case of the thief is a remarkably beautiful illustration of this mighty work in a soul—this total change in the man. And besides this, we have in this scene, the mighty work of Christ for him, which enabled him to take his place with Christ that very day within the vail. The work which fits all who believe it to take their place, by faith, with Jesus, the same moment, in God's presence, within the vail.

The case of the comrade thief, too, is truly and deeply solemn. A soul passing away from this world into another; approaching the portals of an eternity, from which there is no return, with a scoff on his lip, and the taunt for the Blessed One in his mouth, "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us." Deeply solemn is such a closing hour of a man's shadowy life here, Christless, faithless, sinning against his own soul. Well is it said of the wicked, "There are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men." (Psa. 73:4,5.)

Let us look at the same hour in the other's life-the brightest it had ever known. "But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God?"— grand illustration of the work of God in a soul. It began with but a little word, but a word by which one reads a heart which had been taught in wisdom's ways. For "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. 1:7). We have in this little word a precious work of God in his soul. It is said of the wicked, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom. 3:18). God is not in all their thoughts. "Dost thou not fear God?" Here was the root of this mighty change in this man: the holy fear of God. God had His proper place in his thoughts, although he did not know Him yet as a Saviour. It was Abraham's word of the men of Gerar, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake." It was the fear of God which guarded Joseph's heart, when in the land of his exile. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God." It is that which guards the heart in a world of sin. Its absence leaves room for the workings of man's corrupt and wicked will. It is the beginning of wisdom.

How is it with you, my reader? Can you say that this holy fear of God has been the guide and fashioner of all the thoughts and intents of your heart, the actions of your life, and the motives which have governed your ways? Have all these been governed by the fear of the Lord? Has God had His proper place in your heart; and has His fear restrained your will? Job was a man who "feared God, and eschewed evil;" Cornelius—one who "feared God, with all his house." "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought on his name." (Mal. 3). It was the proof of Abraham's faith, "Now I know that thou fearest God." (Gen. 22) Now this "fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." (Prov. 14:27). It "tendeth unto life," (Prov. 19:23); and we see this so remarkably in this man. It led him to take his true place before God. "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly." Can you with him say, "We indeed justly!" Can you, as he did, take the just and righteous sentence of death, to your own soul; and own, in full honesty of heart, the rightness of your sentence? "We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward for our deeds." Do you own the justness of the sentence; yea, have you passed it upon your own self, as the due reward for your sins? Blessed peace; to own in full, your true and proper condition before God, and thus take the sentence of death home to your own soul, as he 1 How the work of God grew brighter and brighter, till he was with Christ in Paradise! God had his true place in his soul, and he was in his true place before God! The rightness of his sentence pronounced by his own lips; no excusing of himself, as I dare say, you have often done; pleading circumstances—an evil nature, to palliate your sins. A convicted sinner was there making no excuses for his sins and his sentence, but owning that God was true. Justifying God, and condemning himself, as one of Wisdom's children. "I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

So much for the work in this man's soul.

Now we must look at another thing—at the work for him—for all, on the cross beside him

There hung beside him the Lord of Glory: and out of the mouth of Wisdom's child, as the light grew brighter in his soul, we have a testimony of two things—the spotlessness and the Lordship of Christ. "This man hath done nothing amiss." And the spotless Christ, and the self-condemned sinner, were side by side! Grand and solemn scene, the like of which eternity will never behold again! Beautiful testimony of that dying man, which led him to take his place with Jesus there, at a moment, and amidst the turmoil of a scene such as that which surrounded the cross. A time when the world was united against a man who had "done nothing amiss." When even those who had loved Him and leaned upon Him during His life, deserted Him at the hour of His greatest sorrow And yet the soul of that man was absorbed with Christ, who hung there. His whole soul's vision was filled with Jesus; and he forgot himself. A complete and total change had taken place in the man and, forgetting his agony, all his thought was, "Lord remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom." How would it be with you, my reader, if you were dying on your comfortable bed, surrounded with your sorrowing friends? Or how is it with you now? Would Christ be so precious to your soul then? Is He so precious to you now, as to absorb all your thoughts, and fill your soul with Himself? The terrible suffering of that moment had no power to disengage his heart from Christ. And his only request was, "Lord, remember me!"

But what was the reply? The light in his soul ended otherwise than he thought. Instead of being remembered when Jesus returned in His kingdom, he got a place that very day in Paradise with Christ! The work was done by Jesus there which enabled this man to have a place with Him that very same day; even as it fits every soul who believes in it, to take his place that moment with Jesus within the vail!

Dear reader, have you gazed with a believing, adoring heart upon that work of Christ, as that which has delivered you from the wrath to come? And believing, have you taken your place, in virtue of it, within the vail? Where are you, if you have not done so? What are you? Outside the vail, an unbeliever, still in your sins! Solemn place, solemn condition. Rest not a moment, then. The same blow which rent the vail, exposed the wickedness of man's heart, in the death of Christ; and revealed the love of God's heart, in sparing not His Son; and has put

away forever the sins of His believing people. Rest not a moment, then, till you take your place, by faith, inside the vail. Let no false reasoning of the enemy, or unbelief of your own heart, deprive you of this joy. Happy, indeed, if you have, as the saved thief, the fear of God in your heart: happier still, if you have owned your true state and condition before God taken the sentence of death home to your own soul; and happiest, if you have forgotten yourself altogether as he, and that your soul's vision is absorbed with Him who was there consummating His love in doing a work which gives you a cloudless title to take your place this moment within the wail with Jesus! This day... with me, in Paradise!

Holiness—Separation from evil. Innocence—Ignorance of it.

Adam was created in innocence, and fell; thus obtaining the knowledge of good and evil; as we read, "the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." (Gen. 3:22). To the state in which he was created we never can return. We never can unlearn the knowledge of good and evil. The "new man" (the Christian), is "after God created in righteousness, and true holiness." (Eph. 4:24).

Words of Truth: Volume 8, Father's Heart - the Father's House, The

One finds that there are many sincere souls who are not in the second condition of the prodigal—that is, when he had been kissed, and robed, and was in the house with the Father—they have not real peace with God. They are still lingering on the way; and if they know salvation is a real thing thus given, they are not living in the enjoyment of it. As to their state of mind they have not eaten of the fatted calf, nor have they got on the best robe; they are not living with the Father on the ground of what the Father has shown Himself to be.

It is striking the moment the Father comes, except the confession of the son, you hear of nothing about him—all is about the Father. From the time of his confession the whole scene is concerning the Father's mind, and the Father's will-what His heart is, and what His house can afford; and that is the true Christian state, and what the heart has to be brought to enjoy. I take up that special view now. Many are sincere, yet are not on that ground, and the Lord shows us that this is so; we should ever cry "Alba Father," as having a conscious place with Him.

There are two very distinct states in the prodigal; in the second he learns the expression of the Father's thoughts, and not of his own; and there he rests. You do not find judgment here, it is all grace. Judgment is a real true thing, and the Lord will lay hold of the conscience by it; but it is not the subject here, salutary as it is. Neither is it the side on which you find the blood presented to God, all true and important. It is that of the soul justifying God, and then the way it enters into the enjoyment of His grace. We never should lose sight of the other; but the side of the gospel here presented is not the judgment of God which is outstanding, and then God meeting it with propitiation through faith in His blood.

And we must not confound this with the government of God. He may be angry even with His own child. It is different from the manifestation of His nature, so that there is no possibility of allowing sin in His presence. In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, and the wrath of God is revealed, and that from heaven; not merely judgment and punishment; not merely dealing with man but, God being perfectly revealed, and so you cannot have a single sin. Wrath is revealed against "all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men." In the holiness of His nature He rejects the sin, and in the righteousness of His nature He judges it. Hence, when we speak of Christian state we walk in the light, as He is in the light. It is not now certain conduct that has to be measured and dealt with. God has no measure of sin. He is a holy being, and there is positive rejection of all sin in His nature. Even in Paradise it is not now merely innocence; it came out previously; but man left that state, and then judgment comes on him, and he is to return to dust. It is dreadful enough to see that He chastens His own; but to find that people are shut out from the presence of the Lord forever, from God's favor, is terrible! Here it is the grace which goes out to seek, and how the soul is brought back to enjoy the grace.

We have the whole Trinity in this chapter; the good Shepherd looks after the sheep; the Spirit seeks for a soul, and Grace receives it when it comes back; the activity of God in Christ, and then the Spirit; and, lastly, the way the soul is received by the Father. In the first two you do not get the whole truth; you do in the last. The Shepherd seeks His sheep; the sheep never lays its foot to the ground, it is wandering farther and farther away; the Lord comes and brings it home. The woman cares for the silver piece, seeks diligently, and when she finds it she rejoices over it—the simple power of grace bringing back what is lost.

Then, another thing—thank God, it is not new—a living principle all through, what runs through it all, that it is not our joy to get saved, but God's joy to save! The Pharisees and publicans murmured. It is a righteous principle, and some may have it in their hearts still, that people must be righteous for God. The Pharisee thinks lie has righteousness for God. God says you are a whited sepulcher, full of uncleanness. The elder brother is the Pharisee in all ages, perfect selfishness, no entering into the Father's feelings; the most hateful thing that exists, no sense of sin, else he would know that he was a sinner; no sense of holiness, or of love; there is nothing more foreign to the mind of God than his state; it is thorough selfishness. "Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends." When he says, "Child, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine," He refers to the Jews: the law, the prophets, Christ Himself, the worship of God, the Word of God, all He had was theirs, The use they made of it was another thing; they had enough to take pride out of it, so as not to enter into the Father's heart, made known to the servants. "Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound." That ought to have touched his heart. He should have said, "if my father is happy it must be right;" but he objects to everything. The Father went out even to this Pharisee; nothing could win the self-righteous man; his heart is unwinnable by God! He had no sense of righteousness or holiness, or he would know perfectly well that if all that was in his heart was brought out, he would be ashamed of himself, and go and hide. The Pharisee has not thought of that; he is as hypocritical, as if God could not see its inside as well as its outside. But if man's righteousness was the way to God, why should He have given His Son?

The Lord here takes up the way in which the soul returns to God, and He chooses the case of one who had gone to excess of riot—eating husks with the swine. Many have not done that, but He takes this case to show that grace reaches it there, and that is God's delight—the joy of God, to bring him back and receive him. Remark this—the moment the soul has got hold of what God is, the grace of God has found entrance into the heart. It is not feeding on husks which is the worst thing; nor is there any real difference in people; some are upright and honest, others are sunk in debauchery; but as regards the heart there is not one bit of difference.

Suppose I was brought up among thieves and drunkards, I would be a thief and a drunkard. It is a great mercy to be separate; that is connected with circumstances. Here, in the first act of the young man, the whole thing was done. To turn his back on his father was doing his own will. Scripture says, there is “no difference” before God; there is in wickedness and vice, of course; but all have sought their own pleasure, and their own way. When he crossed the threshold he was in will as much a sinner as when with the swine. There are differences among men. Quite true. And man sows what he reaps. As regards his soul, the young man was as much a sinner then, as when eating the husks; but what is more, he was nearer the turn when there. The Lord says, “Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you.” It is the principle of all men, everywhere, to say, “Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.” We like our own will; we like to be free from God to do our own will. It is perfectly immaterial what it is; that is our history as men; we have “everyone turned to his own way,” and that brings these wretched fruits.

That is what you are, beloved friends. Some have come back; but looked at as children of Adam, you have your back upon God, and your face on your own flesh. You are neglecting God.

The Lord takes the case of one who has gone to excess. The point was, leaving his father’s house, and his getting back there. The young man may not have been a thief, or the like, but he is always doing wrong, till he comes back, and never will be right until he comes back there. “If thou wilt return, saith the Lord, return unto me.” (Jer. 4:1.) How can I return in my sins? The only way is through Christ, of course. I can quite understand that question, both the effect and the way it works.

Now as to his return: “There arose a mighty famine in that land.” Another thought as to the heart is, it never returns to God till there is a famine in the world. As long as people are in health, very rich and gay, they ruin themselves. When that is gone—when the natural pleasure is gone, what then has the heart? It has spent itself, and is ping to die! “Thou fool!” that is all the Lord has to say to that! (Luke 12:20). He had got to Satan’s world, and the heart finds nothing there to satisfy it. You see those that can spend their substance; and there is a certain gaiety of nature which seems like happiness; but leave such only for a day, and you will find how their heart has its canker at the core. “There arose a mighty famine in that land,... and no man gave unto him.” There is no giving in the devil’s land; people find a famine there. Why are there so many concerts and crystal palaces? Because of the famine. They try to keep up their heart, to do without God; but it is all in vain; they cannot! They may get on merrily, but all these “artificers in brass and iron” are but efforts to make a city without God, and sufficiently pleasant to forget Him!

When the famine was there, he began to be in want. That never turns the heart to God. “And he joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.” Drinking and pleasure and excitement did not satisfy; “and no man gave unto him.” When the heart is away from God, this want never turns it to Him; it turns to what satisfies the flesh. “He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him; “a description of where he had got to, the sense of famine not bringing him to God at all.

“When he came to himself,” there is a total change. He was like a mad man before; identified with the place where the famine was. The goodness of God comes to his heart, he says “How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare?” not “I shall get it,” or I would like to have it; or “ How should I be received?” But the sense of goodness; and a want of another kind arising in his soul! —a sense of the ble’ssedness of God! When the Holy Ghost works, there is always a want. I want more holiness,’ more grace, ‘I want God.’ He sees blessedness with God, and would give anything to be back with Him. ‘The servants had bread to spare; there is goodness with God.’ Wherever there is a revelation of self, and man is conscious of his real state, there is always a sense of the goodness of God. He is in the frame of mind you find at times in souls— “Well, if I perish, I perish at the cross.” It attracts him. Conscience is awakened; the heart is attracted; that is everything. He turned his back on his father, left God behind him; now his face is turned towards Him, and his heart too, and that is an immense thing! He has not peace yet; but it is an immense thing when God and the soul meet—when want of holiness, and want of love is created, and there is a revelation that has attracted the soul to God. All right in principle; but righteousness must be met, and that which characterizes him when he came to himself, that he thinks there is goodness, and abundance, and plenty there. Ile did not know that he would be let in, but there was the goodness there to be let in to! And then I am perishing, ‘I have got away from God, and I am perishing;’ a man living without God.’ Orthodox as the Pharisees were, they had not God. Nicodemus says, ‘You must be a teacher come from God;’ but the Lord says, ‘You have not the principle which connects you with God; I cannot teach flesh; you must be born again.’ God and the soul have met, the quickening power of God gives consciousness that he is perishing, and there is a distinct result, “I will arise and go to my father,” not I will get better,” “change my ways,” He must change his ways; but that is not what is in his heart. “I will arise and go to my father.” It is want of God that characterizes him. The sense of love, a total difference with the desire to mend myself; that is the work of the Spirit of God. The heart then says, “I will go,” and then “I have sinned against heaven.” Is that all the title you have to it? It is often a long while till our hearts say that; a long while before we give up and say, “I have no title;” and if so, How can I be there?

That was what the Lord was doing with the Syrophenician. She is of an accursed race; she came out of the coasts of Tire and Sidon, of which the Lord said, they were so bad that, if the things done in Sodom and Gomorrah were done in them, they would not repent. He takes them as an example of hardness of heart and distance from God. She cried, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David,” &c. He answered her that it was “not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to dogs.” He throws her back when she sought Him, with “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” “Truth Lord (she replied), yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.” I have no title; I am a cur, a wretched dog; but the dogs eat of the crumbs from their master’s table. There is goodness enough in God for those who have no title. Then Jesus answered, “Go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter.”

It may be a long process before the soul comes to that point of full blessing. Without a holy nature we cannot enjoy Him; but you cannot make righteousness out of it; or your ground of acceptance out of it. The prodigal has nothing to say to the blessing till everything is spent. The pride of the human heart finds it very difficult to get there. Some things are fit for God, it says. Are you fit for God? I ask. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” There is something in you that is all wrong, totally wrong from beginning to end; you must come down; you have no title to anything whatever, and all depends on simple grace to those that are entitled to nothing but wrath.

Another thing, we have seen his heart brought to turn to God. His eyes were opened, and God had met him; he had not yet met God. He acknowledged his sins; all quite right; the consequence is lie begins to reason how he will be with God-how he will be when he meets Him. “Make me as one of thy hired servants.” What does that prove? That he had never met God at all. Lowliness, confession, is all right; but making terms shows lie had not given up all hope in self, but thought he might have some small place, some little corner in heaven.

Can you pretend to be fit for His presence with all these rags? —every proof of having been in the far country? With his heart drawn to God, he confessed he was unworthy, yet still hoped. All proved he had not got to his father. The father had met him and touched Hs heart in grace, but lie had not, in conscience, come to God at all! That is what I press. Here was a work of God, a sense of sin, of perishing, of bread in his father's house; but this thought, because he had not met God, was all wrong. He had no terms to make; it was reasoning how it would turn out when he came. Numbers of souls are sincere; they have seen the goodness of God, and yet only hope in a general way; they have not met God to find out what God's thoughts are. They are reasoning from their condition, partly fearing, partly hoping for a poor servant's place. All proves they have not met God, though God has met them. He had met that young man. All perfectly true; but he does not judge from what God was and had been. He had not given up so as to know what God was, when we were nothing but sin. He arose and came to his father.

Now, in a certain sense he disappears when the father comes in sight, and the whole blessing comes from, and is the result of, what the father is to this poor creature. All right his returning; but what is the effect of it? To bring him to his father in a condition totally unfit to go into the house. It would be a disgrace to have him in the house with those filthy rags—a perpetual dishonor. Then the elder brother might reproach and say, 'Look at this wretch; is he fit to be in the house with you?' The effect of all that is going on in our hearts is to bring us into God's presence in our sins! Did we not come in rags and nakedness the whole journey, just as he comes out of the far country? Until we submit to that, we never get peace. We are saying, "Make me a hired servant." It is not self-righteousness, but reasoning from our thought as to what God will tie. That is giving God the character of Judge. If He is our Judge, it is everlasting destruction to us.

Are there not hearts who may read this, right in purpose, thinking of their state and condition, and how it will turn out when they meet God? Why not confess you have not met Him yet? You have never known Him. Why not put yourself just in the state the Lord is insisting on? "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him." Now he comes to be kissed in his rags. He deals in absolute grace with him just as he was. The effect of this kind of experience is to bring me to Him in my rags, and to find Him loving me in my rags, in a condition unfit to be in the house.

But He did not bring him in in his rags, but "fell on his neck." The Father acted from His feelings, and the effect of the wretchedness of the son was to draw out the Father's love! That is what I learn in Christ. "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us." The very essence of Christianity is that we have not to meet God as a Judge; and because we could not, He has come to meet us in grace. Sovereign grace has dealt with sinners, to show that God in love is greater than their sins! Simple but blessed, the footing we are on with God is not what we arc for God, but what God is for us. He "commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." He does not look for righteousness; He will have the fruits of it afterward; but the grace of God brings salvation. The very essence of Christianity (by which we too have to act in grace) is, not what God finds, but what God brings.

He is brought to confess what he is, but with the Father on his neck; and he does not then say, 'Make me a servant.' Why? 'Because he had met his Father, and He had acted as a Father. He could not say, when He was kissing him, Make me a servant;' it would be slighting grace Ah! he had met his Father, and knew his position. How? By being with Him, and finding what his Father was for him.

Now, are you content, Reader, that your acceptance should depend on what God has done for you? Are you content to give up all title to His grace? If there is pride, and Adam still working, you will say, 'Must I not have this or that?' Try your hand at it, and see what it will come to. The Lord wants you to learn, that you will never think of saying, "Make me a servant." You will then have learned the Father's heart, and your relationship a son's place, because you have found it in the Father's house. Thus, grace has gone out, and righteousness has gone in! "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." That which the father has to put on him is out of His own treasure—He had got his share, he had nothing of his own—it was that which was put on him when he came back, that when he went into the house he might be a witness of his Father's thought about him; that it is the father's joy to have him there in honor. We are made the righteousness of God in Him. There is where He brings us to; His own presence in the fullness of His own grace; and He puts the best robe on us, so that all may say, 'There is a son the father delights in.' There is nothing now about the son feeding on the fatted calf, but the father and servants. No doubt he did so; but this is the way He receives a person; it is His own delight to have him, and the greatest delight of God is Christ; and He puts that upon him. We thus have righteousness, and glory too, in due time.

Thus there is a total difference between God meeting the soul and the soul meeting God-meeting it in sinfulness, all the reasoning you find, characterizes that state; how it may turn out, and the like. I may get on slowly, or get on quickly, but that is experience. You never find in Scripture, 'Being justified by experience, we have peace with God;' it is "by faith." Faith in what? In what has passed in my heart? Then I may doubt about my own heart, 'Surely it is not what I ought to be.' All that does go on in the heart; but it is not the Father's dealing with the son-not a bit. Experience was there, but experience led him home in his rags to the Father's presence-the rest is all what the Father is!

Are you content to be on that ground—a more sinner—to be put by the Father's grace into the Father's house? It is Christ, of course, who is the best robe, as my righteousness. When He shall appear we shall be like Him. Then the soul sits down and enjoys all the Father has to give. Ah! you will find it hard, there is so much selfishness in the heart, to bow, to depend on what Christ is for you, Strange to say it, but you will. If you submit to God's righteousness you will then have true holiness, but never until you have the certainty of salvation. How can a child have filial affection if he has not a father? So, if I am born of God, I have a nature capable of enjoying Him. But if I have not the sense of relationship, I cannot have peace. We have the Spirit of adoption, if we look up to God. Is there the consciousness that you look to a Father? Not a hope, but that your affections can go out on that footing, because you know Him as a Father. You cannot have blessed, holy affections which delight in Him as a Father until consciously in the position which that position entails. I do not say that you are not on the road. When first I am saved, all my affections go out, and I say, 'What a mercy!' But when I see a Christian resting too much upon what he was as a sinner, that is not a healthy state. I believe "the Lamb slain "will never be forgotten; but if only there, and not occupied in thinking of what He is, I will not get on. A soul that is in the Father's house, 'Is it not to grow up to know what the Father's heart is? I was outside, and He took me in to learn it there.'

I would now ask you, Are you in the best robe? In Christ is your place. Is your heart there? Conscience must be cleansed, of course; but, 'Is your heart living in the affections which belong to that condition, or, are you uncertain?' That is not a Christian state—though you may be on the way to it. Are you content to take your whole condition and blessing from what the Father is to you?

The Lord give you to see what you are, so that you may find you have a new place in Christ, and nothing to do with the old thing. The Father brings the son to His own heart and His own house.

How many Christians are distressed with a spirit of bondage! Many long years, it may be, bowed down, never rising to the glorious height of their calling, they are in a sad state, and literally “bowed together” – their eyes always turned inwards or downwards, like this poor woman in Luke 13

Through Satan’s work she was bound; her disease was one of “infirmity;” its duration long—some eighteen years—so that she “could in no wise lift up herself.”

Christians in such a state are totally incapacitated from working for the Lord. They are “infirm” they cannot testify for Him; for who would admire the testimony of one “bowed double,” as it were, with this “spirit of bondage.” They know not a risen and glorified Christ-now in heaven—as their all-absorbing treasure. If they did, their hearts would be where He is, at God’s right hand; and they would consequently and of necessity be lifted up, straight to Him! for where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. (Luke 12:34) And the word of the Holy Spirit to us is, “If ye be risen with Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection (or mind) on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Col. 3) Ah! yes, if the heart be centered on things above, we may be pretty sure the eyes will be turned heavenwards, and the whole conduct and conversation will correspond. Satan’s great object against us is to rob us of the full enjoyment of our blessing. And, sad to say, he often succeeds in this. Many Christians are thus deprived, not only of their own joy and happiness, but of glorifying God. They lose the sense (if ever they enjoyed it) of the blessed truth that they have died with Christ, and are now a risen people. Consequently, instead of living as those who realize that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has broken the tie that once bound them to earth and self, they go mourning all their days—hanging their heads downwards, and necessarily their hands—with their eyes turned inwards, bemoaning the sin and corruption they find there, and groveling on the earth, seeing only its straws and dust, as if their hopes and expectations were from it, and as if they were a people which belonged to it.

Oh! how few of us really enter into the blessed fact that the cords that bound our hearts to earth are snapped by Jesus’ hand! —that we are a “peculiar people,” belonging to heaven, born from above, let down here for a “little while” to witness for Jesus, and soon to be “caught up” again—having the coming of Jesus as our heavenly hope-truly bright and blessed-a home with Him in the “Father’s House “as the only home we know. Oh! that home—of Love’s preparing! —our heavenly place of rest! There with Jesus! The Lord grant us grace that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we may realize our calling—that here on earth we are but strangers and pilgrims journeying through a desert, but all the while citizens of heaven (according to Phil. 3:20), all our glorious expectations being there. “Things on the earth “occupy those who have this spirit of bondage. Their minds are filled with thoughts of self or of the world; and so it must ever be, when their eyes are never turned heavenwards, to be dazzled with the glory which we should even now apprehend by faith.

O, soul bound thus by Satan under the sad power of this spirit of bondage, Jesus must be thy resource, even as He was to this poor woman “He called her.” Hearken now to His blessed voice calling thee, and mark what He says, for the power you need is in His very words— “Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.” Wondrous word! uttered by the Lord of Life and Glory, as He laid His hand upon her— “Thou art loosed.” And it is for thee, dear brother or sister in the Lord, who has been bound and harassed by Satan, it may be these many years, to know on the authority of Him who cannot lie, that “thou art loosed!” The death and resurrection of Jesus, on whom you believe, has already done its mighty work, and you are now free; “thou art loosed from thine infirmity.” Well, then, walk straight, with head erect, in perfect liberty, as a child of God, your eyes turned to Him, and rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free! “If the Son shall make you free, then are ye free indeed.”

With this woman it was but a bodily ailment; with you it is far worse-it is an unhealthy state of soul. But hearing the words of Jesus, and being touched by His hand, she “immediately was made straight” Ah! now her eyes were no more turned inwards upon herself, or downwards upon the earth: now they looked to Jesus. And the result with her was the same as it would be with you (only with you in a much higher degree). Not only was she made happy herself, but she “glorified God.” Glory was brought to Him. The “religious” people of that day were displeased, and spake evil of the One who was now doubtless dear to her; but what did it matter-God was glorified!

H. W. T.

Words of Truth: Volume N1, My Lord Delayeth His Coming

Nothing can be more solemn, beloved friends, than the Lord’s testimony here to His disciples (and it applies to us). If I look for the will of God being carried out anywhere, I must go, of course, where Christianity is. They are those who will be “beaten with many stripes;” that is, the professing church of God—Christendom, if you will.

The warning is not against saying that Christ will not come; everyone says that He will but the infidel; but against saying, the Lord delays His coming. Now I desire to speak a little of the condition of soul of one who is manifestly waiting for Him, as to whether it characterizes those who read this; whether, if He come at midnight, or in the cock-crowing, or in the morning, He would find us watching; and I would speak of it, not as an interesting topic, which those who have studied much perhaps may receive some light about, but as a subject for our hearts.

Christ is waiting, and, so far as His people are right here, they are waiting. He is not sitting on His throne yet. The blessed work of Jesus on the cross being done, He sits at the right hand of God, on His Father’s throne, until His enemies are made His footstool. From thence He sent the Holy Ghost down to fill our hearts, and make us abound in hope whilst waiting for Him. He is sitting down; He has no more to do as to His atoning work; and He has sent the Holy Ghost to gather out His joint-heirs to wait here, or to wait there, —which is better, of course.

Christ has appeared and brought salvation; but, beloved friends, we cannot have too fast hold of the fact that the heart and intention of Christ is not merely to clear us from judgment, but to have us with Himself, and that is what He is waiting for. I speak of this hope now, not as a little Christian knowledge, but as the only and proper hope of the Church.

Now, for instance, when the Lord was comforting His disciples when He was going away, What did He say to them? — “I will come again, and receive you unto myself.” And He shows what will be their hope meanwhile; not the knowledge of the Father, nor the coming of the Holy Ghost, but the coining of Himself. What is it that the angels say in the first chapter of Acts? — “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” And so we should find in every respect that what God has set before us in His Word all sinks down when this hope is lost. It is this hope which characterizes the Church, in the mind of Christ and in Scripture, and the Lord is now awaking and calling us back to this expectation. Paul tells us, in the third chapter of Philippians, that “our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” I find that as characteristic of the Christian. It is not to doubt the fact of our dying and departing to be with Christ, precious as it is and useful as it is for us to think of it, but this is His coming to take us to Himself.

There are nothing but troubles here for us in the world. We belong to it until we are converted, and then it belongs to us. “Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours” —even the trials through which we pass. The poor thief says, “Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.” How little they thought, when they sent the soldiers to break his knees, that they were sending him off to heaven!

Another point—if the saint dies, he is just absent from the body and present with the Lord. But we are to be “conformed to the image of his Son.” Now I do not want to be conformed to Christ in the grave. The poor thief was, of course; he saw corruption. Of course Christ did not “see corruption.” But we are not to be conformed to Him in the grave, but in the glory. That is the full, blessed result of the hope that is before us—to be with Christ and like Christ. The reason why I have found the Lord’s coming so precious is that it brings so definitely the Lord Himself before me. He is coming to take me; it is not that I am going to be happy in heaven, but that Christ Himself is coming to fetch me.

Now it is delaying the Lord’s coming that brings such deadness into the Church. Take the first chapter of Thess.; you will see it is the Lord’s coming which gives the character to the people. What were they converted for? “To serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.” Here were a number of people who had turned away from all their idols to serve the only true God, instead of all the gods they had before; and Paul says to them, I am looking for the Lord to come, and ‘then you will be my joy and crown.’ Then, if you look at holiness, it is “That he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Then in the fourth chapter he gives full expression to it, and in the Second Epistle you find the coming of the Lord with respect to judgment. It was the object that was perpetually before them, as that which formed and fixed their character.

If you take the virgins (Matt. 25): —They went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Well, the Bridegroom tarried; He delayed His coming (we know He has tarried); and they all slumbered and slept. People say, “Why did not all these good and holy people find it out long since?” Why, because they all slept! They had all gone out to meet the Bridegroom, but, as people say, it is not very comfortable to bivouac out, and so they all turned in somewhere—turned into the world, in fact; and there they all slumbered together, for people can very well sleep together. But at midnight the cry was made, and then, when they began to awake, they found they had not all got oil; and the effect of the cry was to separate the professors from the true ones. The professors go to buy, and whilst they are gone the Bridegroom comes, and those that are ready go in with Him to the wedding.

You will see that you never find the Lord’s coming delayed beyond the life of the people to whom it was being written of and you find the same thought in the Lord’s teachings on the subject. What I mean is this—we know the servants who received the talents are the same ones who are judged for their use of them; and it is the same virgins who went to sleep that awake up again. We find in Revelation the history of the whole time of Christendom. Is He going to make a long tale of it? No. He takes seven churches then existing to tell it all out. So there is no excuse for a single soul to say, He delays His coming. It is a present thing. As James says, “The Judge stands before the door.”

But the hope of the coming of the Lord has been lost, and the church has gone quite into the world. Do not you think that, if it were believed in R— that the Lord was coming, it would not alter every detail of people’s lives? Paul says, that after his decease there should be a complete turning aside; men speaking perverse things, and drawing disciples after them. And then in the midst of this darkness there is to be the cry at midnight. How can I resist such a testimony?

People say, Well, though I am occupied with what is here, my heart is not in it, so it is not my treasure. They always say, Where my heart is, there is my treasure. Now, that is not at all what the Lord says. He says, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be.” If you have a great treasure in heaven, you may be sure your heart will be there. It is no use talking; an unconverted man knows very well that if he were looking for Christ it would alter all his life-converted people too. Do not you believe that it would separate professors off in five minutes, if we were all walking like men who are waiting for their Lord! It is the delay between the cry and the coming that separates them off. And they were to have the character, and tone, and ways of men that were waiting; and these were to be “blessed”, blessed.

(To be continued.)

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