Matthew - Commentaries by Frederick George Patterson

Words of Truth: Volume 3, Judge Not That Ye Be Not Judged

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These words are often employed to hinder a sound judgment as to the plain paths of right and wrong. If a person is walking that which I know by the word of God to be wrong, I must judge that he is walking wrong, or give up my judgment of right and wrong. I may trust that he may be misled, or that difficulties and temptations may have overcome him, and consider myself, lest I also be tempted—think the best I can of him—but I cannot put evil for good, and good for evil. There can be no right motive to do what is wrong—to do what is contrary to God's will. There may be ignorance, want of light in the conscience, and I may and ought to take all this into account, but I cannot say that the person is not doing wrong.

Woe be to me, if for any personal consideration I enfeeble my own sense that a wrong path is a wrong one. The saint must be very careful not to allow any sophistry to modify any submission of heart and conscience to God's judgment of good and evil. As regards the Church of God, the Scriptures plainly declare we are to judge "them that are within; them that are without, God judgeth."

There is the imputation of motives to persons, or habit of forming an opinion on other's conduct, which is an evil habit. This is what the Lord guards us against in Matt. 7:1. But the duty of not allowing evil in the house of God—it is positively commanded to us not to allow it.

Again, many apply this to judge whether people are Christians. But this is founded on a fundamental mistake. It is assumed that people are supposed to be Christians unless proved to the contrary. If the faith of the soul be a personal thing and I value Christ, this cannot be. I am not called upon to be volunteering to pass judgment on the point, whether such and such an one is a Christian; the person who blames me for saying such an one is a Christian, is judging that he is a Christian of course, which is quite false. The apostle says, "the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." Believing, then, it is a joy to believe that any one has passed from death unto life. That is not a judgment, through the rejoicing of the heart, that faith in that person has brought him into the blessed place of the child of God. It is a most horrible principle that we cannot know who are God's children, Christ's disciples. It destroys all godly affections. If the children of a family were told that they could not know, and ought not to judge who are their brothers and sisters, what would become of family affections! The Lord has said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." How can this be if I do not know who are disciples, and towards whom their love is to be exercised? We must know each other as children of God to "love as brethren." He who objects to judging that such and such are God's children, objects to the love of the brethren. He is rejecting the spiritual affections on which the Lord and Scripture so much insist.

There is a wrong spirit of judgment. If I occupy myself needlessly in thinking of others, and expressing an opinion of them. If in questionable cases I ascribe, even in my mind, wrong motives—nay, if I do not hope in such cases that a right motive is at the bottom, I am in the spirit of judgment, and away from God. If severity of judgment with a person when I am bound to judge he is faulty, possesses my soul-this is not the Spirit of God. But to weaken the plain, unequivocal, and avowed estimate of right and wrong, under pretense of not judging—to deny the knowledge of one another and mutual love amongst the saints, under pretense that we have not a right to judge, is of the enemy, and a mere cover to a man's conscience, to avoid the conscious pressure of that judgment on himself. If saints maintain a divine standard of right and wrong, I must judge them who do wrong to be doing so. I am not always called to occupy myself about them-then, if unhindered, the spirit of judgment comes in—but if I am, I must judge according to the word of God. If I am to love the disciples of Jesus, the saints of God, "the brotherhood" (1 Peter 2), I must know whom they are. If there is a disposition to distrust or to impute motives, then the spirit of judgment is at work, which is not the Spirit of God.

Words of Truth: Volume N2, Salutation, A

Hail Morning Star! —the Father's self and Son,

Lord Jesus Christ: Thy vic'try now is won:

Thy greeting back we bring;

Thy praise 'tis ours to sing;

Heaven's courts shall joyful ring

With ceaseless song.

Thou Lamb of God—thou Lamb for us once slain—

To shed Thy blood Thou cam'st in love divine,

To bear Almighty wrath,

To break sin's power and death,

To let love's tide flow forth:

All praise be Thine!

What brought Thee down to us from heaven's height,

To midnight gloom, and shades of deepest night?

Thou didst pass angels by:

As man Thou cam'st to die,

That we might dwell on high,

With Thee in light.

This far surpasses all creation's work—

There Thou saidst "Let light be," when all was dark:

But now Thy praise we sing,

Who didst from heaven bring

As cure for death and sin:

Redemption's worth.

O love beyond compare! O love divine!

Stronger than death and sin, let Thy light shine,

Till all the tribes on earth,

Learning Thy glorious worth,

Unite to set it forth

In joyful strain.

Words of Truth: Volume 5, Thoughts on Sacrifices 8: The Crucifixion Part 1

Turning from the Old Testament to the New to investigate the subject of sacrifice, we turn from types to the antitype, from the shadows to the substance, from the laws 'about the sprinkling of the blood of bulls and goats, to the history of the shedding of the blood of Christ, God's own Son, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. In the Old Testament we have traced out God's gracious provision for fallen man-a sacrifice, in the New we learn what man really is, as God saw him from the earliest days of his disobedience and estrangement of heart. In the cross is. displayed God's great love, and how far it could go on the sinner's behalf; and at that same cross was brought out, in a manner never before manifested, what man is, as his treatment of God's Son is set forth by the inspired historians.

That the heathen, who were without God, should persecute in ignorance God's Son, might not have surprised any of us. But to learn that He appeared on earth among His own people according to the flesh, and found that His bitterest enemies and 'most determined opponents were the chief priests and Pharisees, affords proof of the utter corruption of man's heart (however richly he may be blessed on earth, or highly favored with a Divine revelation), which could not otherwise have been credited. Knowledge even of the word of God, unless the Holy Spirit applies it to the soul, cannot impress his heart, nor temporal blessings, however' great, subdue his enmity to what is of God. The rulers of the Jews knew Messiah would come; in Christ, too, they saw One who did good to all who were in want of it, as no man had ever before done; yet many a time did they attempt His life, and at last succeeded in their design. Had Pilate hearkened to the entreaties of his wife, or acted in accordance with the dictates of his conscience, he would have saved the Lord from death; for the chief priests it was and the elders who "persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus." (ver. 20). It was in obedience to the popular cry, reiterated when Pilate had remonstrated, and to show his fidelity to the Roman Emperor, that, though conscious it was from envy the Jews had delivered Jesus unto him, he handed Him to the soldiers for immediate execution.

Crucified between two thieves, but recently scourged, and unable to bear His cross to the place of execution, surely it might have been supposed that, at the sight of His sufferings, man's enmity would have been changed into pity, and his bitterness have given way to compassion. Three people were crucified together, but to One only do we read that reviling's and taunts were addressed, and that One was the Lord Himself. Had they taunted the thieves it would not have been surprising, for they had offended against society; but He had only "gone about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." Had they reviled them all indiscriminately, it might have been set down to popular ignorance. But the Lord Jesus alone was thus treated, and none of the chief priests who witnessed what took place, interfered, that we read of, to check the malice of the people, or to lift up a voice in His behalf. Man, there unrestrained by God's hand, skewed of what he was capable.

The passers-by "reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." Power manifested would in their eyes be proof of His Divine Sonship. To their taunt He vouchsafed no reply; but because He was God's Son, He remained on the cross. They associated power with Sonship. He owned that obedience was involved in the relationship, and showed His perfect obedience to the will of His Father by staying on that cross. They knew not the value of their words as they thus reviled Him. How could the Son have acted in contravention of the Father's will? Their words spoke of relationship, which, if real, implied subjection to the Father. Their use of them at such a time proved how little subjection to the Father was in

their thoughts. “Save thyself.” Such language revealed the current of their thoughts, that self, not the Father’s will should be the guiding principle for man’s conduct. Unconsciously surely by this they justified the sin of Adam and Eve, and proved their descent from them, begotten in Adam’s likeness.

Another class of the people of Israel witnessed Him, who was the sacrifice, offering up Himself, and as they witnessed His sufferings, they mocked Him; It was the chief priests and scribes and elders who said, “He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.” They acknowledged His works done on behalf of others, yet refused to admit the claims which these works substantiated; Of His life on earth they were not ignorant—of His acts of kindness and power they could speak. Those acts testified that He was God’s servant—the Christ—as the men who professed to expound God’s word should have known. yet they asked, after all they had heard and seen, that His claim to be the. Messiah should be settled by His immediate descent from the cross. Power exerted for the benefit of others was a proof of His Messiahship—power put forth to save Himself from death when on the cross was never predicted as a proof that the King of Israel was on earth. They rejected what the word of God would have led them to look for, and asked for a sign which no prophet had authorized them to expect. It was right to connect the presence of the King with the display of power, but it was wrong to connect it with the exercise of that power to save Himself. The passers by had proved their ignorance of the subjection due from the Son to the Father—the chief priests here showed their ignorance of the word of God; and, stranger than all, they unwittingly fulfilled the Psalms as they taunted Him with being forsaken of God. (Compare v. 43 with Psa. 22:8). How strange that those, who professed to teach from the word, should have fulfilled the prediction as they hurled at Him this taunt, the bitterest and most cruel of all. If such was the conduct of the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, can we wonder at what follows-” The thieves also which were crucified with him cast the same in his teeth.”

What an exhibition, then; lave we of man, the religious man by profession, as the Jews. were; and the educated man who professed to know God’s word, as the chief priests and the scribes. They had crucified the Lord between two thieves, but by their behavior to Him they proved themselves to be true companions of those whom they had associated with God’s Son. Man’s trial of 4000 years was ended. He had acted as the tool of the enemy, and driven out God’s Son from the world He had originally created; for, Jesus, “when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.”

What could God do under such circumstances? That He should immediately act in power, who had been a silent spectator of man’s atrocity and sin, was only what could be expected. He did act in power, for we read: “and behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.” But, whilst acting in power, He did not act in judgment against man, because He had acted in judgment against His own well-beloved Son. For during that time of darkness, mysterious to man, when all nature mourned for the death of the King.

There are passages in Ezek. 31:15;32. 7, 8, which may help us to understand the suitability of the darkness at the time of the Lord’s crucifixion. The language of Ezekiel is figurative, the’ language of the evangelists must be taken in its literal meaning. God by the prophet spoke of the mourning of nature at the fall of the Assyrian, that great cedar which towered over all; and at the fall of the Egyptian monarch, “the young lion of the nations.” If such language could be used even figuratively concerning the fall of such monarchies, how suitable and expressive was that supernatural darkness when the true King of Nations (Rev. 15:3, margin), under whose rule alone all tar; be blessed, was about to leave the world by death brought about by the creature’s iniquity, whilst men on earth, as far as we read, were silent, awe-struck, apparently, by the strange unnatural gloom in which the land was enveloped, God’s well-beloved Son, who had always done on earth that which pleased His Father, was experiencing the full weight of God’s anger against sin. “The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Death took place, the death of the sin-offering, and the shedding of that blood, without which there could be no remission; but, now shed, the ground was laid, and all could see it, on which God could publicly deal in grace with those who deserved His everlasting wrath. Here then, we learn, at the earliest possible moment at which it could be displayed, what that sacrifice is in God’s sight, and what He can do in consequence.

“The veil was rent.” By His command it had been erected, by His power it was rent in twain. Under the eye of the mediator of the first covenant that veil had been first erected; because of the sacrifice of Himself, the mediator of the new covenant, the veil was rent in twain. He, who had caused it to be erected, alone had authority to part it asunder. He caused it to be reared up when first there was a redeemed nation on earth. He caused it to be torn asunder when first redemption had been accomplished. So, as soon as the Lord had died, there was manifested in the temple what had taken place on Calvary. Outside the gate the Lord had suffered, but inside the sanctuary God showed what His death was in His sight, as the rent veil betokened the way into the holiest opened out for sinners by virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ.

(To be concluded in next Vol., D. V.)

Words of Truth: Volume 2, Who Is This?

It is Jesus entering Jerusalem shortly before His crucifixion. It is the Day-spring from on high; the very Sunrising of heaven; the glorious Son of the Father who has visited us in wondrous grace, garbed in the servant’s form, meek and lowly. One whose presence tells out the mighty love of God to this sin-polluted world! He is unknown by the people, so that the question has to be asked, “Who is this?” God was unmistakably displayed in His every action down here. He revealed the Father; and made God known as He had never been known before. Up to this time man’s little knowledge of God had been that He was a great and awful being, only to be approached at a distance; dwelling in clouds and thick darkness; and to be worshipped “afar off.” One who, at the same time, was demanding from man a righteousness which he never could procure.

Thus the popular thoughts of God then, were much the same as they are now; amongst those who know not Jesus. People now, as then, look upon God as a hard and angry Judge; reaping where He had not sown, and gathering where He had not strawed. All this time little knowing the grace that is in God’s heart toward them; how that He commends His love to sinners, bad people, even the rebellious. He is not now willing the death of the sinner, but desiring his salvation; wanting to have such saved from hell, to be happy with Himself forever; and He has for this object given up His own Son to die. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Do you believe this astounding fact, that the Son of God has visited this world? He came uninvited. Nobody prayed God. to send Him down from heaven. It was His own thought—the spontaneous acting of His heart of love towards sinners—God chose to send Jesus. He passed as a stranger in this ungenial world of hatred, finding not so much as where to lay His head. At His birth the manger was the only place to be had for the holy child Jesus. Such was His reception,—there was no place for Him in the inn of this world; it was already crowded with the sanctimonious Pharisee, the fashionable Herodian, and the infidel Sadducee. The one had his long robes actually decorated with Scriptures of the Old Testament about Christ, and yet, blinded—by his very religion, when Christ did present Himself, he would none of Him. With all his professed reverence for God, devotionalism in praying at the corners of the streets, and ostentatious benevolence in giving alms with the sounding of a trumpet before him, yet when God's Son is born into this world, such is His reception from the religious people, they would rather have their religion than Jesus. And as for the fashionable world, they are as well satisfied with their gaieties and pleasures, as the religionist is with his unreal worship; for the stranger babe, born in Bethlehem, to enter their inn, was to burst rudely in upon all their ways; as well as upon the grosser evils of the publicans and sinners. He was uninvited; a stranger in a strange land, an unbidden and unwelcome guest.

This was the manner in which He was received at His birth; and things only grew worse afterward, for "they bated him without a cause." From a manger at the commencement, He went to the cross at his death, and the whole scene was wound up in a borrowed grave! This was the world's treatment of the Son of God! And that too at a time and by a people who professed to have a zeal for God and to worship Him. Are the people of the present day one bit altered? They know not God now, even as they did not then. If you knew God you would know Jesus' for He is the Son of God; and knowing that the Father sent Him is eternal life! Then there would be no need for the question "Who is this?"

But with all this talk about knowing God, what is the way to know Him? It is to believe on His Son Jesus Christ. He has revealed God. He came to this world with the express purpose of making God known. The reality of His having been in this world is an astonishing fact, and surely ought to make a serious man consider that if God were indeed against him, or seeking his destruction, He never would have sent His Son to die for sinners. For though in every act of the Lord Jesus we see the same blessed truth that God is for us and not against us (as Satan is always deluding souls to believe), yet above all we learn it at the cross. There He who knew no sin, this blessed One from heaven, was "made sin," and "numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12); there He "bore the sins of many." He died "the just for the unjust," to bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18), in order that all this blessing of salvation, eternal life, and forgiveness of sins might be ours-that God might be manifested as "for us," He must be against sin when His own Son made Himself chargeable for all that we were, and all that we had done. He was therefore "bruised for our iniquities." "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him: He hath put Him to grief" (Isa. 53:5-10). Why was this? Because we deserved to bear the judgment of our sins-and He offered Himself and bore it, that God might be free to deliver us out of it. God now can righteously let His love flow out to all poor sinners; commending His love so fully to them that they may stand before Him perfectly righteous; or, as the Scriptures declare, "all who believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:39).

"Ye know that He (the Son of God) was manifested to take away our sins" (1 John 3:5) believing this you are saved! How then do we know that God has accepted His work, and that it has really satisfied Him? We know it, in that He hath raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him to His own right hand in heaven. So that not all the power of hell can alter or shake our salvation in Christ; it depends on nothing in oneself, or of ourselves, but simply on Him; and He who put us in it, keeps us in it to the end.

But howsoever full and free are these glad tidings of God's love to sinners, the time is fast drawing on when this One of whom the multitude once spake saying, "Who is this!" will be seen to have exchanged the meek and lowly form for that of the kingly and judicial; and then again it shall be said, "Who is this?" (Isa. 63:1.) His garments shall be dyed red with the blood of the slain, for He will tread in His anger the unbelievers, His rejecters, and trample them in His fury (Isa. 63:3). As to preach the "acceptable year of the Lord" is now His mission, so then will He say, "the day of vengeance is in Mine heart" (v. 4). "See then that ye refuse not Him that speaketh," but heed the warning voice, for "now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (judgment), but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9,10). He was manifested that we might have both life and forgiveness of sins! H. W. T.

Words of Truth: Volume N3, Matthew 16:21-28

The Lord addresses Himself to His journey to Jerusalem, in the full recognition of this—that He has there to meet the enmity of man: here He does not look towards that city with the thought of His being made there the offering for sin under the hand of God, but rather, of His being there the victim of man's hatred.

His death, of course, had each of these characters in it. It was the death of the Lamb of God for the putting away of sin—it was the death of the righteous Witness against the world, whom the world, in full enmity, slew and crucified. It was, at one and the same moment, the death of the Atoning Lamb and the death of the Martyr, but it is in the second of these characters, the Lord anticipates it here.

His road to Jerusalem was such, that all His saints can be in that same road with Him, and He calls on them to follow Him along it. And this evinces His mind on this occasion, for we could never follow Him as the Lamb, or the Atoning Victim, but we may, and should follow Him as the Martyr or righteous suffering Witness against the world. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (v. 24.)

This makes the character of this path of Christ very simple and distinct. But, there is comfort along that road, if we have but faith to receive it. It is a weary and a rough path, such as nature does not like. We do not like to be the companions of an insulted, despised, rejected, suffering Master. A journey on such a road as that is rough enough, and strength and heart naturally fail. But again I say, there is comfort provided for it, if we have but faith to receive it and drink it in. "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (v. 28). This is the comfort. The saints are not set on this road to Jerusalem, this path across a world that is at enmity with them, and is preparing death for them (as men at Jerusalem were then preparing it for Jesus), till they are given to

know what the end of that journey is to be—till they be introduced to the glory that lies on the other side of the sorrow and the martyrdom—till they see the Mount of Transfiguration that is higher as well as more distant, than Mount Calvary.

This is the comfort, and this the Lord gives His saints when He calls them to follow Him on the road to Jerusalem, in v. 28. And in this character of it, let me observe, that that verse (v. 28) is an epitome of that magnificent chapter, Acts 7. For one of the purposes of the Spirit in Acts 7 is to tell us this:—that from the beginning, and all along the line of Scripture, the Lord has never called His elect into a place of sorrow without telling them, or giving them some notice, of the glory and joy that were to end the sorrow. Thus Abraham was called from all that nature could value, but it was the God of glory that had appeared to him, and spoke to him with words of promise.

Joseph was separated, and in principle was a martyr—but he had had dreams which already told him of ultimate exaltation.

Moses was reviled, refused, exiled; both brethren and strangers, the seed of Abraham and uncircumcised Egyptians, mistaking him, and persecuting him—but he already had had that beauty upon him which faith discerned to be of God the token of divine favor.

Stephen was hated like his Master; interfered against and killed—but his face had already shone like that of an angel, he was marked as a child of resurrection ere he was hurried, as a martyr, to death.

And so in Matt. 16:28—Some were to taste of death; (Peter himself was to be bound and led whether he would not, John 21:18,19), and suffer as a martyr, but they were to be taken beforehand to the place of the glory, and shown the heavenly blessedness in which all their sorrow was to end: the value of which is such, as the Lord hero speaks, that “the whole world” though gained would be nothing in comparison with the loss of it—if the soul at the end, came short of “the glory of the Son of Man,” all beside, though acquired, would leave the soul a loser.

The Sympathies Of Our High Priest. Hebrews 8.

It is remarkable how much we may be with God in the circumstances in which we are placed, and having God in them, and yet not be practically in the heavenly calling. To be consciously and practically in it is a totally different state. The soul may be thinking of God’s presence amid the woes and troubles here, and looking at it as a rest out of it. Or it may in heart think of the place merely that Christ has sat down there, and ministers grace to it down here. Christ is the center source of each. He is the Word; who has come down here and dealt with our souls here—then He adds, “and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” He takes us up there. He has gone apart as Man, away from the rest of men. He takes up the double character of service towards us. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” perfect grace brought Him to the sinner, but now He is carrying our hearts as He will our bodies into glory. We get the mixture of feeling in our poor hearts. Divine light and love brought into the scene, yet bringing our hearts out of it. Whenever I get the other world I must get the cross, because the things of my heart and flesh—all selfishness—are in no wise connected with heaven; all is love there—lust, nor pride, nor worldliness never can be connected with heaven. “Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood” ye cannot know the bread which came down from heaven.

If you do not know a dying Saviour gone out of the world you do not get practical sanctification of heart or true association with Him as a present thing. A person may have a very true and blessed apprehension of His person and yet not have the flesh subdued to take up the position and consequences which follow from it down here. In Peter it was not a revelation of flesh and blood hut from the Father, yet Peter’s mind was not prepared for the necessary consequences. He says—Have mercy on yourself, do not let that happen to you. A soul may be taught of God and yet find when it comes to walk, that as to the state of his heart he has not realized it. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” not only to take up our hearts by a heavenly work, but so to bring down a heavenly word that it may judge them. Christ takes both in, and His present position is just the link of it. He could not be a Priest if He were not up there, because He must have entered into all that I have to pass through down here, in order to sustain me in it and yet He must be free to be occupied with the things up there. We do want both. This is a question of a soul with God, not of a child with the Father. A naughty child may go and tell his father, but in the question of competency to enter into the holiest, it is a question of going to God, a question of His holiness and of my perfect title to be close to the throne of God where no evil could appear. “If he were on earth he should not be a priest,” this priesthood was in contrast with Christ, men encompassed with infirmities and weakness able to sympathize in the things as in them at the time. “Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.” This would not do for us, and for this reason that He must be down here. The priesthood would have ended where it was exercised—it ends now where it is exercised, and not only for a year but forever it goes till there is no need for it. But our High Priest went through all that fitted Him to help us before He went into the place, not only to sympathize with us, but to bring down heavenly things to us and to take our hearts through the things up to where it is all completely settled, and now I want my heart to be in the place where it is settled—kept by the power of God through faith. That is the way He keeps. Is your faith never dim or feeble? Do your eyes look straight forward? Do they never look askance? Satan tempted Christ by the glories of this world—is there not a nature in you which sees something fair in this world? Satan tempted Him by everything that could be attractive to a man: He was tested in every possible way but was perfect in obedience. He became “the Author and Finisher of faith.” He was perfect in going through the things, we have to learn in the things to go through the path of faith with everything against us, there is not a thing in the world that is not either an occasion of obedience or of temptation— either the occasion of making us quail from the straight path, or of blessed obedience in it. But Christ is constantly and unceasingly occupied for me in all the trials and temptations of the path. He has suffered being tempted—in Him it was the occasion of the flowing out of the odor of His good ointments, but He was tested. He says to Peter, “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Peter loved the Lord but he did not know himself, he had to be put through a process to let in the knowledge of himself, but before ever he had committed sin Christ prayed for him—so here we get that “He ever liveth to make intercession:” it is the word used for besetting a person to get what you want. Christ is one in the presence of God obtaining for us whatever we need, not that we go to ask Him to intercede but He is there, ever our servant (see John 13). We might have thought that would cease when He had gone to glory. He came down in the form of a servant and He is never going to give it up. Before God we are perfectly clean, accepted in Him, but we do pick up dirt by the way, and it is His service to wash our feet. He does not say that He is mighty and able to help, but that He suffered, perfect to suffer being tempted. We do not suffer when our hearts acquiesce. On the other side, such a high priest became us, became God; the kind of high priest that takes us right into the sanctuary. I want a priest who can feel for me here, and I want a priest who can take me in there, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens.” Why? Because in our place, our calling, in Him we are “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens,” we go in to worship in the holiest—going higher than the heavens—going to God Himself. I have got this place as called out of the world, I have got it through this blessed Man who has come down, who in putting forth His own sheep, went before them all the way and I am in this blessed dependence all

along the road. I come boldly to the throne of grace, I know that Christ is there.... how He has filled up the whole measure from weakness, trial, exercise of heart down here right up to the throne where He is sitting on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, giving me competency for intercourse with God which He could not do unless He was close to God, this is what Christ sustains. Having given me a place in the heavenlies He puts me in a path where there is constant supply. My heart wants to be there in my place above the heavens. I have got Christ there as the One who carries my heart up with Him, for nothing separates me from Him. Do you go and try it; stay half an hour in the positive sense of God's presence, you have not power to sustain yourself there, you want energy of faith. Nothing so tests the state of your soul as how long you can keep up intercourse with God. Suppose your heart has tasted that enjoyment, how long can you keep it? Do not you want One there to sustain you in it? "He ever liveth to make intercession" —He lives for that. A double case of meeting you down here and taking you up above the heavens to be with God in tender, gracious, thoughtful, condescending love. "Touched with the feeling of our infirmities," but out of them now, that is the very character of Christ's priesthood. When I speak of my old man I do not want sympathy—I want the hatchet of God's Word "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit," when I find the evil of my flesh I want to have it thoroughly judged can look to Him to be with me against it. The heart learns to trust the ever-living love of Christ in the presence of God for us, the very infirmities in us become occasions of help from God, occasions of seeing how God's heart can be constantly occupied with me. The High Priest is gone in now—this is our heavenly calling—and while in the Holy Ghost comes out to us. Our association with Christ is while He is in, therefore we have assurance, full assurance of faith. The Lord give us to see how such a High Priest became us, and to know the effect of that ministry of His to keep our hearts steady, whether carried up in Spirit with Him, or sustained down here by Him.

Words of Truth: Volume N1, Truth, and the State of Soul for Receiving It

There are two points, beloved friends, which I have a little on my mind to speak of; one we have directly in this chapter, and the other more in connection with the settling of the soul in the consciousness of the place into which grace brings us, and which enables us to stand before God according to that place now. All this is founded on the rejection of the Son of God in this world. Here He charges them, for instance (v. 20), not to say He was the Christ; the time for that testimony was all over; the Christ had been rejected by His own; God Himself had been rejected in this world. The moment this came out, and that the disciples knew Him, who He was, He began to say that He "must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and be killed, and be raised again the third day;" then Peter began, unthinkingly, to rebuke Him.

God will take account of His Son having been rejected. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin;... but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15:22-24). Then God accomplishes His work in the gift and death of His Son, man being the outward instrument; still it was God's work. When Christ speaks of being rejected here, Peter began to rebuke Him; but what did the Lord immediately answer? "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." What a warning to us not to hinder, on supposing that because we really believe certain truths by divine teaching, that our hearts are in a condition to walk and take the place of the truth we have learned; that is quite another thing. This will lead me to the second point, and that is, the Lord says here, " Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." There is no mistake where he had learned who Jesus was, and yet in almost the same sentence, the Lord calls him "Satan." The flesh in Peter was not judged, and therefore he "savored not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." God had revealed to him that Christ was His own blessed Son, but Peter was doing the work of Satan, in seeking to turn Him from suffering.

A person may have mere head knowledge, but it is more than that in Simon Barjona; yet, for all that, the state of Peter's soul was not on a level with the truth; the whole was founded as to salvation, upon Christ having been crucified and raised again, that is, God was beginning upon a new footing altogether, It is now the second Man, raised and glorified, as the starting point of blessing; you must have the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ whether for redemption, or laying the foundation of the Church, and then you have all the blessing on the other side of the cross when Christ is risen again—that was all foreseen through the Gospel.

As soon as the disciples were able to bear it, He takes them aside and tells them, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." It is resurrection that we find is the foundation of all blessing, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." It involves these two things, first the solemn, terrible truth, "The world seeth me no more;" looked at in that character in which He came in grace. The world as such will never see Christ again; but, on the other hand, there is God's work in which He has laid the blessed, perfect foundation of acceptance. If Christ be raised, ye are not in your sins; thus it is a new starting point altogether. That is the reason He has this special character here. It does not say merely that He is the Christ, but the moment Peter says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" then follows, "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." I learn this immense truth, that where death had come in through sin, and sin had reigned by death, He who was life in Himself came into this scene in love, and, blessed be His name, met the whole of it. Sin was there; He was made sin; death was there, and He goes and dies; judgment and condemnation were outstanding against man, and He drinks the dreadful cup. "He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death." He goes and stands in that place and perfectly glorified God in it. "Now is the Son of man glorified (speaking of the cross), and God is glorified in him."

The work was perfectly done, which God has accepted and proved He has accepted, by raising Him from the dead, and setting Him at the right hand in glory. God has anticipated the day of judgment by giving His Son to meet the question of sin, and has completely settled that question for faith, before ever the day of judgment arises. "He appeared once in the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." There I see the whole question of sin is met with, and by God Himself, according to God, in the cross-death, the curse, sin, as to Christ, all passed, and He has entered as Man into the glory of God, and sat down because the work was finished. There I find this great and blessed foundation for what is entirely new, and then there is a new creation altogether; the old thing is judged, entirely judged. The patience of God goes on bearing with it, and testifying of this work of Christ; but the whole thing is judged, and the second Man is He whom alone God acknowledges. Then as regards the saints, "You hath he reconciled;" things are not yet reconciled, but we are reconciled to God, in a world that is not reconciled.

I will now turn and look at the way of our entrance practically into this new state of things—what I rest upon for it all. Let me say, God has foreseen all these last days, and, after describing (2 Tim. 3:2-4) the terrible things that would characterize them, He says there is a resource,

and what is that? “From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.” That is, God has given His word, the Scriptures, as the security when there would be a form of godliness, but denying the power, if there was faith in Christ Jesus. But mark, whoever hinders the direct authority of the Word of God upon the heart of a believer is meddling with God’s rights. If I were to send a message by a servant, and someone was to go and meddle with that message, it would not be meddling with the servant but with me.

I must have that which was “from the beginning”— nothing else will do, I must have it from the beginning; why? Because it came from God— “that which was from the beginning,” that is what God taught. I have got what is from the beginning; and I must know from whom I learn it. The apostle had said, that “after my departure grievous wolves would enter, not sparing the flock.” I am told that there would be a time of failure, and if you do not give me that which was from the beginning I know very well it is worth nothing. I have, in the Word of God, that which is from the beginning distinctly. Take the last thing said to the Church of God in the seven churches (Rev. 2:3). Isaiah it a call to hear the church? On the contrary, it is to “ hear what the Spirit says to the Churches,” I am called upon to listen to what the Holy Ghost says to them.

“Upon this rock I will build my church.” I have thus what is certain, and who is doing this work? Christ. “Upon this rock I will build my church.” You get Christ in heaven, the head, and the Holy Ghost came down forming this church. “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,” thus connecting them with Christ, who is “ head over all things to the Church.” I find, then, not only salvation, but Christ raised from the dead and set above all principality and power as head over all things to “the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” That is not yet fully accomplished, because all the stones are not built in, but I have this testimony of the purpose of God having exalted Christ, and by the Holy Ghost uniting us to Christ. He baptizes all who believe into one body, and thus is formed the Body of Christ, a thing never revealed or spoken of before Christ had been glorified: for the existence of the Church, Christ must be rejected, as also accepted as the Son of man, in glory, at the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost come down to unite souls to Him. It could not exist before. You must have the Head before you have the body. Then I have not only the individual here, but all Christians united by the Holy Ghost as members of “His body, of his flesh, and of his bones;” a figure, no doubt, alluding to Eve, that is what we are now in connection with Christ.

“Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” I have the power of death on one side, and on the other I have Christ building, after He had broken the bands of death, after He had met all the righteous judgment of God, after all was done He builds up one stone after another. Satan’s power is already destroyed, even for the individual. “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” It does not say that you will overcome him, but he will flee from you.

Peter alludes to this in the second chapter of his first epistle-” To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house.” There is not a word about the building of that—there is no person meant as doing it; but what I find there is this, the Word of God declares that He will carry it on, a work of grace; that Peter says is going on, and Paul says that it “is growing unto an holy temple in the Lord.” But in 1 Cor. 3 we find a very different thing— “As a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another man buildeth thereon.” Now I have man’s building, and I have man’s responsibility—that alters the whole thing. If he builds with God, that is good work; if he builds with wood, hay, and stubble, that is another thing. Has no wood, hay, and stubble been built in? The mistake made is, to confuse Christ’s building with that of the wood, hay, and stubble. You find three cases in this third of 1 Cor. You have a good Christian, who is a good builder; then a bad builder, though a good Christian; then a corrupt builder, and the man destroyed. Here I find another thing entirely: God has set up man as responsible; and what God set up good, in the responsibility of man, breaks down, as has ever been so; but whatever has been ruined in the first man has been gloriously established in the Second, and a thousand times more gloriously than what was lost—infinitively more than was lost; but still everything is reestablished in Christ, and so with the Church. Christ will have a Bride. “He will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.” But God does put it in man’s responsibility, and man has always failed; then God calls me to hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches-taken on their responsibility. Christ is seen walking amongst the golden candlesticks, not as Head of the Body, but He walks amongst the profession of the Churches, judging their state, and I am told to listen to what He says, and He gives me God’s divine authority to direct me what to do in such a state of things.

“I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” John 11:25, 26.

Words of Truth: Volume 2, Pathway and the End of It, The

The Lord addresses Himself to His journey to Jerusalem in the full recognition of this—that He was there to meet the enmity of man. He does not look towards that city in the thought of His being made there the offering of sin under the hand of God, but rather, of His being there the victim of man’s hatred.

His death, of course, had each of these characters in it. It was the death of the Lamb of God for the putting away of sin. It was the death of the righteous witness against the world, whom the world in full enmity, slew and crucified. It was; at one and the same moment, the death of the atoning Lamb, and the death of the martyr. But it is in the second of these characters, the Lord anticipates it here.

His road to Jerusalem was such as that all His saints can be on that same road with Him; and He calls on them to follow Him along it, and this evinces His mind on this occasion, for we could never follow Him as the Lamb or the atoning victim; but we may and should follow Him as the martyr, or Righteous suffering Witness against the world. “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” (v. 24.) This makes the character of this path of Christ very simple and distinct.

But, there is comfort along that road, if we have but faith to receive it. It is an uneasy and a rough path, such as nature does not like. We do not like to be the companions of an insulted, despised, rejected, suffering, martyr. A journey on such a road as that is rough enough, and strength and heart naturally fail. But again I say, there is comfort provided for it, if we have but faith to receive it and drink it in. “Verily. I, say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the son of man coming in his kingdom.” (v. 28.)

This is the comfort. The saints are not set on this road to Jerusalem, this path across a world that is at enmity with them, and is preparing death for them, (as men at Jerusalem were then preparing it for Jesus,) till they are given to know what the end of that journey is to be, till than be introduced to the glory that lies on the other side of the sorrow, and the martyrdom—till they see the mount of transfiguration that is higher, as well as more distant than mount Calvary.

This is the comfort; and this the Lord gives His Saints, when He calls them to follow Him on the road to Jerusalem, in v. 28. And in this character of it, let me observe, that that verse is an epitome of that magnificent chapter Acts 7. For one of the purposes of the Spirit in Acts 7 is to tell us this, that from the beginning, and all along the line of Scripture, the Lord has never called His elect into a place of sorrow, without telling them, or giving them some notice, of the glory and joy that was to end the sorrow.

Thus, Abraham was called from all that nature could value; but it was the God of glory that had appeared to him, and spoken to him with words of promise.

Joseph was separated, and in principle was a martyr; but he had dreams which already told him of ultimate exaltation.

Moses was reviled, refused; exiled; both brethren and strangers, the seed of Abraham and uncircumcised Egyptians, mistaking him and persecuting him, but he already had that beauty upon him which faith discovered to be of God, the token of divine favor.

Stephen was hated, like his master, witnessed against and killed; but his face had already shone like that of an angel. He was marked as a child of resurrection ere he was hurried as a martyr to death.

And so in Matt. 16:28, some were to taste of death; (Peter himself was to be bound and led whither he would not, (John 21:18-19), and suffer as a martyr,) but they were to be taken beforehand to the place of the glory, and shown the heavenly blessedness in which all their sorrow was to end. The value of which is such, as the Lord here speaks, that “the whole world” though gained, would be nothing in comparison with the loss of it. If the soul at the end came short of the glory of the Son of Man, all beside, though acquired, would leave the soul a loser.

Collected Writings, Matthew 16:19 and Matthew 18:18

Q. “A. L. O. C.” What is the difference between Matthew 16:19 and Matthew 18:18? Does the first refer to salvation in connection with the bringing in of the members to be added to the Church; and the second to the discipline of the Assembly? Or, do they both refer anticipatively to discipline?

A. The first refers to the administration committed personally to Peter, with reference to the “Kingdom of the heavens.” The second to disciples — “two or three” gathered together in Christ’s name, and connected with the “Assembly”; and valid at any time for two or three thus gathered.

In both cases it is “whatsoever” — thus not referring solely to persons; though slightly differing in form of expression.

To Peter was given — and to him alone of the Twelve — the administration of the kingdom of the heavens, brought in in its “mysteries” (Matt. 13), and commencing at the ascension of the Lord. This power he used, as the first great division of Acts testifies (Acts 1-13). He directed the choice of Matthias, Acts 1; he opened the door to the Jews, Acts 2; he bound Ananias’ and Sapphira’s sin on them, Acts 5; was chief in directing the choice of deacons, Acts 6; discerned Simon the sorcerer’s state; and with John communicated the Holy Spirit, in Acts 8. He opened the door to the Gentiles, Acts 10; he was one of the chiefest speakers in the conference about the law, in Acts 15, &c. Whatsoever he did under heaven’s authority, heaven ratified. Though Peter did not do all heaven did, for all that! This authority and commission was given to none of the apostles but him, and it ended there. This administration was continued to none.

The passage in Matthew 18:18 is authority to the “assembly,” and applicable to any “assembly” which scripture authorizes, though consisting of only two or three. It is continued to such. There is no individual authority in it at all. For making requests, and acting under heaven’s authority, the Lord was in the midst, and gave validity to what they did; though, like Peter, heaven might do, and did, a great deal more than the assembly.

It is of much importance to distinguish between the “Kingdom of the heavens,” of which the “keys” were committed to Peter; and the “Church” which Christ builds. It has been remarked that “men do not build with keys,” and the Church is built.

Words of Truth 5:97-99.

Words of Truth: Volume 4, Similitudes of the Kingdom; Part 20, Thoughts on the

Another similitude the Lord gives to the disciples, and here not confined to the true heirs of the kingdom, but taking in the whole scene as in that of the tare field. Only here it is not from a world-stand-point as that was, but it is God’s estimate of the whole thing, and the real work that He was doing while men were glorying in theirs. That was given to the outside multitude-the world; this to the disciples within the house. And accordingly the Lord gives prominence to that which accomplishes His purpose in setting up the kingdom, or rather in allowing it to subsist in its present form, namely, to have the good taken out from the bad, and put into a place apart. The great object in this parable is to put the good fish into vessels. All the glory and power which accrued to the kingdom through the wickedness and failure of those to whom it was entrusted, is here ignored. It is not worth a thought in the mind of the Lord, save as the object of judgment, but which comes out plain and definite in what is added to the parable. (Ver. 49.) From the former parable we have the appearance of the kingdom as it might be viewed by the outside world, which knows not the purpose of God to gather in souls in spite of men and devils: the latter is the carrying out of that purpose, and therefore gives God’s reality.

We learn from this how impossible it is to have a right judgment of what transpires here below, of the world's history, the ways and doings of men, unless we are with God and learn His mind about them. So the disciples with Jesus get the mind of God, and looking beneath the surface of events find the accomplishment of His will in all. But we must be with Jesus to know it, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom." With Him we get the truth. The four empires were gold, silver, brass, and iron, splendor and strength to the world; and the world admired and bowed to them. But what were they before God? When He would give his estimate of them to His servant Daniel, how and under what likeness did he present these empires? As ravening beasts, monsters. Nothing in created nature was adequate as an emblem of their reality. So he unites different, and to our present perceptions, discordant attributes to form a picture of what He sees them to be. In our little path we cannot have a true estimate of the smallest circumstances apart from God. A wrong judgment sometimes tends to a wrong path.

This parable presents several interesting and important points for consideration. The sea, the fishermen, the casting of the net, the drawing to shore, and the final sorting. It presents the same thing the main as the tare field, but under different symbols. As for instance, the sea here answers to the field there, yet with this difference that the field is the world at the beginning of the present period; it is the commencement both of the good and the evil, of which the following parables give the development. So the good fish answer to the good seed, and the rejected fish to the tares. But the parable before us, that of the net, supposes the previous existence of the kingdom, and is a similitude of it, after certain events have taken place. The sea being all the same emblematic of the condition of the world when the net was first cast into it, i.e. when the gospel of the kingdom was first promulgated.

It was from an earthly stand-point that the world was said to be a field. A place where good seed having been sown, a good result might reasonably be expected. That is, I judge, it has respect to man's responsibility. And a good result would have been realized if tares had not been sown and the good seed overmatched. A field moreover suggests the thought of order and regularity, and such there were in the world to the eye of man.

But it is God's view we have here. The scene is unfolded before us from a heavenly stand-point, and not from an earthly. The disciples are in the house with Jesus, it is not a parable addressed to the multitude outside. This world so fair to man is but a sea; always unsteady and restless, sometimes turbulent and casting up mire and dirt. All is agitation, or if seemingly quiet, it is only a treacherous calm where the least breath of Satan may raise the angry waves of hatred and war: where at all times the passions of men openly or secretly are active against all that is good. And if ever the world could be compared to a sea it was when the Apostles began to preach the gospel. There was no stable belief of any kind. There were "gods many" presented to the mass for their worship. But the philosophers although at variance among themselves as to what truth was, or where to find it, looked with cold contempt upon the popular notions. The very priests of idolatry laughed in secret at the vulgar superstitions which they inculcated; and the people themselves, the profanum vulgus scorned by the educated few, transferred their idolatrous homage from one god to another as their own depraved desires led them. Nothing was certain, the past was shrouded in obscurity, the future was utter darkness, the present was only a lottery. A general professed belief in their gods, with perhaps an equally general secret denial. In a word, we cannot read the history of that period without seeing that atheism, violence, and corruption everywhere prevailed.

Into this confused and agitated sea the fishermen cast their nets. This is evidently the preaching of the gospel, the proclamation of God's salvation, of the name of Jesus. From the kingdom-point of view, it is not the actual salvation of all enclosed within the net, but a truth believed, a name confessed; salvation was there for those who truly believed and unfeignedly confessed, but many were found in that net who were "'ejected when it was brought to shore. All the enclosed are necessarily professors, but not real believers. The bad that are cast away are neither Jews, Pagans; nor Mahometans, but those who have borne the name of Christ falsely.

The Apostles were the first fishermen sent to fish in the troubled and foul waters of this world. And in the power of the Holy Ghost they went into all the world. Paul could tell the Colossians that the truth of the gospel was come to them as in all the world. (Col. 1:6.) We possibly have but a limited notion of how far the gospel was preached in the first age. Many a place now fallen into worse than the previous darkness once enjoyed the light of the truth. Nevertheless the net was cast there, and there were many of every kind gathered, and in a certain modified sense we may say it was quickly brought to land. That is, we find in almost every Gentile city that the Apostles visited, a local assembly was founded, in which were seen those of every rank. It is one peculiar feature of the gospel, and which is in marked contrast with the law, that it speaks freely to all; to Greek as well as to Jew. And if to Greek, then to every condition of Greek as well as of Jew; to the low and wretched and outcast as well as to the better sort. We find from the inspired record that there were devout Jews and devout Gentiles—Cornelius and Lydia. There were honorable men and women at Berea who believed. Dionysius the Areopagite, and Damaris at Athens. At Thessalonica a great number of devout Greeks and of the chief women not a few. But we find also the persecutor and bigot—Saul of Tarsus. The ruffianly jailor of Philippi; the dealers in curious arts (witchcraft and sorcery) at Ephesus. Servants in Caesar's household and runaway slaves. In fact, there is abundant proof in the first days of the gospel that "they gathered of every kind."

Perhaps there is not a language or people upon earth which will not have its representative among those put into the vessels. We do know that in the great body of the redeemed there will be those of whom the elders sing, "for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation."

If sin came into the world and broke up into diverse languages (Babel), and divided into distinct races the hitherto one family of man, and instilled hatred and hatefulness among them, the gospel brings them together again. And the King when He takes the kingdom will re-unite them, and, they shall be under one rule and one Prince.

But the parable of the net does not give a picture of what the kingdom presented at the beginning, but rather of its appearance after it had been a certain time in existence. "Again the kingdom of the heavens is like to a net which has been cast into the sea, and which has gathered together of every kind, which, when it has been filled, having drawn up on the shore and sat down, they gathered the good into vessels and cast the worthless out." (Lit. Translation.) Evidently the point of the parable is in the last clause, "they gathered the good into vessels," all the former are but the condition or state of the kingdom, that is, all the previous events had taken place. The net had been cast, the fish caught were drawn to the shore; and the fishermen were sitting down, separating the good from the bad. Clearly this is not the commencement but a subsequent stage of the history of the kingdom. I doubt not but that the end of the present time of the Lord's absence is before Him, though I should hesitate to refer the parable exclusively to the end. That which will be a distinguishing feature at the end may even now be discerned, namely, the sorting of the good from the bad. No sorting was needed at Pentecost, when the church and the kingdom were conterminous. It was not till the kingdom became a power of as well as in the world, and all sorts of evil like birds nestling in the branches of a tree, had found

a home within it, that the separating the good from the bad became necessary.

When the Lord Jesus was about to leave His disciples, (Matt. 28) He commanded them to go into all the world and to disciple all nations, and to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. A Jew or a heathen when he professed belief in the doctrines of the Apostles, and was baptized, became outwardly a disciple, that is a professor. He at once entered within the limits of the kingdom, and came under all the responsibilities of his new position. He was enclosed within the net; a Christian by profession. Now the object of the mission committed to the Apostles, as recorded by Matthew (ch. 28), is to assert the rights of the Lord Jesus as Son of man. Rights which had been denied by the Jews. And not those merely over Israel as heir to the throne of David, but His power over all. For all power in heaven and in earth was now in His hand. The charge here given to the Apostles was not in virtue of His being Son of God, nor as being Head of the Church—for the Church supposes an absent Lord, and there is no ascension here, no going away for a time—but it is in virtue of His title as Son of Man, which is now made good in resurrection; and thus He says, “all power is given to me,” and the Apostles go forth to disciple all nations, not to call individuals, which is rather a church call (if we may so say). This is a call to submit to the authority of the King, and the ceremony of induction into the new relationship and duties was to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Thus every baptized person has, so to speak, taken the oath of allegiance to the Lord Jesus as King, and if unconverted will be judged as a rebel against his rightful master. We of course do not say that this is all, or the most important truth that baptism implies; but it is an awful consideration for those who, outwardly confessing, in their heart deny Him.

This parable applies specially to the time when the tree and the leaven are in full development. But the kingdom does now at this present time present this appearance. It is Christendom. And there is presented to the wondering eye of man a system equally corrupt as that which it displaced, and far more offensive to God. This religious system which has given form and character to the kingdom raised the astonishment of John. (Rev. 17.) But how comes it that this system which contains more evil than can be found in any other, unlike every other, has taken such firm hold of man? Mahometanism where it exists, does hold man. tenaciously in its grasp; but it does not extend, nay, is showing evident symptoms of decay. On the contrary, this system which gives character to the kingdom flourishes. The answer is, because it pampers to the lusts of men, not less now than before. The vices of men may be in somewhat different shape, but they are still lusts. One reason why the new doctrine-for it was only dogma that was preached in corrupted Christendom, not the power of God to salvation—was because there was nothing of the looseness of opinion which bowed to this or that god as caprice, or worse, led the people. The doctrines of Christianity even when thoroughly leavened, offered in direct contrast with the vain speculations of philosophy, a fixity of creed, and a quasi-resting place for the tired and wearied mind. For whatever evil men joined to the Christianity of the word, there was an innate strength, an inherent cohesiveness which made itself felt even when the saving power of the Word was denied. And in general, after the first opposition of pagan prejudice, communities and nations submitted to the new religion, and ended by becoming its zealous advocates and fierce supporters.

It is the way in which the dogmas of corrupt Christianity were made palatable to the natural man which accounts for its success. It was mainly the adoption of heathen feasts and ceremonies into the new system. The so-called Christian feasts of the Nativity and others were so arranged, that the time of their celebration should be the same as the pagan feasts. The clergy of the day seeking thus to wean the idolater from his paganism to the profession of Christianity; and the scheme was successful.

Some little change was made, the old idol was taken down, baptized, another name was given to it, and then it was put up into its old niche, its worship to be observed with the same scenes of lewdness and sin as was paid to it under the old pagan regime. Saints’ festivals were instituted to replace the heathen. Mary superseded Venus; the temple of the goddess became the church of the virgin, in which not the old sacerilos, but the monk was the priest. The feast of the Nativity (commonly called Christmas) was changed to the end of December, in order to take the place of the Saturnalia; and so for other pagan orgies. The people did no longer resist the new doctrine when they were allowed their old practices. The mass became nominally Christian, in reality it remained idolatrous no less than before; nothing was changed but the name. The old evils were carried on, and sanctioned by the ministers of a system calling itself Christian, who pleaded necessity in order to secure the adhesion of the people.

This condition of man, so different from the sea into which the net of the gospel was first cast, is in part the result of the preached gospel. It is the effect of God’s truth received by the natural man where the Spirit has not communicated divine life. Nothing else could be expected but that man having so much better material would work out a worse wickedness than before. Christendom will have a heavier judgment than heathendom.

(To be continued, D. V.)

Collected Writings, Brief Word on Matthew 12:5, A

“Have ye not read in the Law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless.”

The Lord, in His reply to the Pharisees who charge His followers with breaking the Sabbath day in Matthew 12:1, 2, uses the above remarkable expression.

The disciples were an hungered, and had plucked the ears of corn on the Sabbath day, and the Pharisees had charged them with doing that which was unlawful to do upon it. It was quite lawful to “pluck the ears of thy neighbors’ standing corn” (see Deut. 23:25), but they made it an unlawful action when done on the Sabbath day. The gracious directions of God, were thus forced into the narrow lines of Pharisaism. The Lord does not vindicate the grace of Deut. 23:25, but by recalling cast-out David’s course with the show-bread in the days of Saul the usurper, He shows that when God’s anointed king was a wanderer and an-hungered, the show-bread was in a manner common; there was no value in forms and ceremonies when God was rejected in the king of His choice. So by the force of reasoning when God was rejected in His Christ, the Sabbath was no more than any other day. He touches here the springs of evil in the “blind Pharisee,” and takes no notice of the plucking of the ears of corn charged on His followers.

But more, His answer in verse 5 conveys a fine and blessed principle not to be overlooked. The Sabbath, given with the law, was a command or claim upon man under that law. Priests and sacrifices were not contemplated under pure law at all. They came in as God’s provisions of grace when and after the law was broken! In fact, the whole ceremonial of Leviticus, and of Exodus after the giving of the law by Moses and its breach through making the golden calf, etc., with all that then happened, came in as gracious provisions for the approach to God Himself of those who had failed under law.

We might say in a few words as to verse 5: — The Sabbath was the claim of law; the priesthood and sacrifices were the provisions of grace, and while under the law and its demands the provisions of grace through priesthood and sacrifices took the upper hand, its claims had to stand aside, that these provisions might express themselves; how much more should the Sabbath now stand aside in its claim, when God Himself was there in their midst in lowly grace — in the person of Christ!

This system of priesthood and sacrifices is commonly called the “ceremonial law,” in contradistinction with that which is named the “moral law”; but we might the more correctly term them “ceremonial grace”!

Alas, when we look around us, in how much do we find the same thing under a different guise! God and his grace rejected that ordinances and ceremonies without meaning or value might have their place in the religious thought and practice of man!

Words of Truth, New Series 2:182, 183.

Words of Truth: Volume N2, Savior's Call, The

Come thou weary heavy-laden,

Come to Me and rest:

Lay thine aching head and throbbing

On my breast.

I have passed through hours of sorrow,

More than thou can’st know;

I have fought the fight and conquered

Long ago.

Well I know thy weary burden,

And thine aching heart;

Once I bore in love and pity

All sin’s smart.

Oh! if thou but knew’st how tender,

And how full of grace,

Is my heart towards weary wanderers,

Then thy face

Would light up with joy and gladness

Spite of all thy pain,

And thy very woe and sadness

Would be gain,

If it only brought thee to Me,

Who from heaven came down,

Left my Father’s home and sunshine,

And my crown.

For, within my fair creation

Lurked a serpent vile,

Filling men with evil passions,

And with guile;

Leading them to endless ruin

By a gilded road,

Ending in eternal darkness,

Far from God.

So I came from high in glory

By my Father’s side,

And I lived “A Man of Sorrows,”

And I died:

Lived that thou might’st see my glory;

Died to set thee free,

When I bore sin’s awful judgment

On the tree.

And in life and death I suffered,

More than thou can’st know—

Drank the bitter cup of sorrow

And of woe.

But I did it all to win thee,

Win thy heart to God;

Gave my body to be broken;

Shed my blood.

Still the same though high in glory,

Conqueror o’er the grave:

Once in pity humbled; mighty

Now to save.

Come to Me and lay thy burden,

Sin and sorrow down;

I will be rejoiced to make it

All mine own.

And “my peace” shall be thy portion—(John 14:27)

In the Father’s love:

“Peace” I purchased by my sorrow—(Colossians 1:20

Thou shalt have.

Lord, it is enough, I own it;

Why should I decline?

For time and for eternity

I am Thine.

Thine, to serve Thee here in gladness,

Serve Thee soon above;

Learn the sweetness of Thy sadness,

Know Thy love.

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