Matthew - Commentaries by Walter Thomas Turpin

From Occasional Helps: Volume 1 (1875), Veil Rent, the Rocks Riven, the Graves Opened, The

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Matt. 27:51, 52

These verses relate what took place when the Lord Jesus yielded up the ghost. The blessed Lord died, laid down the life which He had, and which none had title or power to take from Him. “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” Such are His own blessed words. The moment that was done, results followed which nothing else could accomplish—which all His own blessed and beautiful life, as God incarnate, could never have produced. But the giving up of His life, His surrendering Himself as a willing victim to death, as the just judgment of God due to sin, as well as yielded by the power of Satan, is followed by the veil of the temple being rent in twain from the top to the bottom, by the earth quaking, the rocks rending, the graves opening, and many bodies of the saints which slept coming forth out of the graves after his resurrection. Heaven, earth, and hell, felt a power they had never owned before.

“By weakness and defeatHe won the meed and crown; Trod all our foes beneath His feet By being trodden down.He hell in hell laid low, Made sin, He sin o’erthrew;Bow’d to the grave, destroy’d it so, And death, by dying, slew.”

The “Holy of Holies” was separated from the rest of the temple by a veil, made of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen work; it signified the distance of man as a sinner from God, and set forth the impossibility on the part of God of having any intercourse with man in his sins. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest: God could not come out, and man could not go in. But now all is reversed. The veil was rent—that veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, typifying the spotless humanity of the Lord Jesus. It must be rent before the full moral glory of God can come out, and before we can go in. The new and living way was consecrated for us “through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.”

It is most blessedly significant, too, the manner in which it was rent—viz., “from the top to the bottom”; thus declaring that no hand but God’s could rend it. He declares that He does not wish the distance, which up to this moment existed, any longer to continue; and not only so, but undertakes Himself to remove it, and in such a way as to display all the righteousness, holiness, truth, and love of His nature. The life of Jesus, beautiful, and perfect, and blessed, as it was, His services to man, His obedience to God, could never have rent the veil or opened the graves. If there were no Savior who died, whose blessed body was given, and whose blood was shed, God were still concealed behind that veil. Man, even at his best, was still at a distance, hell still unconquered, and he that held the power of death still unsubdued. But, blessed be God, it is not so, now that Christ has died. All of God has come out, sin in its root has been judged, the way into the holiest has now been made manifest. The Christ who died is risen and glorified, and in His face shines the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

Two facts of immense importance stand connected with the precious death of the Lord Jesus Christ—first, everything on God’s side is manifested and declared; secondly, everything on man’s side is exposed and judged. By the rending of the veil not only is God set free to act in righteous love toward guilty rebels like us, but the affections of His nature, His heart, are disclosed in such a wondrous way, leaving us absolutely nothing to do in the presence of such favor but to adore and worship. Wonderful it is to think that there are no secrets in God’s heart now; the sorrows of the beloved Son have told the secrets of the Father’s bosom. Jesus, who was the only- begotten Son, ever in His bosom, declared Him, and never more truly than when God forsook Him, when His heart was broken by reproach, when He looked for some to take pity, and there was none, and for comforters, and found none. It is very blessed to see that on God’s side both His heart and the new place in which He would set us in His Christ, according to His heart, are both made known at the same time that everything on our side is exposed and judged. What tidings would this latter be to our hearts without the former? How could one ever face such a scene if the heart had not the knowledge of a home with Him who is the “brightness of eternal glory?” I am sure we are feeble in our apprehension of the terribleness of judgment, Divine judgment, as expressed in the cross of Christ; but (not to anticipate on that head) we are as feeble in apprehending the beauty of that Divine circle now thrown wide open to us, that spot, that unique region on God’s side, where not only all His secrets are divulged, but where His heart finds its own satisfaction in disclosing its treasures to us! The earliest moment in which the blessed God could do this He did it, and that was when His own Son, who came to do His will, accomplished it to the perfection of God’s own nature; then it was the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, the silence which had long reigned within that mysterious curtain was broken, and within it, where only one man, of one tribe, of one nation, on one day of the year, was permitted to enter, poor hearts like ours are entitled to be perfectly and always at home.

“God now brings thee to His dwelling, Spreads for thee His feast divine;Bids thee welcome, ever tellingWhat a portion there is thine.

In that circle of God’s favor, Circle of the Father’s love, All is rest, and rest for ever, All is perfectness above.”

Then, secondly, at the same time that all on God’s side is opened, all here on man’s side is both exposed and judged; the sun was darkened, the earth quaked, the rocks rent, the graves were opened: now it was that destruction and death felt the power of Him whose fame they had heard with their ears. If our hearts only entered a little more into the wonderful extent of this judgment, we should never desire to revert to anything so judged here, the emancipation would be wonderful to us. If we understood the cross better, the Lord’s Supper would be our continual attitude of soul; positive delight to connect ourselves with Him in His death, and remember Him in it, because through that death the circle of God’s festivities was opened to us, and because in His death the love of Jesus, as well as of His Father, was expressed to us. It would, moreover, fortify our hearts against crushing disappointment, for how could we expect anything but death here, if our hearts were in the continual remembrance of His precious death for us?

“Remember Thee and all Thy pains, And all Thy love to me;Yea while a breath, a pulse remains, Will I remember Thee.”

‘‘Note: This also appeared in Helps in things Concerning Himself, vol. 3.

From Occasional Helps: Volume 1 (1875), “Rest . . . Rest”

Matt. 11:28-30

There is something very remarkable in the place in which we find these well-known verses, and there is a great contrast between what the blessed Lord proposes to the soul in them and His own circumstances at that moment. Indeed it is this, I feel certain, that clothes them with the beauty that surrounds them. The Lord called around Himself His twelve disciples, and instructed them in view of all that lay before them in their path. This occupies ch. 10. As soon as He had finished, He Himself departed to teach and preach, for He was, while on earth, not only the faithful servant of Jehovah, but the unwearied servant of men, ministering to all the needy around Him.

John the Baptist, Christ’s messenger, who was in prison, heard of His works; and, forgetting that it was not the day of Christ’s power as yet, but the day of his grace, he allows a doubt to cross his heart. Can this be the Messiah of Israel after all? “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” The Lord, in sending His answer, refers John to the works, which were those which only the Messiah could do; but it must have been a grief to the heart of Christ to find the confidence of His forerunner and messenger thus shaken.

Next, the state of the nation of Israel, His own people, passed before His heart and grieved Him. He compares them to “children sitting in the market, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, ‘We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.’” Israel would not have the ministry of either John the Baptist or Christ—they cast the one into prison, and in the end they crucified Christ. John the Baptist came and preached law, and they refused him; Christ came and preached grace, and they cast Him out. What a picture of the heart of man!

Then there were places on earth which witnessed Christ’s mighty works—places where His glory shone out in a remarkable way—Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum. His thoughts turn with sadness to such, as He announces the woe which rests on abused and despised privilege; the heaven- exalted Capernaum should become the hell-doomed city. Reader, I entreat you to ponder such deeply solemn words as these, uttered by the sorrowing Savior, in regard to slighted opportunities and despised long-suffering. Never was there a period like this in the history of Christ as a man on earth, when His labor seemed so in vain—doubted by John, refused by Israel, despised in the scenes of His mightiest works. Yet at this moment, it is, He rises in the perfection of a man whose meat it was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and He says, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” And then it is, having let us, as it were, into the secret of His resources, He comes out with His returns, in the well-known precious words which have fallen as healing balm upon many a troubled heart since, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will rest you.” It is now no longer a question of responsibility to accept or receive; it is free sovereign grace that acts from itself and for itself, finding the weary and burdened that it may rest them. Oh, how blessed all this is! Say, my reader, does it meet you? He who spoke those words knew what man was, what the world was, what the most privileged were. He knew that in a scene in which God was not, where His name had been dishonored and His grace refused, there was weariness enough and burdens enough, but rest there was none. He Himself stands here as the only One in whom there is a place for the sole of the foot to rest on; and, looking out over all time since, and poor breaking hearts in it, He says, “Come to me.” The invitation is world-wide; those to whom it is addressed are found everywhere—“Ye that labor and are heavy laden.” He knew what that was, and He alone could meet it. Reader, does it not suit you? You cannot deny it—however you may despise or refuse, you cannot say it does not suit you. I would here seek to meet one who says, “Well, what you say is very true; but I am greatly troubled by another little word of Christ which often comes up before me, viz., ‘All that the Father giveth me shall come to me’; and I begin to think within myself, am I given of the Father to Christ? and so my burdens and labor of soul are increased.” Reader, is this your state? If so, the way out of your difficulty is simple, and the end of your sorrow of heart is near at hand; for do you not see that here there is no condition or qualification—it is simply, “Come unto me,” and going to Jesus is the proof of the Father’s giving and drawing. It is to Himself I go, for He says, “Come.” He does not say how He will give me rest. He presents Himself, and the rest for my poor sin-stricken soul and sin-burdened conscience is in connection with Himself. He never said “Come” until He Himself had come first from heaven to earth, that He might be in this sense “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Reader, are you seeking rest? “Come unto me, and I will rest you.”

The second rest is a further and needed thing too. It is connected with subjection and submission, with taking Christ’s yoke upon us—it is rest after rest. Dear reader, most earnestly do I desire it for you. If you have never had the first, you are, like Noah’s dove, out of the ark, in a scene of judgment, without a spot for the sole of your foot to rest on. Safety, rest, peace, and plenty, were inside the ark; destruction, death, restlessness, and sorrow outside. The two great marks of a perfect man, are manifested by the blessed Lord in connection with the second rest, viz., submission and subjection. “I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth” is perfect submission; “even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight” is perfect subjection. Observe this second rest is connected with taking Christ’s yoke and learning of Him; here the yoke is taken not for service but for rest.

It is, beloved reader, a question either of submission or self-will; where there is subjection to the Father’s will, there is a path of quietness and peace. Christ was meek and lowly in heart, satisfied to be in the lowest place at the will of His God; and nothing can possibly molest or overthrow one who is there.

“We wonder at Thy lowly mind, And fain would like Thee be,And all our rest and pleasure find, In learning, Lord, of Thee.”

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