Micah - Commentaries by Unknown Author

Things New and Old: Volume 4, Present Pardon, A: My Sins Are All at the Bottom of the Sea

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A FEW weeks ago, we were present at one of those meetings which are now becoming so general, and which, in some instances that we know of, have been made a great blessing—namely, a meeting expressly for the young. On this occasion, about 130 boys were assembled in a schoolroom, where a plentiful tea was provided for them.

After tea, some suitable hymns were sung, prayer offered, and the boys, though in great spirits, soon became very quiet, and listened with great attention to an address on the subject of their soul's salvation. Towards the end of the discourse, we observed many of them quite fixed in their attention, and some were weeping.

At the close of the service, those who were really anxious about their souls, or had a wish to remain to an after meeting for prayer, were invited. Perhaps one-third of the whole remained. Many of them now seemed in real earnest about their souls. The scene became deeply interesting. Doubtless, on such occasions, one affects another, so that much of the manifestation of feeling may be through sympathy; still, it is always a blessed sight, to see sinners, young or old, affected about the state of their souls. The Spirit of God alone can so work, and His work will remain, and always prove itself. In moving through the room, we were much struck with the earnest expression and ready answers of one boy that we had some conversation with. The flushed cheek, the tearful eye, the agitation of the muscles, all bespoke deep emotion within.

"And has the Lord spoken to your heart tonight, my boy?" was, substantially, our first question.

"I am sure he has, sir," was his immediate reply; and from his general expression, we could believe he was feeling what he said.

"Do you now know, my dear boy, that you are a lost sinner?" "I know I am, sir."

"But now, tell me, do you think that Jesus has brought you to Himself this evening?" "I know he has—I am certain."

"What has Jesus done for us that we may come to Him?" "He died for us."

"Do you mean to tell me, that you believe you are now safe on the arm of Jesus?" (Something had been said, during the address, about Jesus feeding His flock like a shepherd, gathering the lambs with His arm, and carrying them in His bosom. Isa. 40:11.)

"I believe I am, sir; I feel sure I am."

"You seem very decided, my boy; but now, tell me this, If Jesus has given you a place on His arm tonight, what has He done with your sins?"

"He has put them away, sir—they are all at the bottom of the sea."

This answer was given with such apparent feeling and energy, that we could only say in our hearts, 'surely thou art taught of God, and to Him alone be all the praise.' Not a word had been said, in the address, about the truth, as to the believer's sins being cast into the depths of the sea. (Mic. 7) Id further conversation, we asked the lad if he had been in the habit of attending school here, or if he had been anxious about his soul before this evening. To both questions he answered, "No."

We are well aware, that it may, by some, be difficult to believe, that a boy, or any other person, could have, in so short a time, such assurance of pardon and acceptance. And truly, were we to be guided by the state of things in general throughout Christendom, on this point, we should suspect all such testimonies, whether from young or old. Uncertainty, not assurance, characterizes by far the greater part. Comparatively few have the full assurance of their salvation. And yet, what are the first two questions that each one of us needs to have settled before we can be happy and really enjoy further truth? Why, surely, pardon and acceptance. But if we look at the fullness of the gospel, and are guided simply by the truth as it is in Jesus, all such unbelief will vanish. We shall cease to be surprised at such happy results. A present pardon, and every blessing connected therewith, are surely proclaimed to the chief of sinners in the gospel of the grace of God. The blessed Jesus Himself, after He was risen from the dead, told His disciples "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24) And this, we find, was their practice. Take two examples:—

1. That of Peter in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10), where, after stating the truth about Christ and His finished work, he declares, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." The same moment the gospel of Christ is believed, the sins are remitted. As the truth enters the heart, the sins are washed away. When the sinner is accepted, his sins are all cast into the depths of the sea. Nay, more, the Holy Ghost enters the heart that believes and is forgiven. And He will abide there forever as the seal of all the blessings of grace already revealed, and as the earnest of all the glory that is yet to be revealed. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Heard, of course, not with the outward ear only, but with the ear of faith. The truth preached was received into the heart. In connection with this testimony, see also {vi 29220-29221}Eph. 1:13, 14, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of your inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Here, every promise, every blessing, is secured to the truster in Christ, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, by which, believers are made one with Christ, and are brought into the same privileges. Oh! how many there are who are really trusting in Christ as the Saviour, and yet are in constant fear and trembling lest they should be lost at last. May God in mercy deliver them from such dreadful bondage, and bring them into the happy liberty of Christ, in whom they are pardoned, accepted, and complete forever.

2. Our second example is that of Paul in the synagogue at Antioch. (Acts 13) To all there assembled he preaches the gospel; not according to human thoughts and feelings, but as he had been taught it of God by the revelation of Jesus Christ. “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” This is plain enough, surely. All that believed what Paul preached were pardoned and justified there and then. And they were fully assured of it by the plain statements of the word of God. The same word that assured them that Jesus had died and risen again, assured them that they were pardoned and justified, through believing in Him. Surely this is full assurance! What can give fuller assurance than the word of God? If, in place of looking to ourselves and our own feelings, or for some inward token of our acceptance, we looked to the word of God, and believed it, just as God has given it, we should at once be delivered from all our doubts and fears. Full, unclouded assurance would take the place of gloomy uncertainty.

Many persons, engaged in the good work of the gospel, whose sincerity could not be doubted, believe and maintain that if conversion be real, besides the statements of God’s word as to pardon and acceptance, there will be an inward feeling, sense, or token, witnessing to the genuineness of the work. The inward feeling must prove the truth of the word to them. And if they have not this inward sense of pardon and acceptance, they have no right to believe that the promises apply to them.

In reply to the above statement, which, in substance, we are constantly hearing in connection with the work of the gospel, we would say, most truly, if the work of conversion be genuine, and the full gospel be believed, there must be a deep inward feeling of assurance as to pardon and acceptance. But the mistake lies in looking for the inward sense of forgiveness before the word is believed that assures them they are forgiven. It will be seen at a glance, that such teaching and belief must lead the soul into endless perplexities. Of course, we speak only of earnest, anxious souls, in whom we believe there is divine life, although they would not believe it themselves.

Under such circumstances, when a sinner is awakened and really turned to Christ in deep earnestness about his salvation, in place of listening to the voice of Jesus, through His word, which only can speak pardon and peace to a troubled soul, he anxiously looks within for some inward sense or assurance that he is a changed person, a new creature in Christ Jesus. And not feeling sure that he has undergone this change, the word of God, however plain, is not received as applicable to him; consequently, the anxious inquirer is plunged into a state of the most painful perplexity. This class of anxious souls is numerous, and some are to be found in it of a long standing. We once witnessed a soul brought into full peace through simply believing, who had been thirty years in trouble about her salvation. Her joy was great when she saw it was all settled. She could now rest in peace on the authority of the word of Christ.

The grand aim of the enemy in all this system of looking for feelings, is to get the eye of the believer, young or old, turned away from Christ and His word, and turned in upon self. And so long as he succeeds in keeping them occupied with themselves, his end is gained. The poor soul is kept without peace or joy, and, consequently, in weakness, and so an easy prey to his wicked suggestions. Sometimes they think they can feel that all is right, and hope springs up, accompanied with a gleam of joy; at other times they feel cold and dead, and then, dark, dark clouds overshadow them.

But now, let us turn to the word. What light and direction have we from it on this subject? Does not the Lord say, plainly enough, by His written word, mark, that all who look to Him as the Saviour, or come to Him—hear Him—believe in Him—trust in Him—are saved? He never says, “may be—will be—or can be,” but, “are saved.” His word meets every state of a soul that has been moved towards Him by the Holy Spirit. The word assures the coming one, that He “will in no wise cast out.” Here, it is assured of acceptance. But, my sins, my sins! it exclaims. Again the word replies, “thy sins are forgiven.” When Christ receives a sinner, He must put away his sins.

He cannot receive them. Or, as the prophet says, “And thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea?” But whose sins? The sins of all who believe in Jesus. But what is meant by “the depths of the sea?” It means they will be cast, where they can never be traced. If you cast a thing into the depths of the sea, you can trace it no more forever. Thus God and faith get rid of sin. And not some sins, observe, but “all their sins.” Thus, the sinner can rejoice, through believing God’s word, that he now rests securely on the arm of Jesus, and that all his sins are at the bottom of the sea—sunk in the untraceable depths of the deep waters of God’s everlasting forgetfulness. As it is elsewhere said, on the same subject, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Heb. 10:17.

Listen, then, tossed and troubled soul, to the very words of Scripture. They are the gracious answers of Jesus to thy anxious requests. Expect not to hear His voice from heaven—look not to thyself in anywise. The right feelings will spontaneously arise from the right truth believed. If good news be received, thou art made glad—if sad news, thou art made sorry. There must be a corresponding feeling to the news believed. But when is this feeling produced? Just when we believe. Not before it, certainly. Oh then, dear reader, believe the good news of the gospel—the full gospel of the grace of God. A present pardon, full justification and acceptance, are assured, on the authority of holy scripture, to all who believe in Jesus. Look not to self-look to Jesus—look to the word. Go to it at all times and under all circumstances. It is the unfailing word of Christ. Confide in it with un-misgiving assurance. It can never be broken. So shall thy peace be perfect, thy joy abundant, and the light of a cloudless sky shall shine on thy interest in Christ, until thou see Him face to face in the bright and sunny regions of eternal glory.

“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; hut is passed from death unto life” John 5:24, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matt. 11:28.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,

Come unto me and rest;

Lay down, thou weary one, lay down

Thy head upon my breast.

I came to Jesus as I was,

Weary, and worn, and sad,

I found in Him a resting-place,

And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,

Behold I freely give

The living water—thirsty one,

Stoop down, and drink, and live.

I came to Jesus, and I drank

Of that life-giving stream;

My thirst was quench’d, my soul revived,

And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,

I am this dark world’s light,

Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,

And all thy day be bright.

I looked to Jesus, and I found

In Him my Star, my Sun;

And in that light of life I’ll walk,

Till traveling days are done.

Echoes of Grace: 1975, In the Depths of the Sea

Micah 7:19

I will cast in the depths of the fathomless seaAll your sins and transgressions, whatever they be;Though they mount up to heaven, though they reach down to hell,They shall sink in the depths, and above them shall swellAll the waves of forgiveness, so mighty and free;I will cast all your sins in the depths of the sea.

In the deep silent depths far away from the shore,Where they never shall rise up to trouble thee more,Where no far-reaching tide with its pitiless sweepCan stir the dark waves of forgetfulness deep—I have buried them there, where no mortal can see;I have cast all your sins in the depths of the sea.

"He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Proverbs 29:1.

The Remembrancer: 1911, "This Is Not Your Rest"

IC 2:10{

Scripture shows us that true joy and happiness cannot be had in connection with the earth, or in the circumstances and history of the world, in their present state, nor till the earth is made the scene of righteousness; and such is not to be, till the Lord have ridded it of all that offends, and all that do iniquity (Matt. 13:41). The sword of judgment must go before the throne of glory. The earth must be cleared of its corruptions, ere it can be a garden of holy, divine delights again.

The Gospel is not producing a happy world, or spreading out a garden of Eden. It proposes no such thing, but to take out of the world a people, a heavenly people for Christ. But the presence of the Lord will make a happy world by-and-by, when that presence can righteously return to it.

The close of the Psalms shows this. Beautiful close! All praise—untiring, satisfying fruit, of lips uttering the joy of a filled heart, and owning the undivided glory of the Blessed One! But this had been preceded by the sorrows of the righteous in an evil world, and then the judgment of that world. For that Book gives the cries of the righteous in an evil world, the joys of the Spirit in the midst of that evil, the varied exercises of the soul by the way, and the end of the righteous in the joy of praise. All, however, forbids the heart from entertaining the thought of joy in the earth till the judgment have cleansed it; the rest is to be prepared for Solomon by the sword of David.

The proper thoughts of this will keep the heart from being tossed by disappointments, and take it off from the expectation of any progress to rest and stability for the world, or in it, till the Lord have executed judgment. Our joy now is to be in Himself, in spirit, in the thought of His love, and the sense of His peace, helped onward, day by day, in the hope of full and righteous joy with Him, when the wicked have gone from the scene forever.

How sensitively does the Lord's mind recede from the thought of joy in the earth, when the people were wondering at all things that He did! Turning to His disciples He said, " Let these sayings sink down into your ears; for the on of man shall be delivered into the hands of men." But this, I may say, was only a sample of all His mind, as He looked to the earth in its present condition. It was ever in His thoughts connected with trial.

Psa. 75, strikingly utters this. There Messiah looks on the earth as all dissolved and disordered, about to drink the cup of judgment at God's righteous hand. For the present He expected nothing from it. But then, after the exhausting of that cup, He does look on it as the scene of joy and praise and exaltation of righteousness, He Himself bearing up its pillars, and leading its songs.

I feel it, however, to be a very solemn truth, that God is allowing man, giving him space and time, to ripen his iniquity, that the judgment may fall upon him in the height of his pride, and crush the system which he is raising in its point of greatest pretension and advancement. It is surely a solemn truth. But even in such a purpose, as in all others, " Wisdom is justified of all her children." The believer may be awed by such a fact in the divine dealings with man, but he approves it, understands it to be a fitting thing, that man should be allowed to produce the fully ripened fruit of his own departure from God, to present it and survey it in the pride of his heart, and then receive his righteous answer to all his boasted and enjoyed apostasy, from the signal judgment of God. The iniquity of the Amorites was to be fall, ere justice should overtake it. The Lord bore with Babel till the cry of it went up to Him. Nebuchadnezzar had built " great Babylon," as he gloried, by the might of his power, and for the honor of his majesty (not for the glory of God), when he was driven from his high estate; Haman was full when God emptied him even to the dregs (Esther 7:10). And the great man of the earth, at the last, shall come to his and, just as he has planted the tabernacles of his palace in the glorious holy mountain (Dan. 11:44, 45).

It is solemn: but it is as wisdom would have it, and as faith deeply approves it. God is justified in His sayings, and overcomes when He is judged. (Rom. 3:4).

When the scene around is getting full of man's inventions and man's importance, it is well to look to those regions of light and purity, where GOD, supreme and all sufficient, will gather together all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. Regions of light and purity indeed, where all will tell of intimacy or nearness, and yet of the full sense of the position of the Creator and the creature, the Sanctifier and the sanctified. In many a delightful page of God's word is this brightly reflected. The Lord dwelt in the midst of t he camp of Israel while at rest, and, as it took its journey, went along with it, whether by night or by day, whether the road lay right onward, or turned back to the mountain or the sea. But still He was GOD, the Lord of the camp.

How does all that commend itself to our souls! We bow to this. We rejoice to know that He dwells in a light that no man can approach unto, and yet that He has walked through the villages and cities of earth; that He is One whom no man hath seen, nor can see, and yet that none less than the One who is in His bosom has declared Him to us, been in the midst of us, our Kinsman in the flesh, as well as Jehovah's Fellow. (Zech. 13:7).

His supreme authority, as Lord, is infinite; His distance and holiness, as God, are infinite. And yet He is " Head over all things to the church." and God Himself is "for us." (Eph. 1:22; Rom. 8:31). At the very moment of His commanding Moses and Joshua to take their shoes from their feet, because of His presence, He was manifesting Himself to them in symbols or characters significant of the deepest sympathy and of the most devoted service. (Ex. 3; Josh. 5).

In the days of increasing gloom and perplexity, like the present, the soul is the more sent to the sure hiding-place of safety, or to the sunny Pisgah heights of hope and observation. It gets the more accustomed to meditate on the strength of those foundations which God has put under our feet—the intimacy of that communion into which He has even now introduced our hearts—and the brightness of those prospects which He has set before our eyes.

I ask, beloved fellow-believer, Are we pressing in desire after this portion? Are we unsatisfied with all in comparison with it? Are we refusing to form any purpose, or to entertain any prospect, short of this? In Psa. 84, the heart of the worshipper is still on the way, unsatisfied, though he have " pools," and " rain," and " strength " of the Lord, till He reach Zion. In Psa. 90, all which the man of God sees is the vanity of human life and the " return " of the Lord. He does not anticipate changes and improvements in the condition of things, but looks to being " made glad" and of being " satisfied " at the " return " of Christ.

Is this our mind? I again ask. Are we still prisoners of hope, refusing to let anything change the expectant attitude of the soul? The Holy Ghost is given to us, not to change that, but to strengthen it. His very presence does but nourish present dissatisfaction of heart, and the longings of hope and desire. He causes the saint to " abound in hope " (Rom. 15:13), and gives breadth and compass to the cry. " Come, Lord Jesus." Spirit of truth, the other Comforter, as He is, He does not show Himself for the Bridegroom, nor propose to make His refreshings " the marriage supper of the Lamb." The energy of hope, the desirings of the soul after our still unmanifested Lord, only speak the Spirit's presence in us the more clearly and blessedly. It is His very design and workmanship. He draws us forth to hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And is He our Object? The heart well knows the power of that which is its object. Do we make JESUS such? Are we able to say, " When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"

May the Spirit shed abroad more and more, in the heart of each of us, these and the like affections. And to HIM that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory and dominion forever!

Amen.

Girdle of Truth: Volume 2, Our Rest Is Not Here

"This is not your rest, because it is polluted." Micah 2:10.

"This earth is not thy rest,"

Beloved of the Lord;

Of higher hopes possessed,

Than it can e'er afford.

Thou hast this faithless world resigned,

That thou a nobler rest might find.

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