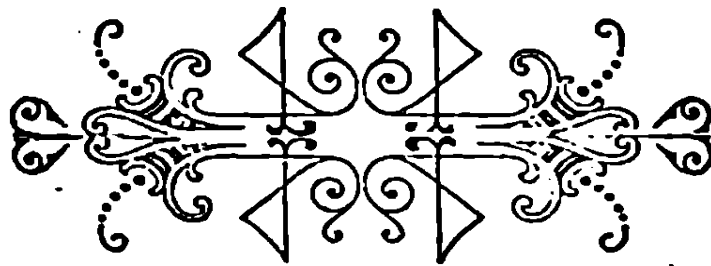


THE
B U N C H
OF
H Y S S O P .

By F. G. P.



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“THE BUNCH OF HYSSOP.”



“**F**OR I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans i. 16-18).

“And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despiseth thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance

and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans ii. 3-5).

With the message of the fullest and richest grace of the Gospel comes the most solemn and final revelation of a Judgment to come. As final as it is solemn and searching to the soul. No threat—no language of denunciation or declamation; but the terribly calm, clear statement of the utter ruin, after every trial and test, of man's estate. Of the sure and certain perdition and eternal ruin of every man with whom God will enter into judgment, according to His works. The truth has come and disclosed all; it has shown what God is, what man is, what Satan is, what the world is, what judg-

ment is—all things are laid bare. He does not *threaten*; but has *revealed* judgment to come as the solemn result of grace despised.

If we examine the parable of the Great Supper in Luke xiv., we find that it was not those who were living in open sin who refused this final call of grace. I say final, because you will note that the Gospel Feast is set forth as the final meal of the day of God's dealings with men. The Lord was at dinner in the house of this Pharisee at the time. The *supper* is the last meal of the day before *midnight* comes. This is very significant and striking. The Gospel comes after all God's previous ways of testing and trial have passed.

The *morning* of innocence, with its lovely moments of freshness, when God came down to visit His creatures, and when His creation was unsoiled with sin,

soon passed away, and man fell, never to return to this state of creation blessedness.

Then came His *noontday* dealings with man, now with a conscience, obtained when he fell. During their continuance came the frightful wickedness of men and angels; the earth was filled with corruption and violence; and God had to wash the polluted earth with the mighty baptism of the Flood! Then men set up the devil for God in the renewed earth, and the whole world was worshipping him in the passions and corruptions of their evil hearts.

The *afternoon* testing of the Law followed. It told man what his duty was, both positively and negatively—it's "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not," taught him what he ought to be. But it never disclosed what *he was*, utterly and hopelessly ruined. Nor did it tell him what *God was*,

with a heart full of tender pity and perfect love. Then the prophets were sent to recall him to its observance, lest judgment should overtake him, and these they stoned.

It was in the *evening* that at last God revealed Himself in Christ. Would man now be won? Alas, no! Not one single heart was attracted to Christ of itself. They saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. It was a lovely evening after a day of storm and evil which was ushered in so brightly; but how soon to close in around the darkness of the Cross, where men quenched (as far as they could) the light of heaven!

God had another moment of mercy. The *supper-time* of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, with the message that “All things are now ready,” “Come,” for the *midnight* of

judgment was about to fall. But "all with one consent began to make excuse." Men who were not living in sin, but who were doing lawful and right things—attending to the farm, the merchandise, or their family affairs—even they also refused the gift of God.

I know nothing more solemn than the fact, that when the Lord lifts the veil and points to the awful judgment of a future scene, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi.), we learn there the *compelled remembrance* (the deathless sting of remorse) of times gone by, and advantages lost for ever, in this present day of grace. How dreadful then for the professor, the procrastinator, the careless man! "*Son remember!*" tells its own tale more truly than the many words which might be used to paint the scene. But it is not my present task to dwell

on this side of the picture. I desire rather to unfold in some measure the certain way of escape from this judgment to come. The one is as certain as the other.

God had a serious question with Israel on the night of the Passover. They were sinners, and sin had constituted Him a judge. He had come down to deliver them, and to bring them to the land. He appoints a way in which He can righteously pass over us as sinners when judging the world. The blood of a spotless lamb was to be taken, and placed upon the two side-posts and lintels of the doors of their houses, which were to be closed, and none of the people were to leave their houses till the morning. In the evening the lamb was to be slain, and its blood sprinkled by the believing Israelite in the “obedience of faith.” This was

done by means of a "bunch of hyssop" (Exodus xii.). Now this points to a significant and important thought in connection with the Gospel. Many know the "plan of salvation," as it is termed; they are as clear as possible on the truth that salvation is by faith alone, and that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it only, is that by which security from judgment to come depends. They know well those words, that "without shedding of blood is no remission." Yet they never have had, so to speak, the "bunch of hyssop" in their hands; there is no real link between their souls and Christ by the Gospel. The "bunch of hyssop" is used in Scripture to signify *humiliation*. The Psalmist refers to it in this way in Psalm li. 7, where he cries, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." This was the moral cleansing of

his soul by complete humiliation.

An Israelite who believed Moses concerning the plan of deliverance on that “night to be remembered,” did not fold his arms quietly, as many, and do nothing. No; he was up and doing in “the obedience of faith” (Romans i. 5; xvi. 26). “Believing in his heart” the glad tidings of Moses, he was seen outside the door of his house, before the world, “confessing with his mouth” the acceptance of this message, and thus appropriating his personal share in the efficacy of the blood of the lamb. It was truly humiliating for him to go outside before a world of idolatry, into whose sins he had sunk (Ezekiel xx. 6-8), and confess that, although he was one of God’s chosen people, he could claim no immunity from judgment but through the shelter of the blood of the lamb. He thus justified God and condemned himself.

It was humiliating; but right to do so. "Let God be true, but every man a liar." Here is the link between the soul and Christ, which so many need. The bunch of hyssop has never been grasped; the soul has never bowed in the obedience of faith, and in the reality of its state, not only believed the Gospel in the heart, but confessed it with the mouth to salvation. The sprinkled blood was to meet and satisfy the claims of God. It was to present a righteous ground to Him when in judgment for passing over a man whose sins deserved that the blow should descend on him, even more righteously than on his Egyptian neighbour next door.

The *midnight* of judgment came, but all was settled beforehand, as it must be for us. Our sins cannot be worse in the day of judgment than now. God's way of escape from judgment will not then *have*

changed. It is as certain now as then. His love has anticipated that day in giving His Son. His Son has come, and has presented His blood before God. God has pronounced on our state as sinners already; and the day of judgment cannot speak more plainly than, “ There is none righteous, no, not one!” (Rom. iii. 10). Christ has borne our sins and put them away before that day comes, and God has sent the news of His having done so. “ He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God ” (John iii. 18). But you may say, I know it all. I ask then, Are you forgiven? Are you safe under the shelter of the blood of Christ? I do not ask, Do you hope to be so? I ask, Are you safe? If you believe God, you are. If you believe your own heart, you are deceived: “ He that trusteth in

his own heart is a fool" (Prov. xxviii. 26).

May you know what it is to have had the bunch of hyssop in your hand, your heart confessing that your only security is, that God, against whom you have sinned, has looked upon that precious blood of Jesus, that He has accepted it already, and the day of judgment will not change its value, or make it less precious in His sight: in virtue of it He has declared, "I will pass over you." Do you dare to doubt that He has accepted it? You could not, for you know He has. I do not ask, Have you accepted it?—but, Do you believe He has done so? The proof that He has, is that Jesus is at God's right hand.

"When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 3). He has by Himself purged the sins, and he

who believes has his conscience purged of them. Suppose some one has paid a debt which I owed and could not discharge ; well, I cannot be sued for it, but if I did not know that it was paid I should be afraid to meet my creditor. To be happy in his presence, I must know that some one has been kind enough to do it. So God declares that it is done ; then my conscience is free, and I can now afford to look into my heart, which I dared not do before.

The question of all our sins has thus been settled before the day of judgment, and according to God's mind ; if not, we never can put them away. Christ cannot die again ; “ death hath no more dominion over Him. ” He “ was once offered to bear the sins of many. ” I say “ all our sins ; ” for all were future when that precious blood was shed—when Jesus bore them in His own body on the

tree. If all were not there, if all were not then borne and put away, they will most surely come up again at the Day of Judgment, and that would be eternal ruin. Thank God, He has borne ours who believe. Others may reject it and perish, but there the love is, and there is the work of Christ to save all who will believe in Him.

"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8).

F. G. P.

