

MADE FIT FOR HEAVEN.

IS IT BY INSTALMENTS,
OR ONCE FOR ALL?

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“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light.”—COL. i. 12.

“**N**EXT week I shall pay *my first instalment* to the National Insurance, and shall hope in time to reap the benefit.”

This was said to the writer by a respectable working-man, a stranger, in the streets of Car-

marthen, and evidently for the purpose of making clear an idea which he was defending, that acceptance in the presence of God can only be gained by increasing our store of *good* qualities and begging His pardon for the *bad*.

Preparation for death was the subject of our conversation. For such preparation, he was professedly doing his best. He always made a point, he said, whenever he had the chance, of doing a kind turn to a fellow-workman. At the same time, he freely owned that he had not always been so good a friend to *himself*, for he liked a glass ! But still, every night before he slept he asked God to forgive him ; and didn't see how anybody could do more !

“But suppose you had been running up a long score in your tradesman’s books, and still went on adding to it, would asking his forgiveness every night meet that debt? Or would *believing* that he had forgiven you clear you of all liability, when you had no *satisfactory* ground for such a conclusion, and no ground at all except that you had *asked* him?”

He frankly confessed it would not, especially if the *creditor* was not satisfied.

Pleading is not paying. If a debt has to be actually *discharged*, it must either be by one complete payment or by a number of smaller instalments. The Gospel shows that in meeting man’s sin it is the former; that is, it is by *one full payment*. “*The redemption of the soul is precious,*

and it ceaseth for ever” (Psa. xlix. 8).

For God’s satisfaction, and man’s deliverance, Christ has offered Himself as a sin-bearer on the sinner’s behalf. He “came into the world to save sinners.” But let us ever bear in mind that the death of Christ did not *procure* God’s interest in sinful men : it *expressed* it. The real secret of Christ’s coming was found in the yearnings of God’s own heart. It was He Who found the Ransom. In offering Himself to meet God’s *requirement* in sin’s judgment, Jesus was doing *God’s will*, expressing *God’s love*. “For God *so loved* the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.” It was GOD’S desire, not only to have man in His own presence eternally, but

perfectly suitable to Himself. Hence we read, "Christ once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18). That sin should not escape its just deserts was only righteous. But God found One Who was *willing* to bear sin's penalty, *able* to remove sin's stain, and, having done both, to rise from the dead, and to impart life everlasting—life *beyond* sin's condemnation. Blessed Redeemer!

" 'Tis Jesus, 'tis Jesus, our Saviour
from above,
'Tis Jesus, 'tis Jesus, 'tis Jesus
Whom we love."

If He has, then, "obtained eternal redemption" for me, by the laying down of His own life, once for all; if God, Who knew

all my sins, is satisfied that full atonement has been made, and has given abundant proof of it by glorifying the One Who did it, and sending His Spirit from heaven, as the Witness of it on earth, shall I insult such grace, or give the lie to such testimony, by offering to God any supposed goodness of *mine* as a sort of *instalment* toward meeting some of my sins, while begging to be excused for the rest? Take an illustration. Suppose that the King of England, at great personal cost to himself, had been pleased to lay down, for his subjects in the Isle of Wight, a sum large enough to cover the whole cost of providing and maintaining a "Home" for the destitute to the very end of his reign. What would be thought of some

subject on the island who desired the *comfort* of the provided Home; but proudly refused to be *entirely* indebted to the King's kindness, and tried to insist on paying for his own board by instalments, with the hope of being *excused* if he could not pay *all*? Would he have any title at all to "a home for the *destitute*"? What would the KING feel about it? And what must the SAVIOUR feel when such a marvellous service as His can be so slighted?

Hear His own testimony respecting that great act. At His last supper with His disciples, referring to the cup as an emblem, He said, "*This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matt. xxvi. 28).

In Isa. liii. 11, it is spoken by

the prophet concerning Him, "*He shall justify many : for He shall bear their iniquities.*" And the same verse gives us the crowning result : "*He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be SATISFIED.*"

Now calmly consider. If Jesus went to the cross to *bear* the believer's sins ; if His precious blood was shed to *remove* them ; how could He regard His soul-travail with *satisfaction*, if His death had *not* removed them ?

But, blessed be God, it has been said of every sinner believing on Him, "*Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*" (Heb. x. 17).

" The trembling sinner feareth
That God can n'er forget,
But one full payment cleareth
His memory of all debt.

When nought beside could free us,
Or set our souls at large,
*Thy holy work, Lord Jesus,
Secured a full discharge."*

God only knows how far the man we have referred to really apprehended what was brought before him. One thing is certain (and those who come most in contact with professing Christians know it best), that this man's notion of attaining to fitness for God's presence by *religious instalments* is spreading rapidly! To such, the new National Insurance scheme would be regarded as a well-chosen illustration of the way it is to be reached. According to this scheme the *master* contributes his share, the *servant* his own share, and the *Government* guarantees the rest. How strik-

ingly similar to the modern method of insuring men for heaven ! By administering the sacrament, etc., the *officiating minister* does his part, the so-called *church member* does his part, and *God* is expected to fall in with their scheme, and accept the best they can give Him. But a great test has already been made on this line. It lasted from the institution of Levitical sacrifices to the coming of Jesus into this world—nearly 1500 years. Heb. x. makes it clear that the sending of Jesus was because all that man was able to bring to God was of no avail whatever. It met neither God's holy requirements, nor His creature's deep need.

The *priest* did his part : the *offender* did his ; he provided and

slew the sin-offering (Lev. iv. 27-29). The rest had to be left with *God*. Could *He* accept it?

No matter how really honest a man may be who *presents* a cheque at the bank, or how well-conducted the clerk who *receives* it, if the cheque itself represents no actual value to the banker, the applicant presents it in vain. So with "the blood of bulls and goats." The offender bringing his offering may have been very sincere, and the priest unusually considerate, but if God could not accept it as effecting what He desired, it was absolutely valueless. Do you ask, *What* did God desire? He would have sin completely put away: He would have man with a purged conscience come near to Him with holy boldness.

After fifteen centuries of sacrificial shadows, brought before God "day by day continually," what was God's verdict? (See Heb. x. 1-11.)

THEY "CAN NEVER TAKE AWAY SINS."

THEY "CAN NEVER MAKE THE COMERS PERFECT" (as to the conscience).

What was to be done? "*A more excellent sacrifice*" must be provided; and *God Himself provided it*. Jesus is God's Lamb. The Sacrifice and the Priest are one. "Through the Eternal Spirit, He offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. ix. 14). What is the result? "By one offering He hath *perfected for ever* them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14). God finds delight and satisfaction in that accomplished

redemption ; and countless myriads have found satisfaction in the same precious sacrifice. Each can say with glad anticipation :—

“ And when in heavenly glory
My ransomed soul shall be
From sin and all pollution
For ever, ever free,
I'll cast my crown before Him,
And loud His praise extol,
Thou hast Thyself redeemed me ;
Yes, Thou hast done it all.”

Yet, alas ! how many to-day are blindly turning away from a *God-provided fitness for glory* in Christ Jesus, and, by weekly religious instalments, are trying to make up a fitness of their own ?

If you are one of them, let me, with all earnestness, ask, What have all your past instalments

really amounted to? Will they support you in the hour of death? Will they clear you in the day of judgment? SEARCH AND SEE.

“Be this *my* foundation,
’Tis wholly Divine;
Christ died for my ransom,
His merits are mine.”

GEO. C.



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