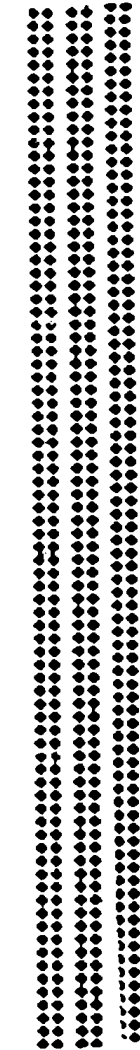
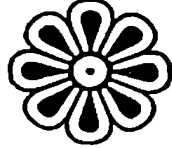


Acceptable Words

Ecclesiastes 12. 10

By
WILLIAM EASTON



*Linking the Soul in Difficulty
With the Unerring Word of God*

PREFACE

The following papers have been written to meet a few of the difficulties of souls, and to help them by bringing them into direct contact with the Word of God itself. Whether, therefore, the reader should be an anxious soul seeking peace, or a believer groaning under the dominion of sin and law, and longing for deliverance—help and blessing will surely be found by appealing to that Word which God has so graciously given, and which He assures us “is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). To that Word, therefore, I have turned the readers of these pages, so that their “faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:5); and would merely add, “Prove all things: hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). W. E.



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Acceptable Words

(*Ecclesiastes* 12:10).

THE SCRIPTURES

TO THE LAW and to the testimony," said the prophet of old; "if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (*Isa.* 8:20). "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (*Luke* 16:31), were the words of Abraham to the rich man in Hell. While Jesus Himself said to the Jews, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his *writings*, how shall ye believe *My words*?" (*John* 5:46-47). How important, then, that the Word of God should have its own authority in the conscience and heart of both writer and readers; for by that Word alone can we have any knowledge of the mind and thoughts of God.

But some men object to it and call it in question. They tell us it is not the Word of God. Others would have us believe that only some parts of it are genuine. Others say, "It is the Word of God, but not the words of God." Thus the enemy seeks in various ways to weaken our faith in the dear old Book. It speaks for itself, however, and needs no champions to stand up for it. It proves itself to be such, spite of all the arguments of its infidel enemies or its mistaken and misguided friends who play into the enemy's hands.

The true and humble believer accepts it as a revelation from God, communicated "not in *words* which man's wisdom teacheth, *but which the Holy Spirit teacheth*" (*1 Cor.* 2:13); and which is able to make all who believe it wise unto salvation (*2 Tim.* 3:15). Indeed, the very fact that men hate and reject it, and do all that lies in their power to prove it to be untrue, combined with all its own internal evidence, prove it to be what it really is—the Word of God.

During a little friendly discussion in a railway carriage between two travellers, one of them, feeling himself at fault in his argument, tried to escape by saying, "But how do you know that your Bible is the Word of God?" "Supposing I take a large knife and gash your arm," said his companion, "how do you know it is a knife?" "Because it cuts," replied the other. "The Word of God," said his companion, "cut my conscience, and made me feel it was the Word of God."

And is not this the reason why men hate it so? Surely it is. It forbids their sins. It reminds them of their responsibilities as creatures responsible to God. It threatens the disobedient and impenitent. It holds out rewards to the faithful. It troubles the consciences of those who act not according to its teaching; and therefore men resist it, hate it, refuse it, and in their folly become witnesses to its truth, "They

have rejected the Word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" (Jer. 8:9). They act like Jehoiakim of old, who cut the roll to pieces with his penknife, and cast it into the fire to get rid of it. But burning the roll which announced the judgment did not hinder the infliction of the judgments which it announced; and another roll was written at the command of God, "and there were *added* besides unto them many like words" (see Jer. 36), and we do well to remember this.

Men do not vent their rage and spite, and use their abilities and powers to prove Shakespeare, Milton, and other great writers to be liars and cheats, and their works, compilations of contradictions and absurdities. And why? Because none of these writings speak with authority to their consciences, and make them feel they must give account of themselves to God, even "for every idle word," nor do they threaten them with eternal judgment if they die impenitent. The Word of God speaks to men with authority. "The wages of sin is death," it says, and "after this the judgment" (Rom. 6:23). "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psa. 9:17). It gives no uncertain sound. It knows no contradictions or discrepancies. Indeed, the *seeming* and *supposed* discrepancies searched out by its unbelieving enemies, or its professed, but deluded friends are, to the Spirit-taught mind, but the glorious and divine perfections which prove afresh its divine origin, and also the truth of what it had already announced, viz., "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth all things" (1 Cor. 2:14, 15).

But let the enemies oppose and do their worst! "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Peter 1:25). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35), the Lord declared. It is like a rock in the midst of the waves. It stands, and, as it were, "mocks at the angry tempest's roar." It has stood for ages, spite of every effort to destroy it. It stands still, while many of its bitterest enemies have passed into eternity and proved its truth. It *will* stand, when Heaven and earth have passed away, and the great White Throne is set, and the wicked dead stand before that throne to be judged every one according to their works (Rev. 20:11-15). Remember, its voice *shall* be heard then. Its testimony will be given and received; and the words of the Saviour recorded therein will be found to be true, "He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

Well may we apply the language of wisdom in Proverbs 8:33-36, and say to all who may read this: "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors. For whoso findeth Me

findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord; but he that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate Me love death." Also the words of the Apostle in 2 Timothy 3:16, 17: "*All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."



MAN'S NATURAL STATE



CONVERSION, SIR! I don't want conversion! It's the drunkards, and harlots, and thieves, and such-like who need converting. I go to my place of worship, and I am sober and industrious, and I don't owe a farthing to any one. In fact, I tell you candidly, I don't believe in your doctrine, insisting upon every person alike being 'converted,' as you call it, or going to Hell when they die. No, sir, I *don't* believe it!"

Facts are stubborn things, my friend; and, you see, your belief neither makes them true nor untrue. There they stand—*facts!* whether you like them or not. God has spoken them; that is enough. Your place is to listen and believe.

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye *shall not* enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 18:3). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he *cannot* see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Of what value, then, is your fancied goodness and self-righteousness in the light of such weighty and solemn statements? Moreover, these are the words of the Lord Himself. Dare you say, "I don't believe them?"

Supposing, now, we could take ten men, and suspend each one of them over a precipice by a chain composed of ten links. Let us further suppose that one link in the first man's chain were suddenly to break, what would become of the man? He would be dashed to pieces at the bottom of the precipice of course. Supposing two links were to break in the second man's chain, and three in the third, and so on until at last *every* link in the last man's chain broke, would not the effects be the same? Surely! Every man of the ten would be killed. Supposing, then, we take the worst person in your neighborhood and yourself: that man has broken every one of God's ten commandments, whereas you are good, and only break *one*. Are you then safer than he? In no wise! For we are taught by the Apostle James that "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one point*, he is *guilty of all*" (James 2:10). That wicked man had broken the ten, and no more; you have broken the ten, and no less; and, dying impenitent,

both of you will be shut out of Heaven, though the punishment of one may be greater than the other, when each is "judged according to his works" (Rev. 20:12).

We see the same thing if we take the parable of the Pharisee and the publican—it was the poor publican who went home to his house *justified rather* than the Pharisee (see Luke 18:10-14). The Lord Jesus also tells us that "they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are *sick*," and He "came not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance" (Luke 5:31, 32). Indeed, the very fact that men do not believe this only proves that they are still *in darkness*, and blinded by the god of this world, "lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine upon them" (2 Cor. 4:4).

What an awful thing for men to be rushing on to eternity in the dark, not knowing whither they are going, whether to Heaven or Hell. Yet every unconverted soul is going straight to Hell, spite of God's warnings and entreaties; spite of His calls of mercy; spite of the pleadings and prayers of friends who know their danger and long for their salvation. Yet onward they rush, stumbling on the dark mountains of sin; and soon, unless they repent, they will find themselves enveloped in "the shadow of death and *gross darkness*" (Jer. 13:15, 16).

"I'm on the down-grade, and I cannot find the brake," said a poor dying man, who had been a stage-coach driver, and whose life had been one of open wickedness and profanity. Alas! we fear there are many who, like that poor man, will wake up some day when too late to find they are on "the down-grade and cannot find the brake," whose course will end in Hell.

"God is no respecter of persons!" High or low, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, religious or profane—"All have sinned." All need a Saviour. All are welcome to receive the One whom God has provided—even His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; and *all* will be punished who reject Him (John 3:36). There is only one place of punishment, in which all unbelievers must have their portion for ever—the Lake of Fire, which is "the second death" (Rev. 21:8). The self-righteous religionist and the degraded sinner, however great the moral and social distance between them in this world, will spend eternity together in the Lake of Fire in the next world, unless they accept God's way of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood "cleanseth us from *all sin*" (1 John 1:7). God's Word declares that man's natural state is "darkness" (Eph. 5:8); besides which he is *in* darkness, and "knoweth not whither he goeth." He is a fallen creature, "alienated from the life of God." He may rebel against it, and refuse to believe it. Alas! many do; but it is nevertheless true, and his unbelief does not alter it.

Many are, of course, endowed with much natural ability and in-

telligence; while others are full of religious sentiment. But all these things avail nothing with God. They are in darkness, and continue in darkness until God's Word penetrates their consciences, and has its authority in their souls. "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple" (Psa. 119:130). Then, and then only, can they say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

Thank God, there *is* mercy, there *is* peace, there *is* forgiveness, there *is* eternal life, there *is* eternal blessing for all who will receive them. "*Not of works*, lest any man should boast," says the Apostle (Eph. 2:9). "But to him that worketh not, but *believeth* on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5). In this way alone can any sinner be saved.



THE FOUNDATION

IT IS WELL to have a good foundation for all our hopes, whether for time or for eternity. Many, we fear, have none for eternity, and are like the man who built his house *without a foundation* (Luke 6:49). Doubtless it looked as well as many that stood beside it; but soon the storm burst upon it, then the useless structure fell, and its ruin was great. Thus will it be with all mere empty professors. Presently the storm of God's wrath will burst in all its pitiless fury upon their guilty heads, and their empty professions will then be found to be no refuge from the storm in that day.

"Other foundation," says the Apostle, "can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). The *Person* and *work* of the Lord Jesus Christ form the foundation on which every true believer rests all his hopes for eternity. Yea, the very throne of God is upheld in righteousness by that work in all its infinite and eternal value; while the floodgates of His heart's love are let loose, to flow forth to the very vilest.

I have said the *Person* and *the work* form the foundation, for what would be the worth of the work if we had not the dignity and glory of the Person to give it value? The enormity and heinousness of the sins which we have committed against God can only be measured and known by the sacrifice which He provided to atone for them. It is useless for men to talk and give us *their* human ideas about sin and its punishment. Where is their standard to judge it by? They have none, if they refuse the one God has given, viz., the death of His own Son, "made sin" on the Cross, and forsaken by Him. No angel or archangel could ever measure our guilt, nor could they ever bear its punishment. It needed One who was divine as well as human; One who was able to sustain all our judgment, and yet One who was willing to die.

Where was such an One to be found? Nowhere but in the Person of Him who was God as well as Man; He who could say, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God;" yet of whom it could be said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Heb. 10:9 and 1:8). It is when our souls get firm, clear hold of the glory and majesty of the Person of Jesus, "God manifest in the flesh," that we begin to apprehend the infinite value and efficacy of His atoning sacrifice.

Let us look at this a moment longer, and we shall see how distinctly He was Man—a real, true Man—without ceasing to be God, so that He could bear all our judgment, and, as Man, die.

Take that scene in the boat on the lake in Mark 4:36-41. Who was it that lay calmly sleeping on a pillow which some loving hand had laid for Him, undisturbed by the howling tempest around? It was Jesus as Man. *God* never slumbers nor sleeps. Who was it that rose at the entreaties of the poor affrighted disciples, and in divine majesty rebuked the angry tempest, and calmed that raging storm? It was Jesus as God. No mere man could command and control those wild elements. How truly, then, do we see in the lowly form of the Nazarene—*God and Man*. Again, who was it gave thanks for the bread as He lifted up His eyes to Heaven in that wilderness? (Matt. 14:15-21). It was Jesus as Man. Who multiplied those five loaves and two fishes, and made them satisfy five thousand men, and left twelve baskets full of fragments? It was Jesus as God. Only He could work such a miracle. Or take, again, John 11. Who was it that wept at the grave? Jesus as Man. Who was it raised the dead? It was Jesus as God. Surely we need not multiply instances to prove this.

He was Man without ceasing to be God. No mere creature was asked to undertake our cause. But God, in the Person of the Lord Jesus, did it Himself. Who now can charge God with unrighteousness? As the God-Man passes before the vision of our souls, walking on the sea, and we hear those memorable words uttered to His affrighted disciples, "*It is I; be not afraid,*" may our hearts be bowed in adoring worship, that *He* has atoned for us—*He* is God's foundation—*He* is our Saviour and Lord.

But we need more than the Person of Christ. There could be no Heaven for any poor sinners if the Lord Jesus had not died and risen. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). Hence we see the necessity for His death.

Yes! "Christ must needs suffer." God must be glorified about the whole question of sin. Satan's power must be broken. The sinner's sins must be put away, the sinful nature condemned, and the sinner himself saved. And all this could be done in no other way than by the sacrifice of the Son of God on the Cross. Has all this been done? Let the Word of God furnish the answer. "I have glorified

Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4). Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31). "That through death He might annul him that had the power of death, that is the Devil" (Heb. 2:14). "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:17). "God sending His own Son . . . condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). "God hath saved us" (2 Tim. 1:9).

Surely these Scriptures give forth no uncertain sound. All is done that needs to be done. The present position of Christ as "*seated*" in Heaven proves that all is done (see Heb. 1:1-4; 10:12). Moreover, the words of the Saviour Himself in John 17:4 tell us in unmistakable language that all is done:

"I HAVE FINISHED THE WORK."

Can we doubt it, when we look up and see Him in Heaven, crowned with glory and honour, *after* He had, by God's grace, tasted death for every man? (Heb. 2:9). Surely not! Does He need to come out of Heaven to die again? No! A thousand times no! Hebrews 9:25, 26 and 10:12 effectually settle that point. He died *once*, and in that one sacrifice every believer may see the eternal settlement of all his sins, and rest on the foundation laid by God—*Christ* and His *finished* work.

See the stir in that little village there. What does it all mean? Why, the gentleman who owns the place desires it should be kept as a model village, and has just sent out a notice that he intends giving a prize to the cottager who has the best laid out garden, and all the villagers are talking it over, and going to arrange their garden plots. In that house to the right lives a poor crippled man, with difficulty he gets across the floor. There is not much fear of poor old Thomas getting the prize, you say. Well, so far as his efforts are concerned, there is not. But by and by a gardener from a neighbouring place comes along, and goes into poor old Thomas' garden, and does it all up so tastefully, and then he looks in at the door, and says, "I have finished it, Thomas! I have done it up for you," and away he goes.

The time comes at last when the gentleman visits the village. He looks carefully at every little plot, till at last he comes to poor old Thomas'. He is charmed. It is beautifully done. There is no question it is the best, and he enters the house and gives poor old Thomas the prize. Poor old Thomas! *He* never touched the garden! No! But a friend did it all *for* him, and he got the prize. And so it is with the Gospel. It is not, however, a question of our doing something and obtaining a prize, but rather we had committed all the sins and deserved the penalties; but the Lord Jesus came and took the sins, endured the penalty, and we got free. Blessed for ever be His peerless Name!

Yes! He endured all on the Cross for us—poor helpless cripples; and we, believing on Him, receive all the blessings the loving heart of our God can righteously give us founded on the work of His beloved Son on the Cross! Need we a foundation other than this? No! No! It satisfies God—it may well satisfy us. “It is I” gives us the *Person* who did the work. “I have finished the work” tells us it is *all accomplished*; while “Thus saith the Lord” in Scriptures gives us the divine certainty of its acceptance and its results Godward and to usward.



ETERNAL LIFE



CAN A PERSON be sure he has it in this world? We reply in the words of Scripture: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God, *that ye may know that ye have eternal life*” (1 John 5:13). Eternal life is the *gift* of God (Rom. 6:23), and is, therefore, simply to be *received* by faith. To *work* for it is to make it no longer a *gift*, but reward for labour done, and this cannot be. Let us look at some of the passages where it is spoken of and see what God says about it.

John 3:14, 15: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that *whosoever believeth in Him* should not perish, *but have eternal life*.” Here it is connected with the lifting up of the Lord Jesus on the Cross. He is set forth as the object of faith. The result to those who believe is—eternal life. They possess it the instant they believe.

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth in Him* should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Here it is connected with God’s love to the world. The Son of Man must be lifted up, but why? Not only because our sins demanded it, if we were to be saved; but because God so loved the world. Thus we are carried back to the source of all our blessing, springing in the very heart of God. We are not told that we must love God, but we *are* told that He has loved us. We are not asked to give Him anything, but we *are* asked to believe that He has given *His* only begotten Son. That is His part, the *loving* and the *giving*. Our part is the *believing* and the *having*.

Had God asked *us* to write down the way to be saved we should have written it something like this: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever does the best he can, and pays every one their own, and goes to a place of worship, and prays for forgiveness, may have a good hope of eternal life when he dies.” Thank God, *He* has made it much more simple than that.

God’s part is: God LOVED—and God GAVE.

Our part is: We BELIEVE—and we HAVE eternal life.

And who does God say has it?—WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH in Him (the Lord Jesus Christ).

Take again the last verse of John 3: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Now, this is a very important verse. Many people think it means—they *hope* to get it if they believe. But I'm sure H-A-T-H does not spell HOPE. No! No! H-A-T-H spells HATH, and means that the person who believes on the Son possesses eternal life here and now. Who is it that *hath* everlasting life? He that believeth. And what has he that believeth? Eternal life. He does not hope to get it; but he *has* it—God says so.

John 5:24: "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, but is passed from death unto life." Here the Lord presents a cluster of blessings to all who will receive them. There are five separate and distinct things, but all are connected and go together:

1. He that *heareth* My word,
2. And *believeth* on Him that sent Me,
3. *Hath* everlasting life,
4. And *shall not* come into condemnation,
5. But *is passed* from death unto life.

Now the question is simply this:

1st. Have I heard His word? And I answer, "Yes, I have!"

2nd. Do I believe the One who sent Him? I reply, "Yes, indeed I do. I believe the Father sent the Lord Jesus to be my Saviour, and that God loved the world and sent His Son; and I can say, '*for me.*'"

3rd. Then the Lord assures me that I *have* eternal life. Not that I hope to get it at some future day; but I HAVE everlasting life here and now.

4th. I shall not come into condemnation. Christ has already borne all the judgment for me; and "*there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 8:1).

5th. "Is passed from death unto life." Once I was in a state of spiritual death; now I *have* passed out of that state into life. How simple, yet how blessed!

John 6:47: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me HATH everlasting life." Here the Lord Jesus is speaking Himself. It is just as though He said to us, "Can you look up into My face and say you *believe* on Me with all your heart? If so, then I do look down upon you, and say, 'I give you eternal life with all My heart—it is yours.'" Precious, blessed Lord! How simple, how precious, how real! Can any one doubt after that? Can *you*?

John 10:27-30: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I *give* unto them *eternal life*; and they shall *never*

perish; neither shall any one pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are One." From this chapter we learn that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, not only gave His life *for* the sheep (v. 11); but He gives eternal life *to* the sheep (v. 28). Not only so, but He says they shall *never* perish; nor shall any one ever pluck them from His hand, or His Father's hand.

In Luke 15:5 we read that when the Shepherd found the lost sheep He laid it on His shoulders, rejoicing, and carried it right home. He never laid it down till He reached home. The little silly sheep had the *strength* of the Shepherd's *two shoulders* to carry it in Luke 15:5; and the *security* of the *two hands* in John 10:28, 29—the Shepherd's hand and the Father's hand; and in Romans 8:39, the *love* of the *two hearts*—God's and Christ Jesus'. What more could the sheep need? Is there any uncertainty in this? None whatever! Not only are believers sure they possess eternal life, but they are assured they shall *never perish*, and the Shepherd will set them down safely at last in the Father's house.

Let me quote one more passage, I John 5:10-13: "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God *hath given* to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son *hath life*; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God, *that ye may know that ye have eternal life.*"

Surely none will ask after this, can a person be sure he has eternal life in this world? Certainly he can. If he is a true believer in the Son of God he *has* it, for God's Word says so, and the question is, Dare he doubt it?



FORGIVENESS OF SINS

BELIEVE IN the forgiveness of sins" is easily and often said; but do those who repeat the words really believe them? In the forgiveness of *whose* sins do they believe? we might ask—their own, or some one else's? Peter's, or Paul's, or James'? Alas! it is too true that numbers who repeat these words do not believe it possible for *any person* to know the forgiveness of sins here in this world at all; and they look upon those who can say, through grace, *they are forgiven*, as fools, or something worse. We shall not trouble ourselves, however, about such persons or their thoughts, but turn to Scripture and seek to learn from it what God says as to this subject.

In Luke 7:36-50 we have the account of a poor sinful woman who came to Jesus when He was on earth. There was no question as to her

guilt. She was a notorious sinner. But she came as a broken-hearted, penitent to the feet of the Saviour, and there she found a *present forgiveness—present salvation, and present peace*. How did she know she was saved? it might be asked. "*He said it!*" is the immediate answer. In no other way could she know it. But if He said it, dare she doubt it? No! His word settled it. He *said* unto her, "Thy sins *are* forgiven; . . . thy faith *hath* saved thee; go in peace" (vv 48-50). She required no more, His word was sufficient.

Peter preached to Cornelius and his household and friends (Acts 10) that Jesus had been anointed by God with the Holy Ghost, and had gone about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the Devil. But man had slain Him. He had died, risen, been seen by chosen witnesses, and He is the Judge ordained of God to judge the quick and dead. But meanwhile. "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name, *whosoever believeth* in Him shall receive remission of sins" (v. 43). When were their sins to be remitted? There and then! They believed what Peter preached to them, and were forgiven at once, and received the Holy Ghost consequent upon that. They had not to wait till they had lived holy lives, and passed through a certain amount of experience. No! They believed in Jesus, and at once received remission of their sins.

Now let us take Paul's testimony. "Be it known unto you therefore, . . . 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" (Acts 13:38, 39). Could anything be more clear and decided than this? Forgiveness of sins—the result of the atoning sacrifice of Christ—is now *preached* to men. They need not work for it; it is proclaimed publicly for men to receive it. "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things." Mark these words: "BELIEVE"—"ARE"—"ALL." "All who *believe*." Not, all who work, or read, or pray, or weep. No! No! All who *believe* on Him whom God raised from the dead. They *are* justified. Not they may be, or they hope to be, or they shall be; but they *are* justified. "From *all* things." Not from a few things, or the most of things, or the worst of things; but from *all* things.

Take, also, what he says to the Ephesians in chapter 1:7: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." We *have* it. There is neither hope nor uncertainty about it. Scripture says *we have it*. That is Paul's testimony.

Turn now to Peter's testimony in his epistles: "Who His own self *bare our sins* in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). "Christ also hath *once suffered for sins*, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (chap. 3:18); and Paul adds, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3).

Now let us put these things together, and what have we got?

Christ *bore our sins*—

Christ *suffered for our sins*—

Christ *died for our sins*.

That is the Saviour's part in connection with our sins. He Himself *had* no sin—*knew* no sin—*did* no sin. He was the spotless and sinless Lamb of God, and the only One competent to take our place, which He did, and was "made sin for us"—bore, suffered, and died for our sins. The result of that is, when we believe in Him, we *have* remission of sins, we *are* forgiven our sins. And, moreover, God says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember *no more*" (Heb. 10:17).

Well may the Apostle quote the Psalmist's words, and say, "Blessed are they whose iniquities *are* forgiven, and whose sins *are* covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. 4:7, 8).

John, too, bears witness when he writes: "The blood of Jesus Christ His (God's Son) cleanseth us from *all sin*" (1 John 1:7). And he writes to the whole family of God, "because their sins *are forgiven* them for His Name's sake" (chap. 2:12). Again he writes, "Unto Him that loveth us, and *bath* washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5).

Thus, then, we see the united testimony of the New Testament Scriptures to be, that every believer *is forgiven* his sins. He is not hoping he may be forgiven some day, but he is forgiven *now*, here, in this world, and he knows it on the authority of the Word of God. He does not look *forward* to the Day of judgment for the settlement of his sins, but he looks *backward* to the Cross, and knows that the Lord Jesus, the sinless One, has borne all the judgment due to him on account of his sins, and settled that question *perfectly* and *permanently*, and therefore God has forgiven him, and will remember his sins *no more*. "He shall not come into judgment;" he is "*in Christ Jesus*," and consequently there is "*now no condemnation*" for him (Rom. 8:1).

Should he sin now, he does it as God's child; then the advocacy of Christ comes in; and when, as a naughty child, he confesses his sins to God as his Father, He is faithful and just to forgive him his sins and cleanse him from all unrighteousness (see 1 John 1:9; 2:1).

This is not to make light of sin. Surely not! Holiness becomes every child of God. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," God has said. When a true believer sins he *does not excuse himself*, but he judges himself, hates and loathes himself for allowing it, and with broken heart he confesses it. He is ashamed for allowing that which cost the Saviour such agony on the Cross. His repentance and confession are a real thing, and the very root is judged. If he does not confess his sin, then God chastens him (see 1 Cor. 11:31, 32).

Every believer, then, can say, not only as a general statement, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," but he can say, "I know *my own sins are* forgiven, and I know it on divine testimony, the testimony of the Word of 'God that cannot lie.' "



GOD IS SATISFIED: ARE YOU?



ANXIOUS SOULS generally begin at the wrong end. They begin with themselves, instead of beginning with God. It is their doings, their feelings, their satisfaction—themselves in some way or other. And often it is a very long time before they learn to turn from themselves and look at God's side; yet they never can find peace of conscience and joy of heart till they do. We are continually meeting such cases.

We ask them: "Are you saved?" They reply, "I hope so." "But are you not sure about it?" "Well, not exactly. I only wish I were. I am seeking and praying for it, but I can't say I'm sure. I don't seem to get satisfied somehow."

Oh! the numbers there are in this condition—praying, seeking, and trying to get satisfied. It is all self together. They are putting the cart before the horse, and are surprised they can't get it to go. Of course not! The surprise would be if they did. The Gospel begins with *God*, not with us. Look at that well-worn but fresh-as-ever verse, John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It begins with *God*. *God loved*, and *God gave*. *We believe*, and *we have everlasting life*.

Start, then, with God. See how He has been met, how He has been glorified, how He has been satisfied! Then you may well be satisfied when you have learned that *He* is.

Some time ago I met a young sailor who had been in this state for three years. He had been seeking, and praying, and trying to feel satisfied. And what, think you, delivered him at last, and made him perfectly happy? Just one simple fact which he had overlooked the whole of those three years.

Do you ask, What was it? It was the blessed and glorious fact that *God is satisfied*! Now, just you think of it; turn it over and over in your mind. Read it slowly, and let *your own* poor, weary heart take it in—GOD—IS—SATISFIED! "Oh!" said the sailor, as his face brightened, "I never thought of that before—*God is satisfied*."

"Yes," I said, "He was the offended party by your sins. You were the offender. The Lord Jesus came to satisfy God's holy, righteous claims by dying for our sins; and He did that work perfectly, and

God has proved His satisfaction in the Person and work of Christ by raising Him from the dead. Had God not been satisfied with that Work He would have left Him in the grave; but He has taken Him out, and thus proved He *is* satisfied. And it was all for you! Surely if God is satisfied with the work of His Son, you may be also!

"I see quite clearly where you are making your mistake," I continued. "You are trying to be better, and feel different; trying to work yourself up to a certain state of happiness, and then feel satisfied with your own joy. And because you are always failing and never arriving at the standard you have set up, you are dissatisfied.

"Now, let us suppose that a man buys goods at a shop to the amount of five dollars, and then finds himself in difficulties and unable to pay. He cannot pay the debt himself, and he is not aware that any one has paid it for him, and so you find him going about saying, 'Oh, if I could only get satisfied!' You would say to him at once, 'My friend, *you* can never be satisfied until you have paid your debt, or some one has paid it for you. The tradesman *must* have payment, and be quite satisfied *first*.'

"But supposing a kind-hearted friend goes to the tradesman and pays the bill, obtains the receipt, and sends it to the man; he would not sit down and look at the receipt, and say, 'If only I could get satisfied!' Of course not. He would *know* the amount was paid, for the tradesman had given his receipt, and the proof of the tradesman's satisfaction would give him satisfaction. Thus it is in the Gospel. The Saviour who stood in our place 'was delivered for our offences (He had none), and was raised again for our justification' (Rom. 4:25). So that the risen Christ is God's receipt for me. *He is satisfied, and so am I*. Now, why should you not be this very moment, and give Him the praise?"

It was sweet to see the effect of this truth on the sailor as his heart drank it in. He was filled "with *joy* and *peace* in believing" (Rom. 15:13) that "God is satisfied." And looking at me, with a face beaming with joy, he said, "I see it all—God is satisfied; I can go home and thank Him for that."

Now, dear anxious soul, you have read thus far. Will *you* now say, "I wish I could be satisfied?"

Never! Never will you be satisfied until you have believed that God has found infinite satisfaction in the work of Christ on the Cross *for you*. "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). He cried out on the Cross, "IT IS FINISHED," and died (John 19:30). But, thank God, He is risen again, and "exalted to the right hand of God" (Acts 2:32, 33). Yes; "This Man, after He had offered *one* sacrifice for sins for ever, *sat down* on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:12). From whence God has sent the Holy Spirit to be the

witness to all believers, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember *no more*" (v. 17).

Matchless Saviour! Thy work is done. *Once* was sufficient for God, and *once* is sufficient for me. I can meet God with joy now, for Thou hast answered every question and settled every claim, and introduced me to that blessed God, who "rejoices over me with joy, rests in His love, and joys over me with singing" (Zeph. 3:17; Luke 15). Yes! the way in which He receives the poor, dissatisfied, repentant, returning prodigal—covering him with kisses, clothing and feasting him—tells out *the satisfied heart of a satisfied God*.

Anxious one, try no longer to *do* anything; wait no longer to *feel* anything; but rest where God rests—in Christ, who has so glorified Him that He can send a message of love to you and say, *God is satisfied!* Now, *are you?*



DELIVERANCE



WHEN WE speak of deliverance from sin we do not mean that believers now, or at any time, so long as they are in this world, have no sin *in* them. Such a thought would be mere folly and contrary to what Scripture teaches; for the Apostle John says, "If we say we have *no sin*, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). If therefore, any person should say that they have no sin we have authority for saying they have *no truth*, and are deceiving themselves. Moreover, if they should say they have not *sinned*, they make God a liar (v. 10), which is worse; for He says, "*All have sinned*" (Rom. 3:23). But when we speak of deliverance from sin, we mean what Scripture means in Romans 6, viz., from its *power*, and *dominion*, and *slavery*, so as to be free to yield ourselves to God, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God, and "walk in newness of life."

In like manner we are delivered from the law, not to be lawless, but to serve in newness of spirit, and to bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7). The grace of God "teaching us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:11-14).

Now the question of deliverance is exceedingly simple in the Word; yet there is none more difficult for the believer to grasp and enter into the enjoyment of, and for this reason, that all his experience contradicts the truth of his being dead with Christ, and thus free from sin and law. To say to him, "Christ died for your sins," he would accept *that* truth without any difficulty, for it is a fact apart from and entirely outside of himself, and he has no experience to contradict it. He knows he is delivered from the guilt and penalty of his sins.

But to say, "You have died with Christ to sin and law," his experience comes in at once, and he replies, "No, I have not, for I was in a passion the other day, so that cannot possibly be true of me." How important, then, to have clear thoughts about such a subject; and in order to do this, let us briefly examine the Scriptures as to it.

Every man has his own sins, for which he is responsible, and for which he will be judged at the great white throne should he die unsaved (Rev. 20:12, 13). Not only so. He has an evil nature within, which is termed in Scripture "the old man" (Rom. 6:6), "sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3), and spoken of in other ways, and is the *root* from which the *sins* spring which are its *fruits*. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from every sin, *i.e.*, from all the acts of the evil nature (I speak, of course, of believers), but it does not cleanse from the evil nature itself. *It* cannot be cleansed, improved, or made better in any way (Rom. 8:7), therefore God condemned it in the sacrifice of Christ. Thank God, we find *practical* deliverance from its *power now* by being in Christ, and reckoning ourselves to have died unto sin, and *final* deliverance from its *presence* we shall have at death, or the Coming of the Lord, for then we shall leave it behind for ever.

Very many believers, after their conversion, get into very much deeper sorrow and exercise about the workings of this evil nature than they passed through about their sins. It is not that they are living in open sin; but they feel what wretched hearts they have; how evil thoughts will rise unbidden, and the more they try to suppress the risings of this evil nature, the more they feel it is stronger than they are, and will assert its authority—in fact, it is their master.

Moreover, they know that God's holy law forbids all this evil within, and curses them if they fail. But the more they try to meet the requirements of the law, and do what it commands, the more they feel the slavery and bondage which they are in, till at length they cry out in bitterness of soul: "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" All this experience is detailed in Romans 7. The deliverance from both *sin* and *law* is found in our being in Christ, and consequently having died to both. And the acceptance of that fact, and carrying it out in practice by *reckoning*, gives the practical deliverance.

From Romans 6:2-8 we learn that, being *in* Christ, we are looked upon by God as having *died with* Christ to *sin*—to *law* (chap. 7:6; Gal. 2:19), and to the *rudiments of the world* (Col. 2:20). Christ's condition as regards these things is ours, because we are part of the new race, of which He is the Head. Moreover, "our old man" has been dealt with by God, and crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). "Sin in the flesh" has thus been *condemned* in the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross (Rom. 8:3), and we are to take God's reckoning about these things.

The evil nature, then, is said to be "condemned," "crucified with

Christ," but it is never said in Scripture to be *dead*, nor are we anywhere told to reckon it dead. The teaching of the Word is that *we* have died with Christ, and are to reckon *ourselves* dead to *it* (Rom. 6:11). It is no use saying, as many do, "I don't *feel* dead!" Of course not. But being in Christ we *have* died with Christ, and we are to carry out that truth by *reckoning* ourselves to be what we are not as to actual fact. Were we actually dead we should not need to be told to *reckon* ourselves to be so. But as in Christ we *have* died with Him to sin, we therefore are to "*reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord*" (v. 11).

Supposing I buy goods from samples, and when the bulk arrives I find them not according to the samples, I condemn them and say, "Fasten them up again and send them back!" They may perhaps lie in the shop some time before they are removed, but I do not look upon them as saleable goods, but as condemned ones, and I treat them as such till they are removed. Thus it is with our evil nature. God *condemned it* in the sacrifice of Christ, and we are to treat *it* as such till we leave it for ever, either by our actual death or at the Lord's Coming.

The only way, then, to obtain practical and present deliverance from the power and dominion of sin is to *reckon* ourselves to have died to it. It is no use struggling and striving to master it; it is far stronger than we are. Our wisdom is just to accept the truth as God reveals it, and carry it out in practice. The *power* which enables us to do this is the Holy Spirit, and this we must not lose sight of for one moment.

Thus we see that the whole question of *sin* and *sins* has been settled, and settled for ever. Our *sins* are *forgiven*—*sin* has been *condemned*—and *we ourselves*, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are said to *have died* with Him to *sin*, *law*, and the *rudiments of the world*. And only as we believe this, and do what God tells us in Romans 6:11 and 2 Corinthians 4:10 can we know practical and present deliverance from the dominion of sin—the claims of law, the rudiments of the world, and enjoy the full liberty of the grace of God.

Deliverance from the *presence* of sin we still wait for, and groan with a groaning creation. But presently the summoning shout will be heard; then these bodies of humiliation will be changed and fashioned like unto His body of glory (Phil. 3:21). Or should the Lord allow us to pass through the article of death, and go to be with Him in that way, even then we shall leave the old sinful nature behind, and thus be delivered from the presence of sin. Meanwhile our hearts can say, "Lord, haste that day of full, final, and complete deliverance by Thy Coming again!"



THE HOLY SPIRIT

FROM THE beginning God has ever wrought by His Spirit. He garnished the heavens by His Spirit, Job tells us (Job 26:13). The Spirit came *upon* various persons, we read in the Old Testament (Judges 3:10; 13:25; 14:6; 1 Sam. 11:6). "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit," Peter assures us (2 Peter 1:21). It is by the Spirit and the Word that souls are born again (John 3:5). All this is blessedly true, and teaches that the Spirit was, and is, and must ever be, the active Agent in accomplishing all that is suitable to God. But until the Lord Jesus Christ had died, risen, and ascended to the right hand of God (Acts 2:23,24), the Holy Spirit did not *dwell* on earth. Previous to that He had only been a *Visitor*. But after redemption was accomplished He came to *dwell*. So long as the Lord Jesus remained on earth, the Spirit could not come. "It is expedient for you that I go away," He said to His disciples, "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you" (John 16:7).

Now it is useless for Christians to argue that the Spirit always *dwelt* on the earth. To reason thus is simply to contradict Scripture, and to bring in confusion by mixing up the two dispensations. David knew the sweetness of having such a Visitor and prayed, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psa. 51:11). But the Holy Spirit had not then come to *dwell*. "The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39).

The special character of this dispensation is, that the Spirit has come to *dwell* on earth in the midst of a redeemed people (Eph. 2:22), and also to dwell in saints individually (Acts 2:2-4; 1 Cor. 6:19). The Lord taught His disciples that this would be the case after He was gone. "I will pray the Father," He said, "and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may *abide with you for ever*; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He *dwelleth with you*, and shall be *in you*" (John 14:16, 17). The Lord is here speaking of what would be after He had gone. The Spirit would come, and He would dwell or *abide with* them in contrast with the Lord Himself who was going to leave them. And besides that, the Spirit would be *in* them. His office, we learn from John 15:26, is to *testify* of Christ, while John 16 teaches us that He *glorifies* Christ, *teaches* the saints, and *convicts* the world.

Acts 2 gives the account of the Coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when He filled the house, and also sat on each individual, and filled each one of them; while the epistles instruct us how saints receive the Spirit in this our own day.

We read in Ephesians 1:13, 14: "In whom (that is, Christ) 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 our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of His glory." From this we learn, that when we believe the Gospel of our salvation, we are at once sealed with the Holy Spirit, God thus marking us as *His* property. The *Spirit* is also the *earnest*, which teaches us that we *have* property, for the Spirit is the earnest of it, giving us the present enjoyment of what is already ours (see 1 Cor. 2:12). The fullness, of course, we can only have when our bodies are changed, and we are with and like Christ in glory (Phil. 3:20, 21).

Thus, then, we see that we have not to attain to a certain degree of sanctity in order to receive the Spirit, but believing the Gospel of salvation, each one is at once indwelt by the Spirit. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *which is in you*, which ye have of God?" (1 Cor. 6:19). The instant that Cornelius and his friends heard and believed the Gospel, the Holy Ghost fell on them (Acts 10:43, 44), and they were sealed, and "sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). Then, having the Spirit, all *practical* sanctification is produced by the power of the Spirit using the word, and working in us.

A dear old saint was once found by a Christian visitor in the deepest distress because she had, as she expressed it, "grieved the Spirit, and He had left her," quoting a verse of a hymn in proof of it. You may imagine her joy when it was pointed out to her from Scripture that it was the very opposite way. That is, she had not to grieve Him, because He would never leave her. John 14:16, "Abide with you *for ever*," and Ephesians 4:30, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed *unto the day of redemption*," being quoted in proof of it. How blessed to have such a Gift, and to have Him *for ever*! We may grieve Him, quench Him, resist Him, and He may thus be hindered from ministering blessing to us, and have to occupy us with our sin to produce repentance and confession, but He will *never leave us*; we have Him *for ever*.

Again, we find He is the power by which we accomplish everything that suits God. "He worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20). And the Apostle prays that he may be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man (v. 16). He also occupies us with the Lord in Heaven, whereby we are changed into the same image by the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). Moreover, "by One Spirit we are baptised into one Body" (1 Cor. 12:13), and "He that is joined to the Lord is One Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17).

What wonderful truths are these! We are united to Christ as the Head of His Body the Church, and to each other as fellow-members of that Body, and the Holy Spirit is the divine link which constitutes that wonderful unity—the Body of Christ.

PRIESTHOOD and ADVOCACY



THE PRESENT priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ is exercised in Heaven, and is not directly connected with our sins, but to maintain us consciously in the enjoyment of the place where His blood has set us. He offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins on the Cross, and made propitiation for those sins as our Great High Priest (Lev. 16:15, 16; Heb. 2:17). Now He carries on His present priestly service, and appears in the presence of God for us (see Heb. 9:24-28; 10:12). His priesthood, too, is an unchanging one. Unlike the sons of Aaron, who were not allowed to continue by reason of death, the Lord Jesus continueth for ever, and has an unchangeable priesthood: "Wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost those who approach to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:22-26).

His ability and fitness to sympathise with us in our trials, and succour us in all our temptations, is beyond question, seeing that as Man He was here in this world, made like unto His brethren, tempted in all points as we are, apart from sin, and learned obedience by the things which He suffered (Heb. 2:17, 18; 5:6-10). How well founded, then, is the exhortation, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace for seasonable help" (not "help in time of need") (Heb. 4:16).

Some one might ask, "What is the difference between 'help in time of need' and 'seasonable help'?" Well, it is just this. If I saw you fall into a pit, and I came and helped you out, that would be "help in time of need." But supposing I saw you walking, in your ignorance, straight into a pit which I knew was there, and I stop you on the way and save you from the danger, that would be "seasonable help." That is exactly what the Lord is doing for those that are His own. He is the Priest on High, and sits there representing us before God. Like the priest of old, with the names of the children of Israel engraven on the breastplate, whenever he went into the sanctuary with his breastplate on, he bore the twelve tribes on his breast before God. And so the Lord Jesus, our Great High Priest, is always in the presence of God for us, and represents us before God. He sympathises with us in our sorrows, succours us in our temptations, and ministers suited grace to us in our infirmities to *prevent* us from sinning. He knows the snares and pitfalls, and exercises His priesthood to preserve us from falling and sinning. He could say to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32).

But supposing we forget or refuse to avail ourselves of His priestly service, and despise the "seasonable help," does He therefore give us up? No! blessed be His Name for ever! Not even then does He give us up. He may allow us to have our own way, and a grievous fall will

be the result, but He will not leave us. Nay, His *advocacy* then comes in on our behalf. Not His priesthood, observe, but His advocacy, "If any man *sin*, we have an *advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins." "And if we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (see 1 John 2:1,2; 1:9).

How very blessed this is! It is not, If any man *repent*, we have an advocate. No; but if any man *sin*. The moment a child of God sins, the advocate's work begins. He pleads the cause of the erring child, and He is the propitiation for our sins. The result of His advocacy up there is that the Holy Spirit answers to it here, and occupies us with the sin—burdens us with it, and leads us into the presence of God our Father, there to make full confession of that sin, and judge ourselves for having allowed it; then God our Father forgives that sin on the ground that atonement had already been made for it, and the communion which had been interrupted by its allowance is again restored, and the child finds itself happy with its Father once more.

Such, then, is the gracious provision prepared by our God to maintain us in communion with Himself. Jesus, as the Sacrifice, "suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God," and having been brought to God, He is the Priest to maintain us there, sympathizing with us in all our sorrows, for He knows what sorrow is, succouring us when we are tempted, for He was tempted, and all this to prevent our sinning and to keep us in communion. Then, when we are self-willed and sin, He is our advocate with the Father in order that we may be led to self-judgment and confession, and communion be restored, and this is based upon the fact that He had already died for the very sin which we confess, for He is the propitiation for our sins.

Priesthood, then, is with God, and is connected with righteousness; advocacy is with the Father, and is connected with relationship and communion. But He who is both Priest and Advocate is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the everlasting Lover of our souls.



THE COMING OF THE LORD



NEXT to the blessedness of knowing the Lord Jesus as our own Saviour, no truth is so cheering to the heart of the believer as that of the Lord's Coming again. The affections of his heart having been won by what the Saviour has done for him on the Cross, he longs to see His face and be for ever in His presence.

This truth holds a very prominent place in the New Testament Scriptures; and, without going into much detail, or taking up the difference between His Coming *for* and Coming *with* His saints, we shall just briefly glance at the fact in a general way.

That it is part of the Gospel, and was preached to young converts is evident; for the Apostle, in writing to the Thessalonians, and speaking of their conversion, says: "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to *wait for His Son from Heaven*, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). We see from this that it is quite an elementary truth. It was a truth taught by the Apostle at the very commencement of his ministry to the Thessalonians, so that it was not a company of advanced Christians to whom he was unfolding something special which babes in Christ could not understand, but they were babes themselves. And this is exceedingly beautiful, as it shows us that the youngest converts may be, and indeed ought to be, instructed in this blessed truth. I believe there is not a converted soul in the world but would be delighted to see the One who saved him at the cost of His own death on the Cross. How much joy, then, must be lost by those who know not this blessed truth, and how much joy must such a fact yield to souls when they are taught from the Scriptures that He whom they love may come for them at any moment to take them to be with Himself!

The story is told of a poor old washerwoman on the banks of the Clyde who one day accidentally fell into the water and was nearly drowned. She was saved by a gentleman who leapt into the river and rescued her. Shortly after she was taken out of the water and animation was once more restored the first words which escaped the old woman's lips were, "O, I do want to see the man that saved me!" As the gentleman had not then left the place he was soon brought to her. As soon as the old woman saw him, she said, "Oh, sir, you have saved my life, and I have nothing in the world but yon tub; but if you'll have it, you're welcome to it with all my heart;"

Now this touching expression of feeling on the part of the old woman is surely that which fills every new-born soul. The natural desire and the exclamation of every such an one would be, "Oh, I do want to see the Man that saved me!" It is the next best thing to being saved—to see the One who has saved us, and at such a cost. And blessed be His holy Name for ever, it is what He has set before us as the Hope to cheer us while passing through this world as pilgrims and strangers.

This glorious fact then is the Christian's hope. We are taught from Scripture not to look for death. Though, should the Lord not come soon, doubtless we shall die as others have; but even then, others will take our place to wait here for the Lord from Heaven, so that there will be those "which are alive and remain unto the Coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:15). But the great thing for us is to expect and look for a Person—the Lord Himself; the personal return of the same Jesus who died on the Cross, but who is now in Heaven.

Now the Lord set this distinctly before His disciples ere He left them, when He uttered those memorable words: "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3). He did not tell them to expect death and prepare for *it*. No! but He *did* lead them to expect *Himself*—"I will come again."

There are many who think that when Christians die *that* is the Lord's Coming for them. But this is a mistake. When Christians die, they go "to be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. 1:23). But when the Lord comes Himself, Christians will not die; but their bodies will be changed—"We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). Surely there is a great difference between our *going* to Christ and Christ *coming* for us! And this last is the Christian's Hope. The Lord taught it in John 14: "I will come again." The Thessalonians believed it, and were waiting, not for death, but for God's Son from Heaven.

.... The *manner* of His Coming we are shown from 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, where the Apostle instructs us that "*the Lord Himself* shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the *dead in Christ* shall rise first: then *we which are alive and remain* shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, *to meet the Lord in the air*: and so shall we ever be with the Lord: wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

Nothing, surely, could be plainer than this! They were not to comfort each other with the idea that the valley would not be a long one, and their Saviour would be with them in it, but with the fact that the *Lord Himself* was Coming. The last recorded word from the lips of the Lord Jesus is the word "*quickly*"; "He which testifieth these things saith, 'Surely I come *quickly*'" (Rev. 22:20). And as we hear Him say it, surely our hearts gladly respond: "Amen! Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Persons have sometimes been foolish enough to say they did not believe in the Lord's Second Coming, because it was said in the Apostle's day He would come, and He has not come yet. Surely then it must be nearer than ever. If saints were led to expect Him then, His Coming *must* be nearer now. Oh, let us as Christians awake, and arouse ourselves from our slumbers, for "the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5:8). "It is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. 13:11), that is, the salvation of our bodies. Such a thought ought to stir us up to seek the salvation of souls, for we know not the moment He may come. Then there will be no more offers of mercy to those who have rejected them. All the Gospel hearers who have been Gospel rejecters

will be lost for ever. Yes; when the Lord has taken away His saints, God will send upon those who are left "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:11, 12).

Moreover, the truth of the Lord's speedy return is a sanctifying truth. It not only stirs us up as *workers*, but it separates us as *witnesses* from all that is unsuited to Himself. How can we go on with that which we know to be unsuited to Him if we really believe that He may come at any moment? We cannot. It separates us. Then let it have its place in each of our hearts, and may we each be found "like men who wait for their Lord," with our loins girded, and our lights burning (Luke 12:35-36).

Thank God, when the Lord Jesus does come, not one saint will be left behind, no, not one! All will go, even the feeblest and most timid believer. What a comfort! "Not a hoof shall be left behind" was said when Israel was delivered from Egypt's bondage. It will be just as true when the Lord comes for His own, *not a saint will be left behind*, all will be "caught up to meet the Lord."

But God tells us these things that they may have a *present* effect in our consciences and hearts. May He, then, grant that His grace which has saved us may teach us all the lessons He would have us learn, and enable us to look for "that blessed Hope," even the personal return of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (See Titus 2:11-13).



THE PUNISHMENT OF THE IMPENITENT

THE QUESTION of the punishment of those who die impenitent is an intensely solemn subject, and as its eternal duration is being denied on every hand, and Satan is using it to hinder the salvation of souls and mar the usefulness of saints and servants of God, a few warning words may be helpful to some. May the Holy Spirit give tenderness of heart in doing it, and use the message to deliver any already ensnared, and preserve others who may be in danger.

Dear children of God, beware of those who would seek to weaken in your soul the solemn doctrine of eternal punishment for the impenitent. Once you imbibe that subtle error your usefulness for God will be destroyed, and the enjoyment of divine things in your soul will be lost. You only need to look round to see the truth of this statement.

Compare the lives and work of those who believe the old and Scriptural doctrine of eternal punishment with that of those who have given it up, and see the difference. I speak of those who are active in religious work. They seek with burning zeal to get souls saved "from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10), and by earnest and consecrated lives they enjoy communion with their Master, and success in His blessed work of saving sinners. Who have been the successful soul-winners? Has it been those who have listened to Satan's lie, and thrown overboard that solemn, soul-awakening truth? Oh, no! We seldom, if ever—nay, we might almost say, never—hear of them winning souls for Christ. If they are children of God, they lose their freshness and brightness, and become cold, hard, reasoning men, keen to dispute on their new and pet idea, and pose as champions for the character of God. They talk loudly about "God is love," but in reality they have lost the God who is love, the God of the Bible, and made another of their own imagining. They have deified love, and made love to be God, forgetting that "God is light" as well as love, and that He is holy and righteous, too, and must act consistently with all that He is in Himself.

Now let me put before you a few brief thoughts to help to guard you against these wiles of Satan, and point out how they all cut away the Atonement, and thus rob us of Christ and His atoning sacrifice, and leave us helpless and hopeless, a result which may well alarm all true Christians.

There are different phases of this doctrine. The two prominent theories are Annihilation and Universalism. The former teaches that there is no life out of Christ, and that man is not immortal as to his soul, so that when he dies that is the end of him. Others of that party teach that the sinner must be punished for his sins, but as soon as he has suffered that punishment he is consumed, and exists no more.

Now the folly and inconsistency of such doctrines are apparent at once, for if death means ceasing to exist, and the soul is not immortal, and the man has not life in Christ and dies, where does he get the life after death in order to be punished? When he died, he ceased to exist; why not let him remain so? The fact is, Scripture is too strong for them. It speaks of judgment *after* death, so they have to bring them up again to be punished. But that denies resurrection, for you cannot resurrect what has ceased to exist. God, therefore, according to this theory, *has to recreate* the man who has ceased to exist, simply in order to punish him, and then blot him out again. A terrible doctrine truly.

Then, again, where is responsibility in this theory? If I am a mere animal, having no ever-existing soul, only more intelligence than a beast, where does my responsibility to God come in? And where does the Atonement come in? You cannot make a beast responsible, or say Christ died for its sins. Ah! they forget. "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7),

altogether different from the beasts, and therefore as a responsible creature he must stand before the judgment bar and give an account of himself to God.

But death is *not* ceasing to exist. Christ was a real and true Man, and as such He died. Did He cease to exist? Observe how Satanic these views are, and how they are all aimed by him to destroy the Atonement. Scripture says, "After death the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). "Tormented for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10), "Everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46). These, and numbers of other passages, all teach that man is in being for ever and ever in Heaven or Hell, and that death does *not* mean ceasing to exist either at death or after a certain amount of punishment. Strange that men will not heed these warnings and accept the way of escape!

Then they deny the ordinary meaning of the word "eternal," and contend that in these passages and connections it simply means "ages," or dispensations connected with this world, and they talk much about Greek. Now we have to beware of those who talk much about Greek to those who know nothing about it. It will generally be found that their doctrines are as foreign to Scripture as Greek is to their hearers. The question of the meaning of the word has been put beyond dispute for us by scholarly men, devout students of our dear old Bible. They tell us that the Word is used in some passages in the New Testament in that sense; but that in 2 Corinthians 4:18; 2 Corinthians 5:1; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 Peter 5:10; Hebrews 5:9; 10:12-14; Matthew 25:46, and many other passages of a similar nature, it never means anything else in these connections than "eternal," "for ever and ever." So do not be hoodwinked by the talk about the Greek words.

Then there is the Universalist theory. They teach that all men will ultimately be saved, because God must be "all in all." To be consistent, however, with that idea they must save the Devil and all the fallen angels as well. Did Christ die for them? They build much on Acts 3:21, which speaks of the "restitution of all things." Did they only read carefully the context they would see that the Apostle is drawing the attention of his hearers to Old Testament prophecy, which treats of *things on earth* being put straight—the Millennium in fact—and not of *persons* who have perished being restored. Moreover, if their theory be received, of what value is the blood of Christ and the Word of God? Again the Atonement is assailed.

The Word says, "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22), and "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). But if men are to be purified by punishment, then they can be saved without the blood of Christ, so there is no need of Atonement, nor is the Word of God true which says, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt.

25:46). "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44, 46, 48). And they "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10).

Now it is evident, that if the punishment of the wicked is *not* eternal, it must be for one of those two reasons. Either the impenitent are annihilated; or, in process of time, the sinner will by some means get rid of his sins and enjoy the favor of God. If the former be the case, why trouble about the matter? Why argue about Hell if there is none? Let us enjoy ourselves as each likes best before we are blotted out. But such a thought denies the resurrection, as I have already pointed out, and the fact of "after death the judgment," and after that the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:15). And since "Christ died and lives again, that He might be Lord (or rule over) both of the dead and living" (Rom. 14:9), it is certain that the dead exist for Him to exercise that rule over them, so that annihilation either at or after death is Satan's lie to deceive men to their eternal ruin. The second reason is also baseless, for in eternity man cannot change his condition, therefore he cannot escape the penalty, consequently he must suffer for ever and ever.

We can only know God's estimate of sin by the sacrifice which He provided to atone for it. If the sacrifice was an infinite one, then the offence must have been infinite for which it was offered. It is no use men giving us their ideas of sin and its punishment; God alone knows that, and has spoken, and we must bow. God cannot change His nature, and man cannot change his. And as God is holy and man is a sinner, they must be for ever apart, unless God can *righteously* pardon and justify the ungodly before they die. Blessed be God! this is just what is made known to us in the Gospel. "God is just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). But if that perfect and infinite sacrifice be rejected, the sinner will find to his eternal cost that his sin is so great in God's sight that everlasting banishment from His presence in the Lake of Fire is the only adequate punishment which He can inflict, and God will not ask his opinion about it. Happy and wise are those who accept God's way of escape from it, rather than disbelieving in its existence, at last find themselves in that which their unbelief has not removed.

Could the sinner undo his sins he would not require punishment. Could he atone for them himself in time he would not need a Saviour. Could he atone for them in eternity he would be delivered from the awful penalty. But as he cannot do any of these he needs a Saviour here and now to save him, and God has provided one in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. If he refuses that Saviour, God in His righteousness *must* punish him. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). But seeing he has wilfully rejected that blood in time, and cannot possibly atone for his sins in that awful place of

woe, he must abide there for ever, and suffer the consequences of those sins and the rejection of the Saviour who would have saved him from them. It is useless for men to fight against God; they had far better be wise and accept His provided way of escape.

The effects of these doctrines is to weaken in the conscience the sense of responsibility to God, and induce carelessness as to the future. Their advocates speak lightly of the "never-dying worm" and the "unquenchable fire" as mere figures. Well, be it so. But are they figures of Annihilation or Restoration? Does God use language in that loose way? Far from it. Be assured that the figures used, if figures they be, denote an appalling punishment for impenitent and wilful transgressors. Beware! There is a way to *keep out* of Hell, but there is no way to *get out*.

One thing more. You will find that the bulk of the texts used by the advocates of these systems are drawn from the Old Testament, and you only need to read the context to see that they speak of God's government and judgments of people on earth and in connection with earth, and do *not* refer to the judgment of men *after death*. The New Testament reveals what takes place *after* death, viz., judgment and doom. Beware then of these evil doctrines. shun them and refuse them. And while feeling the awfulness and solemnity of such a prospect for the impenitent, be thankful to God that He has made a way of escape, so that no man need ever experience it, unless he wilfully and persistently fights against God, and rejects the provided Saviour.



THE WAY TO BE HAPPY

DEAR YOUNG Christians, keep short accounts with God. The moment you find you have failed and sinned, do not trifle with it. It is a serious matter, because it interrupts your communion, and nothing can make up for that loss. Therefore *at once* own up, and confess it to your Father, and receive His forgiveness (1 John 1:9). If it has been failure towards others, then do not hesitate to confess it to them also, however humbling it may be. This will keep your conscience clear and in exercise, and will promote communion and increase your joy.

Read the Word. One great reason for the failure of many of the Lord's dear people is they do not read their Bible. They seem to have no appetite for it. A chapter, morning and evening, seems to be all they think needful. If they treated their bodies to such scant nourishment they would soon be in a state of collapse. The great thing is to cultivate an appetite for the Word. Read it much, and mingle your reading with much prayer for light and help, and for grace to make it good in your own soul.

Carry a pocket edition or portion constantly with you. Do not be ashamed to be seen reading it. Let it be the man of your counsel. Wisdom is there, light is there, everything you need is there. It is the voice of God, which the Holy Spirit causes to be heard in the silence of your inmost soul to guide and counsel you. It is also the *food* of the new life, therefore "as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may *grow* thereby" (1 Peter 2:2); otherwise you will be a spiritual dwarf.

"Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" your Bible, with much fervent prayer. Be not discouraged if you do not seem to get much at a time. You will get sufficient for your *need*, and you will always find you have sufficient to give to others if you have heart to do it. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth (Prov. 11:24). So the more you give, the more you will get to give, and the greater will be your joy in giving.

Pray much. All men of God are men of much prayer. They live in the spirit of prayer, and find their delight in stealing away when occasion offers to talk with God. Prayer is the expression of the Christian's dependence on God. It is human weakness clinging to Almighty strength, linked up with eternal and tender love. Lean hard on Him.

Treat God as your Father. Exercise unbounded confidence in Him. Do not think anything too trivial or beneath His notice. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). Blessed words! "*All your care—He careth—for you.*"

Neglect not your private prayer. The moment you find yourself becoming lax in that, you may be sure there is something wrong. Pull yourself up at once and examine yourself, and see that the hindrance is removed, or a fall will be the result. Live not before others, but live before God.

Look out for answers to prayer, and turn back and give thanks. Forget not to be grateful. Let these things become a constant habit of soul with you, and your happiness is assured.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." (Jude 24, 25).

