

"SOUND WORDS."

1 Tim. i., 13.

A MONTHLY PERIODICAL,

FOR THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL AND FEEDING
"THE CHURCH OF GOD."

*"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all
wisdom."*—COL. III., 16.

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F. GRANT, 390 Yonge Street, Toronto.

C. BAYNES, George Street Hall, Montreal.

# "SOUND WORDS."

## PREFATORY REMARKS.

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THE aim of this little magazine, which, if the Lord permit, shall appear monthly, will be to present to believers in the Lord Jesus in America the whole truth of God, as revealed in "the holy scriptures of truth," for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and the blessing of those who believe in him. While the entire range of what is thus revealed will find ample space in its pages, as the Lord shall give and lead, very special attention will be given to present the personal acceptance and standing of the believer before God now in righteousness, together with the place which saints, while on earth, hold corporately as the "body of Christ," the "church of the living God." It will contain original papers and reprints of the writings of those only well known, and "approved unto God," as "rightly dividing the word of truth." It is solemnly felt how very busy Satan is everywhere, and especially in this country, in deluding souls by perverted and imperfect presentations of the truth; consequently, grace will be earnestly sought of the Lord to prevent anything entering these pages of an uncertain sound, or not calculated to directly minister godly edifying, our only object being to spread the truth, and help to "build one another up in our most holy faith, holding fast the *form of sound words*—in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." To help in edification, a sufficient space will be reserved for answers to correspondents; but the elimination of truth, and truth alone, being what is desired, no questions not calculated to positively benefit souls will be entertained, for we may not "strive about words to no profit."

Those on whom, more especially, the responsibility of this effort to bless souls rests, desire to take up the work in entire dependence upon God for the grace and wisdom it requires, continuing it only so long as the Lord shall will. They feel that God's strength is made perfect only in their weakness, and in the sense of their unwisdom, they count alone upon Him of whom it is written: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not."

Greatly desiring that the truth sent forth may be winged and pointed by prayer, they affectionately ask the intercession of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, that they may open their mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel as they ought to speak it, "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever."

## RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT WORKS.

PSALM XXXII.

1. BLESSED is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
  2. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.
  3. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.
  4. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.
  5. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.
  6. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found; surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.
  7. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.
  8. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.
  9. Be not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.
  10. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.
  11. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.
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I BELIEVE it will be found that the first and simplest truths of the gospel become of growing value to our souls as we advance onward along the narrow road which leadeth unto life. Truths which are at first received authoritatively, on the evidence of Scripture, become commended to us by their own beauty, and what we received at first, as it were by force of our own necessity, becomes, in our progress, that which manifests the glory of Christ—so that we are able, in measure, to contemplate it apart from selfishness, and to see it in the light in which God himself sees it. I think I discern this feature in apostolical teachings; while they unfold mysteries, or develop practical truth, they also (designedly) connect all with the primary truths of the gospel—thus bringing them into constant prominence. And this marks the teaching of the Holy Ghost. It is human to handle a particular truth as a subject; but the object of the Holy Ghost is to hold up prominently to view the *Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ*. The soul becomes unsettled from its steadfastness, when the *mind*

takes the lead in learning even the truth of God. The Spirit, who leads into all truth, connects everything in his teaching with those great primary truths, the *person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ*. The mind may get hold of something new, and be interested in it, as if it were more wonderful than the truth already received. I do not wonder at the apostle saying, "so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God," for in the gospel of the grace of God the apostle saw the deepest truth. Or, in after-times saying to Timothy: "Do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry; for I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." It is an unhealthy symptom, when the simple gospel is not relished. It shows that the *mind* is at work rather than the *conscience* exercised before God, or the affections engaged with Christ. There are indeed wonderful discoveries made to us in the Scriptures, of the grace and purpose of God to the Church; yet when all the councils of God are manifested, and glory enjoyed without hindrance, then, the primary truths of the gospel will be seen in all their brilliancy, even the *person and work of Jesus Christ*, the Son of the living God, the object of adoration, admiration, and praise throughout eternity. It is with these thoughts I now turn to the great fundamental truth of the gospel—"righteousness without works"—a doctrine which has not only been controverted by Christians, and contemned by the wisdom of this world, but on which even many of the children of God have only become settled, after much bitter experience of themselves. It is indeed needful for all to learn it in this school of experience. We may also learn it by looking forward to that day, when the righteousness of the one Man, as the fountain of all blessedness to the redeemed, shall be as illustriously displayed in heaven and in earth, as the sin of the one man, as the source of all misery, has been sorrowfully displayed in the history of this world. But there is another light in which the doctrine of "righteousness without works" may be regarded, namely, as leading us into *present intercourse with God, and enabling us to walk in his presence*. It is the bearing of this great truth as a present influential principle, which the Spirit of God himself has carried out in the thirty-second psalm. And the blessedness predicated of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, is a blessedness, not confined to the wondrous truths of "transgression forgiven, sin covered, and iniquity not imputed;"

but this blessedness is carried on into the exercises of soul, which result from being freely and fully justified. I would now turn to the psalm itself.

First, the great oracular declaration—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." On this statement, the Holy Ghost himself, by the Apostle Paul, has thus commented: "Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works." "The blessedness"—we almost need to have this English word translated to us; so slow of heart are we to believe his goodness, when God himself proclaims it to us. Happiness, "our being's end and aim," is proclaimed by this oracle; and yet men are deaf to it. "Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven!" This is happiness—the alone happiness of which man as a sinner is capable; because nothing but this can bring a sinner to God, in whose presence there is fullness of joy. There is indeed a happiness proclaimed in the first psalm: "Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful." But where is such a man to be found? This blessedness only attached to the Holy One of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the righteous One—a righteousness because He is what He is. But as for us, it is not anything that we can do which can make us happy, but that which God does for us. It is man's impossibility to make himself happy; it is God's possibility to make a sinner happy. And this oracle is the declaration of a sinner's happiness, by means of the work of God himself.

The distinction between *transgression* and *sin* is made sufficiently clear by the statements of the apostle in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not *sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*." Adam sinned by transgressing a positive commandment of God, and thereby incurred the penalty of death. Others were liable to the same penalty who had never sinned by transgressing a positive commandment of God; therefore, there may be *sin* where there is not *transgression*. And the Holy Ghost announces this oracle, according to the usual way in which conscience is awakened. In most cases, it is awakened to a sense of positive acts of sin against the known commandments of God. And so the apostle, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, adduces proof of the practical ungodliness and

immorality of both Gentile and Jew, before he opens the source from whence it all proceeds—*original and indwelling sin*. Man may draw out a theory of Christian doctrine ; but the divine way is, not to teach a theory, but to grapple with the conscience, to make man sensible of his wretched condition as in the presence of God, and show that nothing short of God's own provision of Christ can meet his necessity. "Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh to me," says Christ. The oracle before us regards man as he is, "an enemy to God in his mind by wicked works." Repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in the name of Christ among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. "Beginning at Jerusalem" shows the character of transgression which the divine remedy can reach. In Jerusalem was acted out "the great transgression." The testimony against the Jews was, that they had denied the Holy and Just One, and had killed the Prince of Life. Yet, in the name of Jesus, whom they had crucified, whom God had raised up, there was forgiveness even for this great transgression. Who need despair of finding forgiveness in the same name, in which alone there is salvation ? If we turn to a different and more frequent character of transgression, we find it written : "Be not deceived ; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And *such were* some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." It is to man, therefore, as a proved and convicted transgressor before God, as already condemned by the righteous judgment of God, and, when awakened by the quickening power of God, condemned in his own conscience, that forgiveness of transgression in the name of Jesus is proclaimed by God himself. And blessed, by God's own testimony, is the man who has an ear to hear it.

I much question if the bare idea of forgiveness of transgression, apart from the solid groundwork on which it rests, viz., the infinite atonement of Christ—"forgiveness in his name"—would ever satisfy the conscience. The groveling thought of escape is, indeed, the careless thought of the unbelieving mass, without one just thought, either of the character of God, or of the evil of sin. But if such a manner of forgiveness were possible, it would leave the recipient of it in that state of uneasiness which a man feels who finds himself in the presence of one whom he had injured, yet who had for-

given him. He would be under the conscious sense of degradation. Such a condition would be the very opposite of being "blessed." It is the mode of the forgiveness, bringing the person forgiven to stand *at ease in the presence of God*, who is declared to be just, while he is the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, which constitutes the blessedness. The atonement of Christ is indeed the remedy, the only remedy, the divine remedy for the forgiveness of transgression ; but it is more, it is the great medium of the display of the moral glory of God. "Angels look into these things," and learn the glory of their God by means of his dealing with *sinner*s. And it is a wondrous thought, that man's necessity as a sinner and the manifestation of the divine glory, find their one and only meeting point in the cross of Christ. Yea, blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven ; and so forgiven as that God is glorified. Oh, what riddance of anxiety to the soul, when its salvation is thus taken from off its own responsibility, and it is no longer the question, Shall I be saved ? but, Shall God be glorified ? Blessed peace, indeed ! surpassing all understanding, *when God and the conscience* are alike satisfied

"Blessed is the man whose sin is covered." It is not the manner of the Holy Ghost to use redundant expressions. We often use many words where few would suffice. But "the words of the Lord are pure words ; as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times." And man "liveth by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Now, I believe as the conscience becomes alive to God, and exercised before God, it necessarily draws the distinction between transgression and sin. Outward reformation is seen by others, but the soul itself can not rest on this. There is a very wide difference between reformation of character and conversion to God. Reformation of character will necessarily follow conversion to God ; but for a soul "to believe and turn to the Lord" is something far more deep than outward reformation of character ; it brings us to Him with whom we have to do, before whom all is open and naked. And there it is that we learn the difference between transgression and sin. In human thought, *sin* is an *act* ; in divine judgment, it is a *principle*. And this discovery is so appalling, that *transgressions* appear thrown into the shade by the discovery of what *sin* really is, viz., a settled principle of insubjection to God ; a desire to do what God has forbidden *because* HE has forbidden it, even when there is no positive act of disobedience ; a reluctance to do what God has commanded, *because* HE has commanded it.

Yes—we have a will contrary to the good, perfect, and acceptable will of God ; and this is very experimentally known after we are made willing, by the grace of God, to come to Christ ; so that to do the will of God is more or less connected with denying self.

“Whose sin is covered.” Who would not faint under the struggle, if it were not so ? God himself has covered *sin* up, out of his own sight, and this is what we need. How man tries to cover the evil of his heart from his fellow-man ; yet, even human sagacity can often pierce through the hollow covering, and man himself is ill satisfied with it ; witness his round of religious duties to try to cover it, and his natural proneness to superstition. But it is the atonement of Christ which covers *sin* before God. It is God himself who has set forth Christ as a propitiation through faith in his blood. Here, when we discover sin, we can yet meet God, not in anger, but in mercy ; for the sin which we have discovered is covered up before him. I do not believe that there can be settled peace in the soul, till, taught of the Spirit, it knows the emphatic meaning of such texts as these : “Our old man has been crucified with him”—“God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh”—God “hath made him to be *sin* for us who knew no *sin*, that we might be made the *righteousness* of God in him.” The mighty moral necessity of the Son of God becoming the substitute for a sinner, alone meets the case of the conscience alive to what *sin* is. And how do we see the wisdom of divine teaching, as well as the infinite grace, that it is after showing sin in the shape of transgression, sin in connection with death, sin as dwelling in us, that the announcement follows : “There is therefore *now no condemnation* to those who are in Christ Jesus.” Let the conscience be ever so alive to what sin is in its various phases, the moment Christ is regarded as the object held out by God himself to faith—“No condemnation,” is the answer.

This distinction between *transgression* and *sin* helps to solve a phenomenon not unfrequently brought under the notice of those who are watching for souls. The deepest sense of *sin* is by no means always found where there has been the greatest amount of *transgression*. The transition from a state almost of remorse, on account of transgression, to peace with God through faith in Christ, may well lead the soul to put its Amen to the apostolic declaration : “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ

Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief." Now, when such are led on in exercise of conscience before God, to know sin as a principle, they find that the outward conduct has but too faithfully represented the inward principle. They find, too, the need of not trusting in the outward reformation ; and that the heart, from whence all evil proceeds, has to be diligently watched. But when persons, who have been happily kept free from gross vice, gentle, kind, and amiable, are awakened by the Spirit of God to a sense of sin, the judgment they form of sin is not so much by its injuriousness to themselves and others—which may, even apart from the quickening power of the Spirit of God, affect the conscience—but they measure *sin by its contrariety to God* ; and instead of being able to rest complacently in the blamelessness or innocence of their lives, or in the praise bestowed on them by others, their very lives appear to them as one act of hypocrisy, the motives of action and conduct being now judged in the light of God's presence. And the result often is such self-loathing as betokens deep and steadfast conviction of *sin*, and needs the fullest application of all that Christ is to the conscience. There may be a measure of loathing oneself on account of transgression committed, even from a generous impulse of nature ; but to loathe *self* because we have discovered what it is before God, marks the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, and will be found a deepening work as we go on.

"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." How needed is this clause for the peace of an awakened soul ! There is the consciousness of iniquity ; and the announcement is, that although the Lord knows iniquity to be there, he does not impute it. And wherefore. Surely, because God hath imputed it to Jesus. "He hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" God hath seen sin there, and he has judged it there. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Jesus, and by his stripes we are healed." It is the greater wonder that God should have *imputed iniquity where he only saw righteousness*, than that he should *not impute iniquity where he sees iniquity*. And I repeat again, that nothing short of the truth of the actual *substitution* of Christ for the sinner, gives full relief to an awakened conscience. The cross of Christ is to us the marked expression of the love of God toward sinners. "God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The cross, further, is the declaration to us of the righteousness of God. "Whom God hath set forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness."

Again, it shows the infinite hatefulness of sin in the judgment of God. The cup could not pass away from Jesus. He bowed his head, and drank it. And God hid his face from him, and made him to know on the cross, in bitterest experience, what sin was—"God made him to be sin for us."

The cross is both the way for God to come nigh to man as a sinner without destroying him by his presence—"And having made peace by the blood of the cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself,"—and the cross is also the way for man as a sinner to come near to God—"You that were sometime far off are made nigh by the blood of the cross."

All these several aspects of the cross, deeply important and interesting as they are, would fail of giving settled peace to the soul, if the truth of the *actual substitution of Christ for the sinner* were kept out of sight. "He loved me and gave himself for me." Here we find solid ground on which to rest our souls—the wonder of the Holy One of God being made sin on the cross, is far greater than the wonder that any measure of guilt should by it be answered to God.

But there is more than this. The idea of simple pardon is at the best negative—blessed indeed, even in that view, that iniquity, although committed, is not imputed. Speaking humanly, we have the idea of a free pardon emanating from the grace of the sovereign; we have the idea also of an *amnesty*; but we can not get the idea of *justification*. It is the idea which God alone can present, because he alone can *justify the ungodly*; and this is the new and blessed idea here presented. David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Now in these words we have not the actual statement of the imputation of righteousness. It could not be clearly and fully announced (although it was the only principle on which God had acted from the beginning), because the great groundwork, The Cross, was not an accomplished fact. However, it may have been anticipated by faith, still there was all the difference, as to perception, between a promise made, and a promise accomplished. Everything was suspended on the death and

resurrection of Christ. "We," says the apostle, speaking to the natural heirs of promise and natural children of the Kingdom, "we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made to the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same to us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again." The *proper person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his death and resurrection*, is the key by which we are able to unlock all Scripture. The Holy Ghost, himself the inditer of all Scripture, the Spirit which moved the prophets, "the Spirit of Truth," is especially known to us as the glorifier of Jesus. This great testimony of the Holy Ghost is, to the sufferings of Christ, and the glories to follow. And as soon as the death and resurrection of Jesus became a matter of fact, the Holy Ghost brought it to bear on his own previous Scriptures; and in this light, we clearly discern, that *iniquity not imputed is righteousness imputed*. "God hath made him to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." There is nothing simply negative in the gospel. It is not a prohibitory system. It is a gracious system of conferring positive blessing. To forgive sin may be negative; but to give righteousness, is a positive and inalienable blessing. This marks the genius of the gospel. "Whosoever believeth in him [Jesus] shall not perish;" it stops not here, but "shall have everlasting life." "That they may receive forgiveness of sins,"—but it goes on, "and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith which is in me." If we are "delivered from the power of darkness," it is by "translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son." Alas, our narrow minds and dull hearts deprive the gospel of its glory. "It is the glorious gospel of the blessed God;" it represents God in the gracious place of the giver, and sets man in his only place of possible blessing, that of *simple recipient*. By faith we receive Christ (John i., 13); receiving him we receive from him power to become the sons of God; we receive forgiveness of sins, abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness. We receive eternal life. Christian action follows on this reception of Christ. The teaching of the Holy Ghost unfolds to us what we have received in having received Christ. It is well to keep this principle constantly before the soul; it is not that which we *renounce*, any more than that which we *do*, which makes us Christians, but it is that which we *receive*. And this principle runs through the Christian life; it is a life which has its affections, its sensibilities, its energies, and its activities. Our Christian life is not a system of negation any more than is our natural

life. This marks it so forcibly from the common notion of religion. It is said: "Cease to do evil"—it is added "Learn to do well." "Abhor that which is evil"—"Cleave to that which is good." "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him work with his own hands that which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying." Hence arises the danger to Christians from misusing even the good, holy, and righteous law of God. It "is not for the righteous." Their need is, to have the life already received, nurtured, by the ministry of Christ, the true and living Head, in order that the energies of that life may be called forth in its varied and appropriate activities. We have Christ himself for our standard, and the righteousness which we have in him, as our standing before God, presented to us as our highest but certain final attainment. "Not as although I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after; if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Hence it is, that the one hope of our calling, which is so certain, because according to the purpose of God, becomes so formative of the Christian character. To be conformed to the image of God's Son, as the first-born among many brethren, is the blessed destiny of those whom God has *already justified*. It is upon the certainty of this, that the Holy Ghost acts on our conscience and affections, not making what we shall be to depend on what we practically are, I mean as Christians; but, taking the divine certainty of what we *shall be*, as the mighty moral lever, *now* to elevate our affections; and even now, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

"Beloved, now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

This hope grounded on Christ is the great power of present purification. "Desiring to be teachers of the law," was, in the apostle's judgment the result of ignorance in those who undoubtedly thought to promote holiness thereby. And so there is even a way of pressing *conduct and service*, which, instead of strengthening the life of Christ in the saint, turns him back on the question of his own salvation. Such is not the way in which the Spirit leads. He glorifies Christ, and takes great

care to *establish the soul in Him*, when leading it on into practical holiness. Such is the order of instruction for the most part in the Epistles. And I believe the wondrous truth of "righteousness without works" to be the very ground-work of righteousness and true holiness. It is the positive blessing received, recognized, and enjoyed—"God delivered Christ for our sins and raised him for our justification"—which calls the Christian life into activity.

Secondly, "And in whose spirit there is no guile." It is written of Jesus "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." Of all others the description is but too true—"with their tongues they have used deceit." This is indeed a humbling condition of being—to dissemble what we are, to pretend to be what we are not—to use the tongue, or to put on an outward demeanor, to conceal the thoughts of the heart—and at the same time, on every moment of serious reflection, to be conscious that we are not before God what we seem to be, or profess to be before others, this is a condition which makes the thought of God insupportable. It is too much of restraint for man always to be acting a character, and "the idle" off-hand word betrays the condition of the heart, which perhaps more studied speech had concealed. It was by the idle word—"This man casteth out devils by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils"—that He, "who knew what was in man," made manifest from his very words what was in their hearts. Whence then the remedy for so evil a condition—whence the blessedness of having no guile in the spirit? It is alone the result, the first and blessed result of the great truth of "righteousness without works." It at once cuts off all effort at concealment, and all pretensions to be what we are not. The very ground-work of the doctrine is that the very God before whom all things are naked and open, who knows us thoroughly, and has taught us to see ourselves in measure as he sees us, is the one who has covered up our sin—yea, he has covered up all the *sin* which his *omniscience* knoweth to be in us; for he has not acted toward us on *our estimate* of sin, but on *his own*. None can condemn—since God himself justifieth. God has not put us in the place of justifying ourselves; he does that himself. And he takes our part much more effectually than we could take our own. Hence there is no guile in the spirit, so to speak, it is not needed. All anxiety about making out a case for ourselves is removed, since God himself declares his righteousness in covering our sin, and making us righteous.

If we search ever so deeply (and it is well to do so), as to what sin is, God knows it more deeply, and has dealt with it in judgment on the cross of Christ according to his own estimate of it. There is no guile in the spirit, where there truly is faith; because the truthfulness of our own character, and the truthfulness of the character of God, are alike maintained by the marvelous mode of God's dealing with us, in and through Christ.

There is no guile in the spirit of him who at one and the same time takes his place as the chief of sinners, and yet also as perfectly righteous in Christ. There is no guile in the spirit of him whose object is to glorify Christ and not himself. Hence it follows that when self-vindication becomes needful for a saint, which is but rarely, he is placed in the most humiliating position, because he has to speak of himself instead of Christ. The apostle was thus compelled to speak "as a fool." But, as a general rule, *confession*, and not *self-vindication*, is the path of a saint.

(To be continued.)

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## THE THIEF ON THE CROSS.

LUKE XXIII., 32-46

It has been said by some one, referring to this scene, "There is but *one* case of death-bed repentance in the Bible, that man may not despair; but there is *only one*, that man may not presume." But how much the savor of the self-righteous human heart betrays itself in these words. The latent self-righteousness of the human heart, which would like to add some little atom of its own wretched "*doings*," to the perfect work of Christ for the soul. And yet, when we come to examine this wondrous scene, we find that *all must* be saved as was this thief! I speak not now of the period at which such a work is wrought in the soul, but of the fact that all must be saved just as he. And if this be the case, why not, my reader, now? Why not believe, and know the joy and blessedness of an interest in the saving work of Christ, before another day is past, that your soul may be filled with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost?

There is an absolute necessity for an entire and total change

in the sinner, before he can even see the kingdom of God. A man may be at the pinnacle of a religious reputation in the world ; his name may grace the lists of benevolence—may be held up as a model for the imitation of others ; and yet never have undergone this mighty change. It is a sad and humiliating fact, that possess as he may, piety, or rather that which looks like it, before his fellows ; and the deepest learning, an amiable nature, a benevolent mind, all these qualities, and many more besides ; and yet he may never even have *seen* the kingdom of God. This is a hard saying, who can bear it ? Still, it is an absolute necessity that a man must be born again. He must be renewed from the very sources of his nature, thoughts, affections, feelings, heart, conscience, actions. He must be what the Lord Jesus told the man of the Pharisees—the teacher in Israel—the ruler of the Jews—Nicodemus ; he “ *must be born again.*” In this man’s case, the lesson was but slowly learned. He had much to surrender. It was painful for him to be told that his whole life was wrong ; his efforts and energies, sincere, as doubtless they were, had sprung from a wrong basis ; and that the whole man must be changed from the very roots, before he could enter into the kingdom which God was setting up. Painful, it must have been, to think of what gave him weight and authority, and for which he was held in esteem by his fellows, only came under the sweeping sentence from the divine Searcher of hearts : “ Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God.” (John iii., 3.) Painful for him to learn, that, if he would enter God’s kingdom, he must consent to do so, as the vilest sinner, stript of all that would put him in advance of others, and give him a precedence there. And yet, this entire, complete, and total change is absolutely necessary to enter into the kingdom of God ; necessary for the vilest, necessary for all. It levels all distinctions ; puts men, in the light of its solemn truth, on an even ground before God, so that no flesh may glory in his presence. Have you, my reader, experienced or undergone this mighty change ? Or do you occupy the same platform on which you were introduced amongst the sinners of this world ? Important question ! May the Lord enable you to answer it honestly in his presence.

The case of the thief is a remarkably beautiful illustration of this mighty work in a soul—this total change in the man. And besides this, we have in this scene the mighty work of Christ for him, which enabled him to take his place *with* Christ *that very day* within the vail. The work which fits *all* who

believe it to take their place, by faith, with Jesus, the *same* moment, in God's presence, within the veil.

The case of the comrade thief, too, is truly and deeply solemn. A soul passing away from this world into another ; approaching the portals of an eternity, from which there is no return, with a scoff on his lip, and the taunt for the Blessed One in his mouth : " If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us." Deeply solemn is such a closing hour of a man's shadowy life here ; Christless, faithless, sinning against his own soul. Well is it said of the wicked : " There are no bands in their death ; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men." (Ps. lxxiii., 4, 5.)

Let us look at the same hour in the other's life—the brightest it had ever known. " But the other answering, rebuked him, saying : ' Dost thou not fear God ? ' "—grand illustration of the work of God in a soul. It began with but a little word, but a word by which one reads a heart which had been taught in wisdom's ways. For " the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. i., 7.) We have in this little word a precious work of God in his soul. It is said of the wicked, " There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom. iii., 18.) God is not in all their thoughts. " Dost thou not fear God ? " Here was the root of this mighty change in this man ; the holy fear of God. God had his proper place in his thoughts, although he did not know him yet as a Savior. It was Abraham's word of the men of Gerar : " Surely the fear of God is not in this place ; and they will slay me for my wife's sake." It was the fear of God which guarded Joseph's heart, when in the land of his exile—" How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God." It is that which guards the heart in a world of sin. Its absence leaves room for the workings of man's corrupt and wicked will. It is the beginning of wisdom.

How is it with you, my reader ? Can you say that this holy fear of God has been the guide and fashioner of all the thoughts and intents of your heart, the actions of your life, and the motives which have governed your ways ? Have all these been governed by the fear of the Lord ! Has God had his proper place in your heart ; and has his fear restrained your will ? Job was a man who " feared God, and eschewed evil ; " Cornelius—one who " feared God, with all his house." " They that feared the Lord spake often one to another ; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought on his name." (Mal. iii.) It was the proof of Abraham's

faith : "Now I know that thou fearest God." (Gen. xxii.) Now fear "fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." (Prov. xiv., 27.) It "tendeth unto life," (Prov. xix., 23); and we see this so remarkably in this man. It led him to take his true place before God. "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? *And we indeed justly.*" Can you with him say : "We indeed justly?" Can you, as he did, take the just and righteous sentence of death, to your own soul; and own, in full honesty of heart, the rightness of your sentence? "We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward for our deeds." Do you own the justness of your sentence; yea, have you passed it upon your own self, as the due reward for your sins? Blessed place; to own in full your true and proper condition before God, and thus take the sentence of death home to your own soul, as he! How the work of God grew brighter and brighter, till he was with Christ in Paradise! *God* had his true place in his soul, and *he* was in his true place before God! The rightness of his sentence pronounced by his own lips; no excusing of himself, as I dare say, you have often done; pleading circumstances—an evil nature, to palliate your sins. A convicted sinner was there making no excuses for his sins and his sentence, but owning that God was true. Justifying God, and condemning himself, as one of Wisdom's children. "I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

So much for the work *in* this man's soul.

Now we must look at another thing—at the work *for* him—for all, on the cross beside him.

There hung beside him the Lord of glory; and out of the mouth of Wisdom's child, as the light grew brighter in his soul, we have a testimony of two things—the *spotlessness* and the *Lordship* of Christ. "This man hath done nothing amiss." And the spotless Christ, and the self-condemned sinner, were side by side! Grand and solemn scene, the like of which eternity will never behold again! Beautiful testimony of that dying man, which led him to take his place with Jesus there, at a moment and amid the turmoil of a scene such as that which surrounded the cross. A time when the world was united against a man who had "done nothing amiss." When even those who had loved him, and leaned upon him during his life, deserted him at the hour of his greatest sorrow. And

yet the soul of that man was absorbed with Christ, who hung there. His whole soul's vision was filled with Jesus ; and he forgot himself. A complete and total change had taken place in the man ; and, forgetting his agony, all his thought was : "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom." How would it be with you, my reader, if you were dying on your comfortable bed, surrounded with your sorrowing friends ? Or how is it with you now ? Would Christ be so precious to your soul then ? Is he so precious to you now, as to absorb all your thoughts, and fill your soul with himself ? The terrible suffering of that moment had no power to disengage his heart from Christ. And his only request was : "Lord, remember me !"

But what was the reply ? The light in his soul ended otherwise than he thought. Instead of being remembered when Jesus returned in his kingdom, he got a place *that very day* in Paradise with Christ ! The work was done by Jesus there which enabled this man to have a place with him that very same day ; even as it fits every soul who believes in it, to take his place that moment with Jesus, within the veil !

Dear reader, have you gazed with a believing, adoring heart, upon that work of Christ, as that which has delivered you from the wrath to come ? And believing, have you *taken* your place, in virtue of it, within the veil ? Where are you, if you have not done so ? What are you ? Outside the veil, an unbeliever, still in your sins ! Solemn place, solemn condition. Rest not a moment, then. The same blow which rent the veil, exposed the wickedness of *man's* heart, in the death of Christ ; and revealed the love of *God's* heart, in sparing not his Son ; and has put away forever the sins of his believing people. Rest not a moment, then, till you take your place, by faith, inside the veil. Let no false reasoning of the enemy, or unbelief of your own heart, deprive you of this joy. Happy, indeed, if you have, as the saved thief, the fear of God in your heart ; happier still, if you have owned your true state and condition before God,—taken the sentence of death home to your own soul ; and happiest, if you have forgotten yourself altogether as he, and that your soul's vision is absorbed with him who was there consummating his love in doing a work which gives you a cloudless title to take your place this moment within the veil with Jesus ! This day . . . with me, in Paradise !

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"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness : but unto us who are saved it is the POWER of God."

## BOLDNESS IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

(I JOHN IV.)

WE see two things in this chapter which give the soul immense delight. Verse 9 shows us the way God makes his love *known*. "In this was *manifested* the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might *live through him*." In verse 17 we see how his love is *made perfect*. "Herein is love with us *made perfect*, that we may have *boldness in the day of judgment*; because *as he is, so are we* in this world." In verse 9, God sends his only begotten Son into the world, that we may have life through him. That we may have life who were dead, that we may be partakers of a life that flows from the manifestation of God's love—a life separated altogether from nature's affections and pleasures. It can not be hinged in with selfishness. And what is my nature; is it not mere selfishness? If I look at my motives from day to day, what shall I find them? Are they not self? Take business (we are not speaking of the rightness of the thing), what is the motive? Is it not self? We have no idea how we are under the influence of self. Is it not true that the trifles of dress more occupy the thoughts of many, than *all God has done* in sending down his Son from heaven to save sinners? It is a positive fact, and it is no use to try to hide it from ourselves, we can not hide it from God. On the other hand, the more I look at *this* love, the more I see of its *perfectness*. It is said: "For a good man some will even dare to die." But when there was *not a single good thing* in us, God commended his love to us. It was purely grace. We were just sinners, and nothing but sinners, when Christ *died* to save us. And I can never understand what God's love really is, until I can say that I am *merely* a sinner. If you do not know what God's love is, it is because you have not *learned* that great truth—"you are a sinner." What is it that God has given to save sinners? The very nearest thing to his heart—the most precious boon he had to bestow—His own beloved and only begotten Son. There is no accounting for his love. There is no estimating it. The thing most of all dear to him was the Son of his bosom; and him he gave. There is no limit to his love. He has given me Christ, and there is no end to what I have in him. The *Son* of God was given for *my sins*. He goes down into these *depths* and brings up life. "Herein is love, *not that we loved God*, but that *he loved us*, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." How

can I know that God loves me? By *looking* at the perfect object of *his love*, and this gives me rest. Why? Because in him I see how wondrous is the love that sent down his Son to give *me* eternal life, and be a propitiation for *my* sins. If I have not rest, what I want is a deeper *sense* of sin. I must learn what sin is at the *cross*, and then I shall see the love that has met it, and suffered for it, and thus my soul gets *rest*. Christ's love was not the theory of one who comes and merely tells what God is, but the practical exhibition of him. He shows *out God* in all the *variety* of his *unreserved* and immeasurable love. Compare verse 12 with verse 8 of John i., "No man," etc. Nobody hath seen—He who hath been in the bosom of the Father *must* declare him. The Son must tell *what* can be known of the Father—On Christ *HANGS* everything; all hindrances are gone for the believer through him; all sin is put away by him. I here get a place of intimate nearness to God in *HIM*. I have learned at the cross what God was to me as a *sinner*; and now I *have* to learn how he meets my wants as a *saint*, by feeling my need and bringing it to him. To be hungry is not enough; I must be really starving to know what is in *his* heart toward me. So in the gospel, when the prodigal was *hungry*, he went to feed upon husks; but when he was *starving*, he turned to his father's house, and then learned the love of *the father's* heart. Observe, in verse 15, how low God comes, "whosoever will confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." How he steps down to meet us, so that every one shall be left without excuse. "Whosoever shall confess," etc. The babe, who can just confess Christ, has eternal life as truly as the strong man in Christ. It is not a question of what *I am*, but of what *Christ is*. I am lost sight of; *all hangs* on what *God is*. How can I know this love? Must I wait for its full and open display? No; he *has* shed abroad his love in my heart by the spirit he has given me. Verse 16: "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." If I am dwelling in God, I am dwelling in love, and should be *showing out* love by *looking* at *him* and not at myself and others. Verse 17, this is a wonderful thing to say, "as *he is*, so are *we* in this world." Christ has taken his seat at God's right hand, and brings me there. *We are now* before God in the *righteousness of Christ*. He is my life, and I can not be really, not ought to appear, in anything separated from him. "Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have BOLDNESS IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT." Does the heart get exercised about judgment? Does

the thought of standing before it distress you? Why should it be so? Is not MY RIGHTEOUSNESS my judge? Has he not perfectly put away my sin and purged my conscience from all guilt, so that I rest in God without fear; having no longer any painful uncertainty; but calmly looking forward, in the full assurance that Christ has been judged in my stead, and brought me into blessed fellowship with *that love*, which gives me BOLDNESS IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT." "As he is, so *are* we in the world," and we *know* this *now* by faith. "There is no fear in love." If there is the smallest doubt or distrust in the heart toward God, you are not made perfect in love; for perfect love casteth out fear. There are things to fear, it is true; we may well fear sin and the influence of our own selfish interests. But the *practical* effect of *resting* on God is to cast out *all* fear, and make the heart perfect in love. *His love* is perfect; we have but to own it, bow to it, accept it as ours in Christ, and bless him for it. This is to be made perfect in love.

"We love him because he first loved us."

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### "FRAGMENTS GATHERED UP."

*My dear Brother* :—When our Master had fed the multitudes, he said to his disciples: "Gather up the fragments, that remain, that nothing be lost." (John vi., 12.) And they gathered together and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above unto the five thousand that had eaten!

I think I have the mind of the Lord, both in endeavoring to gather up the waste scraps of present teachings by the Spirit, whether in conversation, reading, musings, etc., and in offering them under the above title. The fragmentary character of the offering may encourage some to cast in their widow's mite to the general stock, and help others to remember, that "he that gathered much had nothing over, as he that gathered little had no lack." When God orders the measure, or gives the increase, the results proclaim his praise as well as refresh the people of his love and choice.

Yours,

G. W.

"ONE thing is evident; God is now working in the last days. Dissolution is, on all sides, not only going on, but *felt* to be going on. If we are faithful, and have sufficient power to blend large-heartedness with faithfulness, we shall be great blessings in this state of things; otherwise, except for a certain individual blessing and faithfulness (which is always something) we shall be naught. But we ought to love the Church (the beloved Bride of Christ), and seek its good; surely more than a David, or godly Israelite, or Jew, could, or did, that of Jerusalem, and seek its good for Christ's sake."

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Hallelujah! We are hasting  
 To our Father's house above;  
 By the way our souls are tasting  
 Rich and everlasting love;  
 In Thee, O God, is all our boast,  
 Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

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