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TRUTH AND GRACE;

OR,

LEPROSY PROVED AND LEPROSY CLEANSED.

Matt. vii. 28—viii. 4.

“ And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.— When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying: Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.”

IN this passage of scripture we have both Truth and Grace very strikingly set before us. We may learn here, not only what Truth and Grace *are*, but also what results they produce. It is written, “ Grace and Truth *came* by Jesus Christ;” and surely it is most important for us to know the nature and the effects of what came from heaven to earth by the Son of God. If he left heavenly glory and joy to bring Grace and Truth into this world, we may well inquire—What is Truth? What is Grace? What have we to do with Grace and Truth?

I desire to answer these questions. And first, let us consider Truth. For Jesus is here seen as the One by whom Truth came.

In the beginning of the 5th chapter, we see Jesus going up into a mountain, and when he was set, his disciples came unto him, and he opened his mouth and taught them. Jesus goes up into a mountain: the high position which he takes, is a sign of what he is about to do. Just before this, he had been going all over the country, healing all manner of diseases, and was followed by great multitudes of all kinds of people. But now (chap. v. 1, 2) he goes up the mountain, and there he takes his seat with his disciples around him—like the Great Master surrounded by his scholars—to teach Truth. Jesus takes the high place of authority as the one who was wiser than all.

And who could teach Truth like Jesus? He could say, “ I am the Truth.” He was also the one that came to bear witness of the Truth: for when he stood as a prisoner before Pilate, Jesus said, “ To this end was I born, and for this

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cause came I into the world, *that I should bear witness unto the Truth.*" He also added, "Every one that is of the Truth heareth my voice." Surely if we wish to hear Truth we shall listen to his voice. The Lord open our ears to hear Jesus!

But perhaps you are ready, like Pilate, to ask, "What is Truth?" I reply, *the mind of God.* That is Truth, and that *only.* And if you listen to Jesus as he here teaches Truth on the mountain to his disciples, you will hear God's mind and God's will. I would repeat, that God's mind only is Truth. And I must ask you to observe this. For man's thoughts, whether about man or about God, about earth or heaven, are *not* Truth. Man's thoughts or notions about good or bad, right or wrong, are *not* Truth. Man's thoughts are false, or only evil; for in Eden man became the slave of Satan, the great liar. And so in the 8th of John, the Lord says to men, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father will ye do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is *no truth in him.* When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh *of his own:* for he is a liar, and the father of it." Truth, then, cannot be found among men; if we have any Truth, it must have come down from God. Now God sent many words of truth from heaven, before Jesus came; to Adam, to Noah, to Moses, and to all the prophets; but never had ALL Truth come from heaven until Jesus came. But then THE TRUTH came: and so we read, "In him are ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

It seems from the 28th and 29th verses of the 7th chapter, that while the Lord sat on the mountain teaching his disciples, the people stood around and heard the Truth which Jesus taught. The people overhear the master teaching his disciples, Truth itself spoken by the all-wise Teacher sounds in their ears! but what is its effect on them? "*The people were astonished at his doctrine,*" &c. Some new doctrine was brought to their ears! O, how solemn is this! Truth is new to them! Truth was a strange doctrine. (See Mark i.) Why, they had the word of God amongst them, "they have Moses and the prophets;" and they had Scribes who "kept the key of knowledge;" but yet when Jesus speaks the Truth they are astonished, for they hear a strange doctrine: "For he taught as one *having authority, and not as the Scribes.*" What must man be, whether teacher or disciple, when Truth is a new doctrine?



But what said this new teacher, who spake with *authority*? If you will read what he said, you will not, I think, wonder much at the astonishment of the people; for surely "never man spake as this man."

Would not the people be naturally astonished by such words as, "Blessed are they that mourn—they that are poor in spirit—they that are persecuted: Blessed are ye when men *revile* you, and speak all manner of evil against you, &c., then rejoice and be exceeding glad"? Indeed, this doctrine was not like that of the Scribes! For the Scribes "loved to go in long clothing," and looked for "*salutations* in the marketplace:"—the Scribes loved the *chief seats* in synagogues, and the *uppermost rooms* at feasts! Again, when they heard this, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven," would they not be astonished? Why, the Scribes were the learned keepers of the law, and the Pharisees were the most religious people living. The Scribes and Pharisees did "outwardly appear righteous." But now the Son of God asserted, that in order to enter heaven they must *far exceed* in righteousness these Scribes and Pharisees! This new doctrine is more astonishing the more it is listened to.

But what must have been the amazement of the people, when, listening a little longer, they heard Jesus say to his disciples, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." What must have been their wonder to hear this,—that they must be perfect as God is perfect! What! did Jesus set up no lower standard than this? Why, this was bringing *God's* righteousness into the earth, as that to which men must attain in order to enter heaven! Man's righteousness, supposing he had any, is cast aside altogether by this doctrine, and God's righteousness is set up as the point to be reached! New doctrine this, indeed: what wonder that the people were astonished? What wonder that the Scribes did not teach like this? All that men in their ignorance or pride hope to attain to, is some righteousness of their own—some perfection of their own imagining. And so it is written, Romans x. "They being ignorant of *God's* righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

Thus then the people heard the Truth: and thus it

worked upon them. They were astonished—their teachers were condemned—their very standard of righteousness was cast down. One had come from heaven, and brought heavenly thoughts and heavenly judgments into the earth; and poor man was utterly condemned and confounded.

O, how does Jesus on the mountain silence *every* tongue, and stop *every* mouth! How does he make manifest the falsehood and ignorance of man! It was only for him to open his holy lips and speak forth Truth, and “all are become guilty before God.”

This, dear reader, is always the consequence of bringing Truth to bear on man. It at once proves that “all have come short.” Men make many classes among mankind. Men talk about poor idolatrous heathen, and about civilized people, and moral people, and so forth; but God has one name for all kinds of people, God says all are *sinners*. And God proves this by just sending Jesus into the world. One perfect man proves all else to be imperfect; and remember, *nothing but perfection will do for God*. None are like Jesus, NOT ONE; then ALL are lost sinners. How are the fancied distinctions among men gone in a moment, when God’s perfect standard of truth appears among them!

A number of people might be very warmly and cleverly debating about which was the cleanest of many dirty garments; but suppose some one was to bring in a spotless white garment,—then the debate would be soon over, and the *clean* would prove all else to be *unclean*.

Just so it is here. God brings the spotless Jesus among men, and God declares that no human being can enter heaven, *who is not as spotless and perfect as Jesus*. If you can fearlessly take your stand by the side of Jesus, and challenge God to search and see whether you are like him,—if as a man you can do this, then you are safe; but if you are not as clean as Jesus, let your name or character among men be what it may, you are hastening on the road to hell. God will not lower his standard of Truth to meet *yours*: and remember God is light, and in him is *no darkness at all*.

I have no doubt my reader is astonished at this doctrine, when plainly put before him. But this is Truth, and must prevail. But let me ask you, are you not *condemned* as well as *astonished* by this Truth? Those people who heard Jesus on the mountain, seem to have been astonished. Conscience does not seem to have been at work. But let me again ask

you, are you able to stand before God and say, "I am as Jesus?" Do you not know enough of yourself to shrink from such a trial as this? And if *you* see so much vileness and sin in your words and deeds and thoughts, what think you does *God* see in you? God's eye is now resting on you, and God looks from you to Jesus, and oh! what a contrast does he see between you? And remember, that however you may try to shake off the thought of this *now*, the day is coming when that will be impossible. Then you must stand all naked and bare before The Truth!

I pray God that many careless or self-righteous persons may read about Truth, and that it may be as a mirror in which God makes them to see their real vileness and ruin! Many a Pharisee has had all his good opinion of himself destroyed by hearing Truth. The Lord grant that to you!

But if Truth only had come by Jesus, we should have been all left as convicted, hopeless, despairing sinners. If Jesus had gone back to heaven, so to say, from the *top* of the mountain, there would have been no hope for any—not for one! This world would then have been as hopeless a place as hell itself. But he did not *then* go back to heaven from the top of the mountain. Jesus did something else first; and this we shall soon see. And if you have found that what you have heard about *Truth* has placed you as a convicted and condemned sinner before the Holy One, listen, I pray you, to what I am able to say to you about *Grace*.

"*Grace* and Truth came by Jesus Christ." To hear about Truth we have been listening to Jesus teaching his disciples on the mountain; but now to learn about *Grace*, we must look at Jesus working the work of grace on the plain. For we read, chap. viii. 1, "When he was come down from the mountain," &c.

The position which Jesus takes is here again, therefore, a sign of what he is going to do. Before he went up and sat above all,—now he comes down to work on a level with all.

This, then, is the first great work of *Grace*. The Holy One and the sinner stand on a level! The moment Truth teaches any sinner that he is a sinner, that moment he finds God is come down to him in his sins. Jesus takes the high place, to show that ours is the low place; and then, when we are laid low in our sins, down he comes to us. Down he comes from the mountain into the plain;—and then he is within the reach of *the poor leper*! Mark, Jesus comes all

the way down. He does not stop part way and call the leper to walk up to meet him. No—this would not have been **GRACE**. The leper does not go up a step—Jesus walks all the way down to meet the leper in his leprosy.

And this, dear sinner, is the wondrous *grace* of God. If you know that you are a sinner—if you feel the leprosy of sin in you, and the sentence of death therefore on you—I can tell you from God of the precious name of Jesus—the Saviour. Down to you in all your sin God sends that name: on that name God beseeches you to believe; and God declares that all who believe on Jesus *are justified from all things*. This, this is Grace. No toiling up to the Holy One—no labouring or working up the mountain, but full salvation brought down to the sinner in his sin and ruin! For God says, “Christ is the end of the law *for* righteousness to every one *that believeth* ;” therefore, “Say not in thy heart,” oh sinner, “who shall ascend into heaven, &c. or who shall descend into the deep, &c., for the *word is nigh thee*, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, *thou shalt be saved*” (Rom. x.).

Is not this Grace? Righteousness brought down to the sinner, and the message to him being, “Believe, and it is yours.”

But let us now look more closely at the blessed picture of Grace here put before us.

Grace brings Jesus—the holy and almighty One, down to the plain. And when on the plain, “behold, a leper came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” Now, what passes between Jesus and this leper on the plain, is just a little history of the work of Grace.

But having seen who Jesus is, we must ask, what is a leper? A leper was a man of whom the following things were true:—
1st.—He had been suspected of having a loathsome disease.
2nd.—He had been, after long and patient trial, proved to have that disease.
3rd.—He had, therefore, been driven outside the camp, or the dwelling place of God, *as utterly unclean*.
4th.—His uncleanness was publicly proclaimed, for his own mouth was to cry, Unclean, Unclean.
5th.—No art or skill of man could cure him,—indeed such things were not to be tried, for God had fully tried him already.
6th.—The almighty power of God alone could cure the leper.

Here then was a proved, condemned, proclaimed, incurable leper!

And of whom is such an one a picture? Of man: of every man. Yes, of all mankind. This is the present condition of the whole world before God. A world of proved, condemned, proclaimed, incurable sinners! All, all are this. Whoever you are, you are this. For all the things which I have spoken of as that through which the leper had to pass,—through all these things the world *has already passed*. For—

1st.—Man was charged with sin in the garden of Eden. 2nd.—Man has been put under a long, a patient, and a searching trial by God, to *prove* the truth of that charge. This trial lasted 4000 years; even from the garden of Eden to the cross of Jesus. 3rd.—Man has not only been tried, he has been found *guilty*. The verdict has been given, “all the world is *guilty* before God.” The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus is the final and crowning *proof* of man’s sin. *Then* the trial ended—for the charge was *proved*; *then* the sentence was pronounced, “Now is the judgment of this world.” 4th.—Man’s guilt and condemnation were *fully proclaimed* when God raised up the Lord Jesus: for the resurrection of Jesus is God’s public declaration of his holiness, and of man’s guilt and sure judgment. “Him whom ye crucified, God hath raised from the dead.” God will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus, “*whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised Jesus from the dead.*” 5th.—No skill or strength or improvement of man can now avail. He is condemned *already*. Men may moralise, or educate, or polish themselves as they will,—God says you are a ruined thing, and no patching of the old garment can avail. 6th.—It follows then, that none but God himself can save lost man.

The sin was against *God*—God brought the charge—God conducted the trial—God proved the guilt—God proclaimed the sentence—God will execute the judgment—and God only can rescue and save any.

Is it not *true*, then, that the world is a crowd of *proved, condemned, proclaimed* sinners, *waiting for execution*? Solemn as this is, yet this is TRUE. The awful sentence has been passed, and the criminals are waiting for execution in the condemned cell! The hour of trial—of probation—is passed for ever. Man is not now in a state of probation. To say that he is, is to give God the lie. If you are a human being—a child of Adam, you are condemned. I do not want to be told your character or your condition: *I know both*. The moment I see a man, I see one who is justly condemned to

death. This is where the truth of God places the world—places man—now. For 1800 years has the trial been over, and ever since then, God only speaks to man, or of man, as a condemned sinner—*condemned already*.

And those who do not see this can know nothing about Grace. For what is Grace? Turn again to the picture before us. Whom do you see there? There stand two on a level—The Holy One and the filthy one. For *Grace* has brought the Holy One down to the plain, and there the poor *leper* comes and worships him. Grace comes to *lepers*, not to *Pharisees*. Grace is for the *lost*—the *dead*.

Look then, dear reader, at this wondrous meeting between Jesus and the leper: i. e. God and the sinner! While Jesus sat on the top of the mountain, this meeting never could have been. There disciples sat in subjection—the people stood listening around: there Scribes and Pharisees even were condemned—what hope was there on the mountain, then, for a poor leper? The people might, perhaps, come near enough to listen, but all would agree to drive away a poor leper; “Stand apart, I am holier than thou,” would be every one’s voice to him! His was, indeed, a desperate case while Jesus sat upon the mountain!

But soon he saw Jesus coming down! How must the leper’s heart have throbbed now,—how must the leper’s eye have watched Jesus now! And see, Jesus is coming down farther and farther: yes, he is come to the bottom, down to the plain itself,—now surely there is hope for the poor leper; now even he can come and worship Jesus!

Yes, Jesus must come down to the leper if the leper is to be healed; and *he does come down!* Holiness and sin, the Lord of life and glory and the slave of sin and death, now meet! God’s searching *light* reveals our leprosy, and then his boundless *love* comes to heal it!

This is what we learn here.—Thus we see the first great work of grace; even God in Jesus humbling himself down to the poor sinner’s ground. This—this is Grace. Just now Jesus was far above the leper—but Jesus had himself come down; *Jesus had done away with all distance between the leper and himself*. And now, all unclean as he is, the leper can cast himself down at the very feet of Jesus—close, close to Jesus. This, I say, is the first step in God’s mighty work of Grace. For none need stand now between Jesus and the sinner. Theirs is a business they two alone can

settle, and alone they must finish it. Oh, how man loves to have the credit of helping in this work! Man is always trying to put something between the condemned filthy sinner and Jesus! But away with it—away with it! God has come down *to you*, sinner, in Jesus; and there is nothing between you but what your own unbelief puts in. Listen not to man about this; man will tell you many a long story about what you must *do*, or what you must *feel*, or what you must *know*. Turn from man, I say, and listen to God—God says,—“*the word is nigh thee*,” “*come unto me*,” “*he that believeth shall be saved*.”

Your salvation depends simply and only on your believing what God tells you about Jesus. The gospel is the word of God about Jesus, and he who believes that word, “*hath set to his seal that God is true*,” and “*hath eternal life*.”

Look again at this leper. I have said that no man, neither disciple, nor Scribe, nor Pharisee, helps him to come to Jesus. His own felt leprosy drives him to Jesus: *he goes because he is a leper*. And I have said that he goes right up to Jesus; he does not stand afar off. Disciples and people must all make room for the leper,—he is bowing down at the very feet of Jesus! And now listen, I pray you, to his cry, “*Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*.”—He is confident of two things you see: first, of the power of Jesus; second, of his own helpless ruin. He is quite sure of these two things; for he says, “*Lord, thou canst*,” and he asks to “*be made CLEAN*.” But the leper is not quite confident about the *Grace*. “*Lord, if thou wilt*.” This is the only “*if*” in the leper’s heart. He has no “*if*” about the power of Jesus—no “*if*” about his own foulness, but he wants to know whether there is *Grace* in Jesus: “*If thou wilt*.”

This, then, is a leper’s knock at the heart of Jesus—a sinner’s appeal to the *Grace* of God. How bold and free has this leper become, now that Jesus has been pleased to come down into the plain! Many around, no doubt, thought him too bold—very rash. They would say, *You* come, a poor filthy leper! Why, you are too bad for the city—too bad *for us*, and you presume to go up to Jesus like that! What an insolent leper this is—what a presumptuous leper; surely his leprosy has made him mad! Thus man speaks and judges.

But how does *Jesus* treat this filthy applicant for cleanliness? There bows the leper with his cry of *faith*—“*Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean*.” He casts that one

“if” on the Lord Jesus—“if thou wilt.” And will Jesus bear that “if;” or will Jesus let the poor leper keep his “if”? **NO, NOT FOR ONE MOMENT.**

The leper’s cry has power with God! Jesus stood there to prove this; for what does that cry call forth from Jesus? **GRACE:—ALMIGHTY GRACE!** Forth it flows—a mighty stream indeed; and away it washes the leper’s leprosy and his “if” too. Yes, *leprosy* and *if* are gone together. What a mighty question is settled here! For thus Grace works for the sinner. Let a poor sinner but look to Jesus for *Grace*—almighty Grace,—and forth that Grace will flow, and away will it wash in a moment *sin* and *doubt* too!

See how quickly Jesus moves and speaks at the cry of faith—a poor leper’s faith. “And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.” This is how sinners can be made clean—and thus only. In all their sin and ruin let them but believe in Jesus, and he has but one reply which *he could* give, “I will, be thou clean.” For he has pledged his own word thus, “Whosoever cometh, I will in *no wise* cast out.”

You observe, the poor leper did not ask to be made *partly* clean. His request was *to be made clean*. He knew Jesus *only* could do it, and he expected Jesus to do it *perfectly*. And so it was. “According to his faith” was it unto him. He was *made clean*, “clean every whit.” He was **INSTANTLY** made clean—he was **PERFECTLY** made clean. “*I will, be thou clean,*” is the word of omnipotent Grace. Oh, how is this forgotten and denied. Some say, that a long process is necessary to make sinners clean; others say, that Grace does part only: *very seldom* do you hear the *gospel of the GRACE* of God preached fully and simply.

Man’s heart always thinks about *gradual amendment* as the way of salvation. This is man’s way of repairing things. But it is not God’s way. God never repairs old things—God creates anew. It is the work of Omnipotence, and of Omnipotence alone, to say “I will, be thou clean.” God commands, and it is done. (Psalm xxxiii. 9.)

For whose voice was this that spoke the leper clean? This was the voice that spake all things into existence. This was the voice of the Creator, for all things were created by this voice, “things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible.” This was the voice of God, which to the leper says, “I will, be thou clean.” None else could holily say, “*I will,*” for

none but God has a right to a will. None else can say, "Be thou clean," for none but God can command to be.

This is the security for the *perfect* and *instant* cleanness of the sinner who believeth. It is God's almighty work. "Thou shalt *be my* salvation to the ends of the earth," says God to Jesus. And again, "God in Christ reconciling," &c.

Remember, therefore, that he who said to the leper, "I will, be thou clean," was he who long ages before had said, "Let there be light." By him the worlds were made. And, I ask, when his voice called the light into being, did that light come tardily and slowly forth? Let God's word answer—"and there was light." Again I ask, when the same voice said to this poor leprous man—"I will, be thou clean"—was his leprosy partially or slowly healed? Let God's word answer again, "and IMMEDIATELY his leprosy was CLEANSED." And so then, in God's name, can I tell you, sinner, that the very moment you believe in Jesus as the Saviour, that moment you *are saved*,—that moment omnipotent Grace cleanseth you from every sin—past, present, and to come—washing all away by the precious blood of Jesus; that moment you are made a partaker of the spotless and eternal life of Christ. Yes, that moment translated out of the kingdom of Satan and the slavery of sin, into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free;—that moment, from being meet and worthy for everlasting fire, *made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light!* This is the mighty work of Grace for all who believe. Into all the security and dignity of this, even of living union to God—faith instantly and for ever brings.

This God can do for sinners, because of what Jesus is unto God. Because Jesus the Holy One has been made sin for us—that we might *be made* the righteousness of God in him! For this did Jesus shed his precious blood!

We have seen that this poor leper came to Jesus with an "if." He did not doubt the power, but he wanted to know "is there *Grace?*" but now *this "if" is gone for ever!* None need doubt the grace *now*—none need despair *now*, none need go as sinners to Jesus in doubt *now*. *For the blood of Jesus is God's answer now to every IF.* God points the sinner to *that*, and says, "Can you doubt my Grace *now?*" The cross of Jesus proclaims God's love as loudly as it proclaims man's sin.—"God SO loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should

not perish, but have everlasting life." To doubt God's Grace now is awful sin indeed.

But alas, some are too proud to receive salvation as a gift. Some, like the Scribes and Pharisees, are too *learned* or too *good*! Some, like the people, are only *astonished* at what they hear. Some may, like the multitude, for selfish ends, "*follow*." But, blessed be God, when any poor *leper* comes and casts himself on the *Grace*, then out flows the living cleansing stream, he is made perfectly clean, and there is *joy* in heaven above, and in the poor sinner's heart below, for one who was dead is alive—alive for ever and ever, for he *hath eternal life*.

Now does my reader doubt whether he be really a filthy leper in God's sight? While you thus listen to the lie of Satan, let me tell you again what *God* says of *your* heart. Hear his word;—"That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Oh, what has man become by sin! and what must hell be, seeing it is the *home* of such hearts as these!

Hear this, you who talk of *good* in man—you who say that sin is the consequence of man's circumstances, and not the outflowing of his heart. God casts the light of His holiness upon the *heart*, and as he points you *there* He says, "*It is desperately wicked*." You may labour to make a world of yawning graves into a world of whited sepulchres; you may restrain, civilise, educate, moralise; but *within* are still the dead men's bones, and rottenness, and death; *within* still is sin, uncleansed, unforgiven sin! What impotent workers you are!

And yet, blessed be God, *whosoever believeth as a sinner on Jesus, is IMMEDIATELY made PERFECTLY clean before God!* What an Omnipotent worker is God!

These are the words of Truth—these are the words of Grace.

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