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Christian Truth: Volume 38, Live Thou and Thy Children of the Rest (4:7)

2 Kings 4:7

Who has not read the deeply interesting story of the widow's pot of oil in the fourth chapter of 2 Kings, and the gracious intervention of God by His servant Elisha to save the widow's sons from being taken as slaves in payment of her debts? Many a time, too, the miraculous multiplication of the pot of oil and its sale to pay the widow's debts, has been used as an illustration of the grace of God in pardoning those who cast themselves on God's mercy, confessing they have nothing wherewith to pay their obligations to Him.

It recalls at once the words of the Lord Jesus in the house of the Pharisee (Luke 7:40-43), when He sought to reach that poor proud heart by the simple story of the two debtors—the one owing five hundred pence, and the other, fifty—but when they had nothing to pay, the creditor frankly forgave them both.

We who have through grace found the deepest blessing in taking our place among the bankrupt debtors rejoice in the free, full forgiveness of our sins. But there is more than this typified in the story of the widow's pot of oil, and we think some of the many blessings peculiar to Christianity are beautifully illustrated in the words of the prophet, "Live thou and thy children of the rest." It tells us that in the gospel of the grace of God there is not only made known the forgiveness of sins, and justification "from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39), but that there is something provided to live upon, a gracious provision for the believer, to meet his need all through the journey.

Let us take a simple illustration. When a prisoner has served the term of his sentence, and is discharged from prison, he is often more in need of help than at any moment of his life. It is true that the law has no further claim upon him; he has fulfilled his sentence. The law however, offers no help, nor makes any provision for his future, although he might have lost his situation and been estranged from his friends as a result of his crime. So again with a debtor—a generous friend may pay his debts, and leave him without a fear of any creditor's demands, but does he not need something to provide against getting into debt again? He wants, like the widow and her sons, some provision to live upon, and this is just the special feature of the fullness of the gospel which we wish to point out.

It has been said that it is easier to die a martyr than to live a Christian, and we can understand the point of view from which such a remark was made. Not many days ago, a poor widow said to the writer, "The hardest thing in this world is to live as a Christian," but she knew nothing of the more blessed side of the gospel, or the joy of a living, loving Savior in heaven, at all times ready and willing to help His tried and troubled people.

To some it has become a hackneyed phrase to speak of our three great enemies, "The world, the flesh, and the devil," but it is nonetheless true that we have these three enemies, and if we measure our own strength against them, we may well be dismayed. And we shall be worsted in the combat too. But let us look briefly at the provision for the way—what is it that answered to the words, "Live thou and thy children of the rest"?

Let us glance at the beginning of the fifth chapter of Romans, for example, and we shall find that we are started with "peace with God" as the result of being justified on the principle of faith. Then in equally precise terms we are told that by the same blessed Person (Christ) "we have access by faith into the grace wherein we stand." Who can adequately describe the value of such a privilege as this for our everyday needs? There is never a time or circumstance, difficulty or trial, that can alter or affect this wondrous access, or close that door against us. We do not, like queen Esther, wait at a distant part of the audience chamber to see if the royal scepter is extended toward us before we approach to make our requests known or seek the needed strength for conflict. No; the One who gave Himself for us, who died to bring us to God, is there in His presence, our High Priest and Advocate, and we are thus emboldened to approach, whatever our felt weakness may be. Neither is joy lacking, for the same finished work has secured for us a share in the glory of God, and we rejoice in the hope of it while on the way to it.

But notice the word, "not only so," "much more than"; how often they occur in this wonderful chapter. We can only call the briefest attention to them. There are sure to be tribulations in our path, but we need not get under them, but rather glory in them. Then look also at the ninth verse, and ponder what is meant by being "saved from the wrath through Him."

Again in the tenth verse we read, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." We are preserved, helped, sustained, and shielded by the living Savior who lives for us on high as a watchful and unwearied shepherd. Is this not something more than being cleared from all charges and knowing that God now has nothing against us? It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to say that "saved by His life," in the tenth verse, has no reference to the life of the Lord Jesus on the earth before the cross. In that sense, as we all know, our salvation is by His death, the atoning death of the cross—by His bloodshedding. But it is the life of Christ where He is now that this passage refers to, and what a precious thought it is for the tried and troubled Christian.

The eleventh verse touches a higher note still, and declares that "not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." So there is not only provision for the way, and encouragement in tribulation and trials, but joy of the highest and deepest character—joy in God Himself.

We began our new life in Christ with "a clean slate" (as the world speaks); "Every charge our God refuses, Christ has answered with His blood." But not only so, we are amply provided for, whether the journey be long or short; we are of those "which receive abundance of grace,"

and "shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." So in a very special and blessed way the prophet's words apply, "Live thou and thy children of the rest." Let us not be discouraged, dear fellow believer, whatever the strength of the forces arrayed against us may appear to be. The Lord Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." John 14:19. And as to the world, He reminds us, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33.

There is even much more than this, for we are started with a new life, eternal life, a new power, the Holy Spirit, and a new Object and hope, Christ in glory. But the consideration of these would take us beyond our present thought of showing how the riches of God's grace in Christ have furnished the Christian "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Eph. 3:20.

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