Mark 1:40-45 (W.H.S.) 51355

Things New and Old: Volume 28, If Thou Wilt and if Thou Canst (1:40-45)

Read Mark 1:40-45; 9:14-29.

Imagine a person to be drowning, and a man passes by at the time. What will qualify the latter to be the savior of the drowning person? The possession of the “will” and the “power” to save. He may have the will, but lack the power; or, he may possess the power without the will. To be a deliverer he must possess both qualifications.

Now, that which constitutes Christ a perfect Savior of sinners is His possession of both the ability and willingness to save. Think of that, dear reader, the only One who can possibly save your soul from hell is both able and willing to do so.

Now the above scriptures bring this out in a very striking manner. The poor leper, weary of his sad condition, comes to Jesus, saying, “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” Now here was faith in Christ’s competency to heal; but there was, at the same time, a lack of faith in His willingness to do so. The leper did not doubt His ability, but he questioned His love: “If thou wilt.” There was something about Christ he had yet to learn. Doubtless, he argued thus: “Here am I, a poor unclean leper, from whose presence all men flee. Now, although I believe that this wonderful Person can cleanse me, my fear is, that He, in common with others, will turn in abhorrence from my loathsomeness.”

But was it so? Ah, no! Forth from the lips of Jesus came those precious words, “I will, be thou clean”—words that discovered the love of that wondrous heart that throbbed in the bosom of the Incarnate God. “And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.” Oh, what an answer to the leper’s doubt! What a blessed exercise of the Savior’s power and love on behalf of that needy one!

The grand point disclosed by this miracle is not merely Christ’s power y but His willingness, to save. It may be, my reader, that you, like the leper, distrust not the former, but the sense of your vileness as a sinner leads you to doubt the latter.

My friend, have you ever considered what it was that led the Lord Jesus to leave heaven, to come into this world of sorrow and woe—this scene in which, by His perfect identification with suffering man, in everything but sin, He gained the name of the Man of sorrows? It was love that brought Him here, love to the sinner; and it was in the energy of that burning, quenchless love for ruined man, that He bowed to the stroke of divine justice, and bore, in His own sinless person, the judgment due to the sinner. It is now the joy of the Savior-God to welcome, and to cleanse from sin’s foul disorder, every sinner who comes to Him.

Remember, Christ has said, “Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out;” and, observe, He said nothing about the character of the one who came—only, “Him that cometh.” It is thus left open for the vilest to come to Him. He has pledged Himself to receive whosoever comes, and He cannot deny Himself; you may be the worst character in the world, but if you come to Jesus, He is bound to receive you. Do you not know that the only charge which the Pharisees could bring against Him, was, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them;” and that the witness which He Himself bore as to His divine mission to earth, was, The Son of man is “come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance?”

Listen! As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. Yes, and the moment you believe on Jesus you will be saved.

Oh, glance again at that wonderful scene. The holy Son of God is bending over the unclean leper, who, crouching at His feet, seeks the exercise of His blessed service of grace. Listen to the word of compassionate love; mark the touch of power; see the joyful uprising of the cleansed one, and gain eternal peace for thy troubled heart from the glorious fact, that He who, in a bygone day, thus displayed His love and power in cleansing the leper, is now in glory, waiting and yearning to manifest the same love and power towards you, in cleansing you from all sin, through the virtues of His own blood.

A terrible scene is depicted in our second scripture. The power of Satan over man is there seen in its most frightful form. A poor child, possessed by a demon, is brought to Jesus; and even as they bring him, the spirit tears him, and he falls on the ground, and wallows, foaming. The broken-hearted father appeals to Christ. “If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.” Here the man questions, not the love of Christ, but His ability—“If thou canst.” Now mark the answer. Jesus said unto him, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” That was to say, The question is not, if “I can heal,” but, “If thou canst believe.”

“And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said, with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” The poor father’s heart is tested, all doubts as to Christ’s power vanish, and faith fills their place: “Lord, I believe.” It was sufficient; the great Deliverer speaks the word: “Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.” The demon leaves his prey, and Jesus, taking the child by the hand, lifts him up.

Have you, my reader, ever doubted the power of Christ to rescue you from the dominion of the devil? Then learn the lesson taught by the narrative, that the question is not, whether Christ can deliver you, but, whether you believe. The only reason you are yet subject to the enemy’s thrall, is, that you have never yet come to Christ as a poor, helpless sinner, trusting simply to Him for deliverance. Want of confidence in Christ’s power and love keeps millions of souls from blessing.

Remember, it is the power of God which is exercised in the sinner's deliverance from the dominion of sin and Satan. Is there any limit to that power? And do not forget that the blood of the Son of God is the ground for the righteous display of that power on the helpless sinner's behalf. Now, who shall estimate, and what can exhaust the value of that blood?

Did you notice that the Lord did not merely command the foul spirit to leave the child, He added, "and enter no more into him." That child was thenceforth safe from the attacks of the foe. Christ does not save a sinner merely to expose him to the subsequent dominion of the devil. He delivers eternally all who have believed on Him, Come, then, to Him at once, just as you are, naked, helpless, and vile, confiding simply in the efficacy of His blood, the love of His heart, and the power of His hand, and in a moment shall you be transferred from the vile clutches of the devil to the safe keeping of the Son of God, who is the devil's conqueror, and who, as the risen Shepherd, keeps, by His Omnipotent power, every one of His sheep, for He has said, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man or devil] pluck them out of my hand." W. H. S.

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