Ruth 2:16 (Edward Henry Chater) 138218

Handfuls of Blessing, Handfuls of Blessing (2:16)

“Let Fall of Purpose” – Ruth 2:16

God and the Sinner

God’s love to this ruined world is blessedly declared in the precious words of Jesus in John 3:16 —

“God so loved the world.”

Have you ever pondered them? They speak volumes to the believing soul.

“God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). But men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). And God in righteousness excludes, and will exclude, the world in their sins from His glorious presence. But God is Love, as well as Light (1 John 4:8), and perfect love devised a plan to bring sinners out of darkness into His marvelous light, and to make them meet for His presence, and that in righteousness to His own glory (Col. 1:12).

Hear the glorious news!

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.”

Yea, God is Love. Not only does He love, but He is love, loving only as God can love. And this world, of which, in nature, we all form part, full of enmity and hatred in heart and mind against Him, was the object of that love. One might love another, and yet not give a proof of his love. But God not only loved, but manifested His love in the gift of His only begotten Son. He could not give a greater gift, and would not give a lesser. He had but one Son, His well-beloved, and yet He spared not His Son, but delivered Him up for us all (Rom. 8:32).

The Person of Christ

Let us next turn to a few passages of the Word of God which speak of the Person of Christ, the unspeakable gift of God’s wondrous love (2 Cor. 9:15).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:1-5).

“And the Word was made (became) flesh, and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (John 1:18).

“And, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)” (1 John 1:1-2).

“Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

But if sinners are to be saved, Christ must die; for man’s life is forfeited on account of sin. Hence we find Him saying, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).

Man’s disobedience in Eden dishonored God, and brought the world under the power of Satan and the reign of sin. For four thousand years God tried fallen man in various ways, but only to fully prove how utterly fallen he is. “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son” (Gal. 4:4).

“There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all.”

“Christ ... through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God” (Heb. 9:14). On the cross of Calvary He suffered, died, and bled. There ...

God was infinitely glorified,Satan’s power was annulled,Sin’s judgment was borne.

Every claim of God was once and forever perfectly met. And God raised Him from the dead to His own right hand in glory, where He is now seated, a testimony to the whole universe that the atoning work is done.

Christ, “by His own blood ... entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12).

“My meat,” said He, “is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). “I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do” (John 17:4).

“It is finished” (John 19:30).

Christ

the object of faith

“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26).

“Faith cometh by hearing” (or, a report), “and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

God presents salvation in His word in the simplest manner possible for all. You may have it either by looking, hearing, coming, or taking.

“Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isa. 45:22).

“Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live” (Isa. 55:3).

“Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).

“Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17).

Could God make it more simple? Reader, will you be simple? Whether you look unto Him in the glory, hearken to His voice, come unto Him with your burden, or take His free gift, it is faith in each instance, and God says you are saved.

Will you take Him at His word?

Christ “was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

But do not think that, in having presented the gospel thus simply, repentance is forgotten. Faith and repentance go in one yoke. It is very clear that no one can be saved without repentance; but it is faith in Christ, as we have seen, and not repentance, that saves.

The thoughts of thousands are astray upon this deeply important subject. Many have the idea that they have a great deal to do before they can be saved, and call their legal efforts to give up sin and lead a moral and religious life, repentance; but this is rather a kind of penance.

Doing our best to please God now will not make up for a single short-coming in the past, nor put away a single sin, any more than a man, trying to keep out of your debt at the present moment would satisfy you for a long-standing debt in the past.

Repentance is neither penance, nor self-improvement, nor reformation, nor self-justification, but exactly the opposite; namely, the thorough Judgment of self.

When a guilty sinner wakes up in his soul to the true character of God, and His wondrous goodness manifested in the unspeakable gift of Christ, he is led to self-judgment, the hatred of sin, and the loathing of the flesh. Having believed the Word of God, which condemns him as a lost sinner, but tells him of a Saviour who came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10), he sets to his seal that God is true, owns he richly deserves the lake of fire, and accepts Christ. And the fuller his knowledge of that blessed One henceforth, the deeper will be the repentance in his soul.

Nothing can be plainer in the Word of God than that we are saved apart from our works altogether. There are four kinds of works spoken of in Scripture, and manifest on all hands, which all alike shut out from God; namely:

Self-righteous works

(Col. 1:21) (Titus 3:5)

Dead works

(Gal. 2:16) (Heb. 9:14)

Ephesians 2:9 distinctly tells us that it is “not of works, lest any man should boast.” Again, in Romans 4:3, we read, “For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.”

And again, in Titus 3:4, “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” We are not saved by works, but by one work, and that the finished work of Christ.

“This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent” (John 6:29).

Neither are we saved by our works and Christ, nor by Christ and our works, but by Christ alone. Good works, acceptable to God, are the fruit and evidence of faith in Him. “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” (James 2:17.) Faith produces good works to the glory of God.

The sinner needs both forgiveness and justification. God alone can pardon and justify. Listen to His word.

“Be it known unto you ... that through this Man [Christ Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him, all that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:38-39).

My reader, if truly you do believe, you may know, on the authority of the word of Him who cannot lie (Titus 1:2), that your sins are forgiven, and you are justified from all things. God says what He means, and means what He says. Take Him at His word. Note carefully, it is not all that do, or work, or try, or feel, or hope, but all that believe. And does it add, “hope to be justified,” or “shall be justified if”? No; but, “All that believe are justified.”

They are inseparable. God linked them together, and all the power of Satan and man cannot rend them asunder. “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” (Rom. 8:33-34). “All that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:39) — from all that you have been, or done, or are; from sins, iniquities, transgressions, offenses, failures, short-comings, all things.

“Little children ... your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake” (1 John 2:12).

“Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

“Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom. 4:7-8).

“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through (in) Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Have you received this inestimable gift? God gives it to everyone who believes on His Son.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

And all who receive everlasting life in Christ now, will share everlasting glory with Him hereafter.

Jesus said: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47).

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

Said a poor old woman of some seventy years, when shown these living words, “What a stupid I’ve been! There have I been a coming and a going, and a trying and a striving, and a arg’ing and a arg’ing, and to think it’s as plain as all that! and in my own Bible too! I’ve been groping in the dark these fifty years. What a stupid I’ve been!”

Do you believe?

But some man will say, “But how can you know that you have everlasting life?” What saith the Scripture? “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

Saith the Word of God, “The blood is the life.” “Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). “It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11).

“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom. 5:8-9). What preserved Israel on the night of the slaying of the firstborn in Egypt? Blood.

“When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Ex. 12:13).

What maintained Israel in relationship with Jehovah on the great day of atonement? Blood. But —

“Not all the blood of beasts,On Jewish altars slain,Could, give the guilty conscience peace,Or wash away its stain.

But believers can add —

“But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,Took all our guilt away;A Sacrifice of nobler name,And richer blood, than they.”

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). “The blood of Jesus Christ His [God’s] Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). A Christian visiting a dying youth, having quoted this blessed verse, added, “So that not a spot nor stain remains.” “Not a speck,” he gasped out in reply, and in a few hours fell peacefully asleep through Jesus. Are you cleansed by the blood?

The sin alights on Jesus’ head,‘Tis in His blood sin’s debt is paid;Stern justice can demand no more,And mercy can dispense her store.

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). “I must wait God’s time to be saved,” say some.

Yes, an ever-present “now.” Tomorrow may be too late. “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1).

Every tick of the clock,

Every beat of your pulse,

Every breath that you draw,

brings you nearer, and nearer, and nearer, and nearer still to

Where would you spend it if you were to die this moment?

In light, or in darkness?

In heaven, or in hell?

With Christ, or with Satan?

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, now, and you are amongst those of whom the Holy Spirit speaks by the Apostle Paul in the epistle to the Romans:

Now justified by His blood (Rom. 5:9).

Now received the atonement (or reconciliation) (Rom. 5:11).

Now made free from sin (Rom. 6:22).

Now delivered from the law (Rom. 7:6).

Now no condemnation in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

Thousands are already in eternity, lost. They failed to discern the importance of that little word “now.” They meant to repent, and believe the gospel; but they put it off, and put it off, until, alas! it was too late. Therefore, my reader, I press it upon you, “Now is God’s time; trifle with it, and it may be never.”

When the children of Israel were in hard bondage under Pharaoh in Egypt, God raised up a deliverer for them in the person of Moses. Ten fearful plagues fell upon the Egyptians, the last being the destruction of the firstborn of man and beast throughout the land. Israel were sheltered and preserved from the sword of the destroying angel by the blood of the paschal lamb, sprinkled upon the two side-posts and the upper doorpost of their houses. Then Moses led them out of Egypt, and God wrought a miraculous deliverance for them through the Red Sea, destroying all their foes, and eventually brought them into the land of promise.

This great deliverance is a striking type of redemption in Christ.

The believer in Jesus is sheltered by His blood, and preserved from judgment. And not only so, but also delivered by the power of God through faith in Christ and His finished work.

And as He is now delivered from all condemnation, which He voluntarily bore for us, suffering on the cross for our sins, the Just for the unjust, so we, in Him, are now and forever completely delivered also.

“There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

“Herein is our love [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” (1 John 4:17).

God “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son [or, the Son of His love]” (Col. 1:13).

Are you Satan’s slave, or Christ’s freedman? “The truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

As long as souls are occupied with themselves or their feelings, they are sure to be subject to doubts and fears, which are a clear evidence that they are still expecting some good from the flesh. But “the flesh profiteth nothing.”

“In me,” says the Apostle “(that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and remains incorrigible flesh as long as we live upon the earth. As surely as you expect anything good from the flesh, the law condemns, and the conscience is burdened with a feeling of short-coming and a sense of sin. Hence come doubts and fears, and the cry, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? “Many stop here for years, living in wretchedness. Are you one, my reader? What is the remedy?

Look by faith to Christ from self, and add with the apostle, “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 7:25). Deliverance will be the result, and you will be enabled to say with him also, “We are always confident” (2 Cor. 5:6), instead of continually doubting and fearing.

“I am full of doubts and fears at times,” said one, “because I feel I still sin; and then I think that I cannot be a child of God, and that I have lost what I had, and must be saved again.” “How many sins do you think that you commit in a day — ten?” “Oh, more than that.” “Well, let us say three — that is a very low average — one in thought, one in word, and one in deed. That makes twenty-one in a week, or over a thousand in a year. So that, according to your doctrine, you must be saved again and again and again, a thousand times every year, all the way to the glory.” “Oh, that is stupid, isn’t it?” was the reply. “Yes, indeed it is.”

The Righteousness of God

People often speak, and preach, and write about the righteousness of Christ, but we do not find such an expression in Scripture. It is the righteousness of God. “Well, but is not that the same thing?” I think I hear someone saying. No. It is true that Christ was, and is, and ever will be, the righteous One. But was not He therefore meet for glory at any moment of His blessed pathway on earth? Surely. Then, if His righteousness is imputed to us, we should be thus meet for His glory also, apart from His death. This would do away with the atonement. But “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22).

Neither is it His perfectly righteous Life and His death that make us righteous before God.

But the truth is, that God hath raised Him from the dead, and the believer is accounted righteous on the principle of faith, and made the righteousness of God in Him. Hence we read, first —

“The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe” (Rom. 3:22).

“To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works” (Rom. 4:5-6).

Second, God “hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). “Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness” (1 Cor. 1:30).

Christ in glory is God’s righteousness, and the believer is in Him, righteous in Christ, the righteous One.

Man is a fallen creature, born in sin, with an evil nature that does nothing but sin against God. This evil nature is utterly incorrigible, and cannot please God (Rom. 8:8). But God condemned sin in the flesh at the cross (Rom. 8:3). And when a sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he is born of God, receiving a new nature which cannot sin (1 John 3:9). But the old nature remains in him still, and not one whit improved by the presence of the new. Thus, an unconverted man has one nature, sinful; A Christian has two, the old sinful one, and the new which cannot sin.

Many, when they are saved, are surprised and cast down because they sin again, and they sometimes even fear that they are lost after all. This arises from the erroneous thought that their old evil nature is improved, and thus Satan gets an advantage.

Now in Romans 6:6, we read, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed (not improved), that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed (justified) from sin.” God has given up the old man; it was crucified once for all upon the cross. Believe God, and you are freed from sin. It is no longer your master.

Then, as to the practical side, we are taught in the 11th verse to reckon ourselves “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through (in) Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Not to realize, nor feel, nor experience, but to reckon. And there would be no need for such an exhortation if sin were not still in us, or if the old nature were made better.

Peace

Have you peace with God? How is it to be obtained? By faith in the Son of God. Man is God’s enemy, but God is not man’s enemy. Thus God, in infinite grace, peace having been made by the blood of the cross of His own dear Son (Col. 1:20), now preaches peace to all through Him (Eph. 2:17). Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Can you, in the Presence of Him who is the Searcher of hearts, honestly reply, “I do”? Then you are included in the precious words of Romans 4:5, “Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

“The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa. 57:20-21).

Many reform (outwardly, not inwardly), turn over new leaves (and blot them immediately), make good resolutions (and break them almost as soon as made), and cry, “Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14). This is Satan’s snare, false peace.

Others believe in the Saviour, but make their final arrival in glory depend upon their clinging to Him, sticking to it, enduring, working on, etc.; and thus, being self-occupied, and adding self to Christ, they never get beyond a partial peace.

But the believer, who ceases from his own righteousness, and utterly mistrusting self, takes God at His word, and rests on the finished work of Christ, knows and enjoys true peace with God.

God is the creator of two creations. In the beginning He created the heavens and the earth first, and man last. In the new creation the order is reversed — God is now creating men anew in Christ Jesus, and hereafter will fashion a new heavens and a new earth (2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 21:1).

It is an immense blessing for a soul to lay hold by faith of the truth of the new creation.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” or, there is a new creation; “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Adam was created in innocence, and being tempted, sinned. The Christian, created anew in Christ, has a new nature which cannot sin. The old Adam nature in the believer is not one bit improved, but everyone who is in Christ is a new creation. Thus God sees him forever.

Those who are “in Christ” are also spoken of as, “created in Christ Jesus unto good works;” “created in righteousness and true holiness [or, holiness of truth]” (Eph. 2:10; 4:24).

“God ... hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:4-10).

“And that ye put on [or, having put on] the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24).

The new creation is God’s own perfect handiwork. And “whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever” (Eccl. 3:14). Are you a new creation in Christ?

“I thought,” says one, “that no one can be sure of going to heaven till the great judgment-day.” “Where are all God’s people who have passed away?” we reply. “Why in heaven to be sure. ‘Absent from the body, and ... present with the Lord’ (2 Cor. 5:8). Do you think, then, that after being in heaven, some of them hundreds of years, they are to be taken out to have it settled whether they are to go there or not “Oh, I never thought of that!”

All judgment is committed to Christ, the Son of Man (John 5:22); He is ready to judge both quick and dead (1 Peter 4:5). But Christians will never come into judgment as to their persons. Christians are the church, and the church is His bride. He will judge the quick (or living) at the commencement, and the dead at the close of His thousand years’ reign. But Christ Himself bore the judgment due to the believer nearly nineteen hundred years ago, and thus we can rejoice in His blessed words, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (or judgment); but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). Believers too are in Christ, and “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

Christ on earth had judgment before Him, not on His own account, but for us. This judgment He bore on the cross. Now He is in glory with judgment behind Him. Where does God see believers? In Christ. Then judgment must be behind us too.

Death and judgment are behind us,Grace and glory are before;All the billows rolled o’er Jesus,There they spent their utmost power.

“I hope so” is a most common answer that the Lord’s servants receive when inquiring as to the state of people’s souls; but the Scriptures show that as long as we are in the unconverted state we have no hope (Eph. 1:2).

No, sinner. Your case is utterly hopeless apart from the grace of God; so you had better discard “I hope so” at once. But believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you may know; for the language of faith is not, We hope; but, We know.

“We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding” (1 John 5:20).

“We know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us” (1 John 3:24).

“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19).

“We know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14).

“We know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him” (1 John 3:19).

“We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2).

“We know, that if our earthly house ... were dissolved, we have a building of God” (2 Cor. 5:1).

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

Reader, do you know?

Said a poor dying girl, “I’m only a poor sinner, but Jesus died for me, and I believe in Him; and God says I’m saved, and so I know I am!”

Again I press it upon you, that as long as you are in your sins you have no hope; but if you are a believer on the Son of God, you are saved — saved in hope of the glory of God. And this is what the Word of God calls “a good hope through grace,” based on His promises (who cannot lie), which are all in Christ, yea, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

The Christian, knowing he is saved, rejoices in hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:2).

Jesus said to His loved ones on earth, “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16-17).

And again, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you” (John 16:7).

This blessed promise was fulfilled when Jesus had ascended to the right hand of God. As Peter said on the day of Pentecost, “Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:33). Disciples on earth received the Spirit. He had wrought in men in the ages which had passed, and He will work again in the age to come; but on that day the Comforter came from heaven to earth, henceforth making the body of the believer His temple, and also dwelling in the church. This is a special characteristic of the present interval (Acts 2; 4:31; 10:44-45; 13:2; etc.).

People often speak of the Spirit as if He were merely an influence; but whilst it is perfectly true that He influences, and that powerfully, the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person.

John 16:13-15 is exceedingly plain as to this: “Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.”

He sanctifies (or, sets apart) (1 Peter 1:2).

Dwells in believers (John 14:17).

Joins them to the Lord and each other (1 Cor. 6:17; 12:13).

Is the anointing (2 Cor. 1:21).

The Seal for the day of redemption (2 Cor. 1:22).

The earnest of future blessing (Eph. 1:13-14).

And also dwells in the house of God (Eph. 2:22; 1 Cor. 3:16).

Tens of thousands of persons who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are taught to believe in a present salvation, but that, should they sin, they may lose it after all. Is this true or false? False, utterly false, the deceitful lie of Satan, the father of lies, in order that Christ maybe dishonored, and souls rendered miserable.

Five impossibilities stand in the way of the true believer’s ever being lost:

The Word of God must become a lie.

The work of Christ must be undone.

The blood of Christ must lose its value.

The righteousness of God must have a flaw.

The devil must speak the truth.

Could it be more secure?

“Well,” I said to a certain lady, “are you saved?” “I’ve believed in Jesus these ten years, but I’m tormented with doubts and fears.” “Would you like to be sure that you are saved forever?” “Ah that would make me a happy woman.” “You are sure you believe on the Lord Jesus?” “Oh, yes!” “Where is He?” “In glory.” “Then before you are lost Satan must get up to the throne of God, and bring Jesus down to this world, and take Him back more than eighteen hundred years, and make Him undo the finished work of the cross, and that is all totally impossible.” “I shall never have a doubt as long as I live,” replied the lady, earnestly. “I’ve never seen it like that before.” When visited a year or so afterward, she confessed to have enjoyed perfect peace ever since.

My reader, ponder our Lord’s precious words in John 10:27-30, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.”

Believers are God’s children. “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:15-17).

And just as the relationship of parents and children never can be broken, neither can the relationship between God and His children.

If a servant misbehaves, the master can, and often does, send him about his business; but if the child misbehaves, will his father treat him in the same manner? Surely not. Neither will our Father.

Nor does He deal with His children as with the world.

Suppose, for instance, a boy in the street breaks a man's window, probably the man will go out and threaten him with the policeman, if not charge him with the crime. But suppose the same man's child breaks the window from inside the house, how then? If the policeman comes to take him up, the father says, "No, I will deal with him." And should the boy judge and confess his wrong, he will forgive him; should he be willful, careless about the wrong, or persist in it, a right-minded father would chasten him.

So is it with God. He threatens, and will judge the ungodly (Jude 14-15). But if His own children sin (and surely it is worse in them than in others), instead of giving them over to the world's judgment, He deals with them Himself (1 Cor. 11:31-32). And "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). But, if willful, He must and does chastise.

Difficult Texts

I think I hear some reader saying, "Ah! it is all very well, but there are a number of difficult texts that seem to me to show that a believer can be lost after all."

My dear friend, this all arises through not understanding their right meaning. Many persons are well versed in texts that seem at first sight to imply a doubt, and lose sight of scores which, if believed simply, would give assurance and peace to the soul. Those who talk about losing eternal life are not sure that they have it. If they were sure that they have it, they could not talk about losing it. A life that you could lose would be a temporal life, and not eternal

We have not space here to seek to expound the meaning of such texts, but if you examine carefully the whole context, you will find that they either refer directly to mere professors, or are brought in as a salutary warning, lest any should turn the grace of God into lasciviousness (Jude 4), continuing in sin, that grace may abound (Rom. 6:1-2). For, "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandment; is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

You would find it very establishing to the soul to look out all the passages where the Scripture speaks positively of the believer's eternal salvation, and, being assured of your own, then ask some fellow-Christian, taught in the Word, to explain to you the true meaning of those passages where you find a difficulty.

The cost — Christ's precious blood.

"You can slip out of Christ's hand," said one. "I am one of His fingers," was the ready reply, based on His everlasting Word, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30).

Many puzzle as to whom Christ died for. Some say that He is a substitute for the whole world; others, that He died for only the elect. Both are wrong. He is a propitiation for the whole world. A substitute for all who believe.

And believers are the elect of God, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). The Word of God is plain.

The following illustration may serve to simplify: I put down a large sum of money on a table for a room full of people who are in debt. Are any benefited as to their debts? Not unless they believe. But some do believe me; what do they do? Why, take some to be sure, and use it. Any who believe not leave it alone.

So Christ died for all (2 Cor. 5:14-15). God hath set Him forth a propitiation for all (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2). And all are hopeless debtors to God on account of their sins. But some poor burdened one believes God, and can say of Christ, with Paul, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Christ is that person's substitute; and, he may know too that he is one of the elect. Another believes not, and therefore remains in his sins; and not only so, but God will cast him into the lake of fire for his unbelief. (Rev. 20:15).

"The sinner who believes is free,Can say, The Saviour died for me;Can point to the atoning blood,And say, This made my peace with God."

My reader, you may know that Christ died a propitiation for all; but unless you believe on Him, He is not your substitute, and you cannot be saved.

It is blessedly true that Christ died for all.

But can you say from the heart, Christ died for me?

Thousands and tens of thousands profess the name of Christ, and call themselves Christians; but only those who have received Christ by faith, and possess eternal life in Him, and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, will enter the glory of God.

Which are you — an empty professor or a happy possessor?

The Christian profession is set forth in a most striking manner in the likeness of the kingdom of heaven to ten virgins, in Matthew 25, five of whom were wise, and five foolish, all being furnished with a lamp, and having light (Matt. 25:8). But the wise had oil in their vessels with their lamps, to sustain the light. What was the result? When the bridegroom came they that were ready — that is, those who had oil — went in with him to the marriage; the door being shut on the foolish, who lacked it, and who cried in vain for admittance.

Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, is coming. Have you nothing more than the lamp of profession? Are you content with being a mere religious professor in this land of light, with an open Bible? Then if He were to come now, you would be shut out and cry in vain to be let in. And Christ

is coming in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:52).

But if a possessor of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, of whom the oil is a figure, you are amongst the ready, and would go in, “caught up,” as we read 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, to meet the Lord Himself in the air.

If so, then see also that you are practically ready. “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord” (Luke 12:35-36). Jesus saith, “Surely I come quickly. Amen.” Can you from the heart respond, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20)?

Many minds are in confusion with regard to cleansing by the precious blood of Christ, which often arises through not seeing or understanding the place that the water has in the Word of God.

The application of the blood of Christ never needs to be repeated.

We are cleansed, on believing, once for all, and forever. “The blood of Jesus Christ His [God’s] Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). The blood of animals brought to God by the high priest on the great day of atonement settled the question of Israel’s sins for one year. That is, they were maintained thereby in their place of privilege as God’s people on the earth. The blood of Christ purges the conscience of the believer forever (Heb. 10:1-14).

But we read that from the side of Jesus flowed forth blood and water.

Hence we find the Scripture speaking both of our being cleansed by blood, and also of our being born of water and of the Spirit. Again, in Hebrews 10:22: “Our bodies washed with pure water.”

And not only thus is there the application of the water (or Word) as well as the blood when we believe, but we further read, in Ephesians 5:26, that Christ is now sanctifying the church by cleansing it by the washing of water by the Word. Hence, though we are ever before God without charge, because of the abiding value and efficacy of the precious blood, yet we need the repeated application of the Word of God to our consciences, for the judgment and putting away of everything evil in our practical daily walk and conversation.

Sanctification in Scripture means setting apart; that is our being set apart to God.

It is a commonly-received thought that believers in Jesus are justified by faith, and that sanctification follows; some going so far as to say that it is possible to be wholly sanctified, so as to cease from all actual sins. A few profess to have attained to this state.

But what saith the Scripture? We are spoken of, first, both as being sanctified by the Spirit, sanctified by the offering of Christ, and sanctified in Christ, when we believe. Secondly, practical sanctification follows.

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit” (1 Peter 1:2).

“But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified” (1 Cor. 6:11).

“We are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once” (Heb. 10:10).

“By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14).

“Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification” (1 Cor. 1:30).

“To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints” (1 Cor. 1:2).

“This is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3).

“Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17).

Note well — 1 Corinthians 6:11 Puts sanctification before justification. “Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified.”

It is of the deepest moment that you should observe and weigh this, if you would be clear on this all-important subject.

A newborn baby is complete in all its parts, as complete as a man; but it will take years to grow to manhood. So a Christian is sanctified by the Spirit, and sanctified in Christ, complete in Him at starting; but needs to grow spiritually, in practical sanctification, from a baby to a young man, and from a young man to a father in the knowledge of Christ (1 John 2:13).

The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

The law demands obedience; grace produces obedience (Ex. 24:8; Titus 2:11-12).

The law says, “Do and live;” grace says, “Live and do.” (Rom. 10:5; 1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The law makes the offense abound; grace has overabounded (Rom. 5:20).

The law condemns sinners; grace delivers them (2 Cor. 2:8).

The law is a schoolmaster; grace brings to the Father (Gal. 3:25-26).

The law was given to Israel; grace flows out to all (Rom. 9:4; Titus 2:11).

The law was given in one language; grace goes out in all (Ex. 32:15-16; Acts 2:1-12).

The law addresses man in the flesh; grace creates anew (1 Tim. 1:9; 2 Cor. 5:17).

“By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20).

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 2:16).

“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4).

“If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21).

The believer is “not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:15).

“By grace are ye saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8).

“But is not the law our rule of life when we are saved?” demand many. No; “for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature [or, creation]. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy” (Gal. 6:15-16). “To me to live is Christ” — not the law. “He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6).

But we can fall from grace, can we not? Yes; but what does it mean? Falling from grace refers to a believer, who knows the grace of God, going back to law, not losing grace and falling into hell (Gal. 5:4). Falling away refers to mere professors (Heb. 6:6).

A little crooked “s” makes a great difference in many things. In the Word of God we find sin and sins clearly distinguished. “Sin” is the root that produces the bad fruit — “sins.”

God condemned sin in the flesh, making His Son, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, by His dying in the likeness of sinful flesh on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21). And now He remits the sins of all who believe on Him.

Do you want forgiveness, and think you must utter many prayers to obtain it? Nay, God is offering you pardon; beseeching you, by His servants, to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:20). Sin has been judged. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and your sins are forgiven for His Name’s sake (1 John 2:12), for He bare the sins of all who believe, in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24).

And, if a believer, you have done with sin, you are to have nothing more to say to it (1 Peter 4:1). But perhaps you will say, “Suppose I sin again, do I not then need to pray for forgiveness?” Let God’s own Word supply the answer, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). And, “If we confess our sins” — not pray for forgiveness — “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

It is very easy for a naughty child to say, “Father, please forgive me.” But it is quite another thing for the child to see its wrong as the father sees it, and to come before him in true self-judgment, confessing it. So is it between God and His children. We ought not to sin; but if we do, we are exhorted to come before Him in self-judgment and heartfelt confession.

Keep to Scripture. Every word has a meaning.

Doubts and fears are often produced through souls being occupied with the work of the Spirit in them instead of simply resting on the work of Christ for them. No soul ever found peace by looking in. There is the work of the Spirit most surely. He sets apart and is also the seal (1 Peter 1:2; Eph. 4:30). But peace is known only by faith in Christ and His finished work.

“Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). And we “are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26). Then “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16).

If you reverse God’s order, the soul is filled with perplexity and doubt. Take His Word as He presents it, and all is simple. Peace and liberty are the blessed results.

The finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ is of such infinite worth in the sight of God, that the moment a sinner believes, he is accepted of God in all the acceptance of Christ, the Beloved, and in all the value of His work. He is brought into relationship with God as His child, and, instead of having a spirit of bondage again to fear, he receives the Spirit of adoption, whereby he cries, Abba, Father.

God’s way of salvation is very simple.

“I want no other argument,I need no other plea,It is enough that Jesus diedAnd rose again for me.”

“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).

It is all-important that the believer should be clear as to his standing before God. As long as I make it in any way depend upon my practical condition and ways, it is reversing the order of the truth, and impossible for me to apprehend it. As a sinner, I stood in Adam, under judgment; as a believer, I am in Christ, delivered from judgment, and Christ glorified is the measure of my standing before God.

Now His standing, as the accepted man, can never change, and the Christian is in Him, where He is, a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). God hath made us accepted in Him, the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). As we have already seen, we are quickened, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:5-6). And therefore, neither our standing nor acceptance before God can ever change.

Further, in 1 John 4:17, we read, “Herein is our love made perfect [or, has love been perfected with us], that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world.”

Knowing these things, what manner of persons ought we to be? “Oh!” responds the soul, who is living in the enjoyment of this wondrous portion, “I want to be like Christ now.” This is the natural result. The more simple our faith, and the firmer our grasp of these things, the more earnest will be the soul’s desire that our practical condition and ways should correspond to them. The assurance of them does not lead to license, but rather to purifying ourselves, even as Christ is pure.

“We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord [or, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face], are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

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