

GLAD TIDINGS, or

Believe And Live

by

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CHAPTER THREE

SINAI AND CALVARY

"He that believeth not is condemned already"

IT is not necessary for the man out of CHRIST to wait till the day of his death, or the day of Judgment, to be condemned, for now he is under the curse of the law; and the curse of the law is the curse of GOD. Go where he will, do what he may, that curse is upon him. He may banish the remembrance of it from his thoughts; he may plunge into scenes of gay and fashionable resort; he may engross his mind with the cares and perplexities of business; he may roam amid the fields of literature and art, and expand his intellect amid the wonderful revelations of science; but employ himself as he may, the sentence of death has gone forth against him; and the execution of that sentence is only suspended to afford him an opportunity of going to CHRIST for pardon and eternal life.

When he lies upon his bed at night that curse surrounds it like a curtain; when he walks by the way it is his attendant; and when he laughs in the theatre, or in the barroom, or at the festive board, that tremendous curse frowns in wrath over his head.

The law says, "**Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them.**"

Now, dear reader, if you can show that since the moment that you became a responsible being till the present time, you have never sinned in thought, word, or deed; that you have loved GOD with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself, during the whole of your life, then you are not under the curse, but can claim eternal life as a right, according to the terms of the law: "**Do and live.**"

Your conscience testifies, however, that you have not thus lived a perfectly holy life, and the want of this perfect holiness brings upon you the curse of which we have spoken.

No man will ever go to CHRIST for a blessing till he feels himself burdened with this curse.

The hoarse, stern voice of justice must be heard from Sinai, pronouncing our condemnation, before we will listen to the "**still small voice**" of love from Calvary, declaring our justification.

It is in vain that you press food upon a man who is not hungry, or offer alms to one who thinks himself rich and increased in goods. So till the soul feels its lost and undone condition, there will be no music in the name JESUS, and no attraction in Calvary.

The sinner must be made to feel that GOD cannot permit his law to be trampled upon with impunity, and that sin is the most fearful thing in the whole universe; for if it is pardoned, it can only be blotted out through the untold sufferings of GOD's own Son, if unpardoned, it must be followed by an eternity of woe.

A German Prince, upon visiting France, went to see the place where many convicts were confined. In compliment to his rank, he was permitted to signalize his visit by giving one of the convicts his liberty. He spoke to one man, whose intelligent look attracted his notice, and asked him for what crime he was suffering.

In reply the convict began to tell him the most unlikely story of his innocence, and of how false witnesses swore against him. The Prince left him and put the same question to another, who also denied his guilt, and averred that he was mistaken for another man. The same question was put to several others, and with the same result; till at last he came to a man whose solemn and melancholy cast of countenance attracted his notice.

The man's reply was, "I have been a vile wretch, and have deserved far more than my present punishment. I have set at open defiance the laws both of GOD and men, and am not fit to look upon GOD's blue heavens or the green earth."

The Prince turning to his attendants said, "Set this man free; he is in a fit state of mind to make a proper use of his liberty."

It is thus that the Prince of peace receives and pardons the sinner, when he is in a state of mind, that justifies GOD and condemns himself. When the pride of the soul is subdued, then the sinner ceases to look at himself in the mirror of the world's notions and maxims about human nature, which makes the most deformed look comely in their own eyes; but he now looks at himself in the mirror of GOD's law, and the result is, he sees himself in some measure as GOD sees him; and "**abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes.**"

We have an illustration of the truth of these remarks in the religious history of the Apostle Paul.

He says, "**I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.**"

He stood high in his own estimation. He thought himself in high favor with GOD as good as any of his acquaintances, and better than most. He tells us that the reason of this good opinion of himself was, that he was "**without the law.**"

This does not mean that he was without the knowledge of the law, for doubtless from a child he could repeat the law of GOD correctly.

But it means that he was ignorant of the far-reaching spirituality of GOD's law, extending as it does to the thoughts and feelings of the heart. He could point to one commandment after another and proudly say, "I have never broken any of them," and so far as the outward act is concerned this was doubtless true; but he forgot that the revengeful thought is murder, that the covetous thought is theft, and that the unchaste thought is adultery; he forgot that it is in vain that we go through a heartless round of religious ceremonies, if love to GOD is not the grand motive power that governs our lives.

Hence when the spirituality of the law flashed on his mind, in the light of a new conviction; and to use his own words, "**the commandment came, sin revived and I died;**" then the sins of his whole life appeared before him unpardoned, black in their aggravations, and loudly calling for GOD's wrath upon his head. His hope perished; his delusion was torn away; the fabric that he had built upon the sand lay around him a pile of ruins. Sin became "**exceeding sinful.**"

Like a man who supposed himself rich and increased with goods, and who with much self-complacency put his hand into his pocket to pull out his well-filled purse, and instead puts his fingers amid the slimy folds of a loathsome serpent that lies there. With what loathing and disappointment would he draw back his hand!

Like a man who supposes himself well dressed, and is on the way to attend a gay and fashionable party, but when he enters the well-lighted room, and when the scrutiny of a hundred eyes is on him, he looks upon himself and finds that he is covered with "**filthy rags,**" with what shame and confusion would he shrink away!

Thus it was with Paul when he saw the purity of GOD's law, and felt himself the subject of its terrible curse. When he was thus emptied of self, he was in a state to be filled with CHRIST; and when his false hope went out in darkness, the hope in JESUS, "**that maketh not ashamed,**" arose in imperishable splendor upon his soul. In his own words "**the law was a schoolmaster to bring him to Christ.**"

We see then that the reason why there are so many who are boasting of their morality and wrapping themselves up in a self-righteous security, is because they measure themselves by a false standard of their own making.

And until they can be induced to abandon that false measure, and try themselves by the perfect purity of GOD's law, the cross of CHRIST will appear to them foolishness, and those truths that fill all heaven with rapture will fall upon their ears as the whistling of the empty wind.

Here is a man, for example, who thinks that all that GOD requires of him is to live a strictly moral life. To be honest in his dealings with his fellow men, to be kind and benevolent to the suffering and the destitute, to be a good citizen, and discharge with fidelity the relative duties of life this is his standard of duty, and he comes up to it. He is an honest man. He is a kind neighbor, a good husband, an affectionate father. He has a great respect for religion and for its ministers. He goes regularly to the house of GOD, and contributes liberally to the support of the Gospel. In short, he comes up, in every respect, to his own standard of what a Christian should be, and the result is he is at peace.

No disturbing doubt alarms him. He is “**alive without the law.**”

Such a man can never be converted, can never repent and believe in CHRIST, till he is induced to measure himself by a different standard. Such a man may like to hear the most faithful preaching, because he is persuaded that it does not mean him.

And men like to hear the condemnation of things that they never will take home to themselves.

- They like to hear GOD's threatenings spoken in a way that never touches their consciences.
- They like practical preaching that does not rebuke them.

Some years ago I met a man whose case may illustrate the above remarks.

In the course of some conversation on religious subjects, I asked him if he was a Christian. He seemed astonished at the question, but promptly replied that he was.

I then asked him how long it was since the great change had taken place. He replied that his parents had been good Christian people; that in his infancy he had been baptized into the true church; that he regularly received the sacrament from the hands of the minister; and that he did not know what I meant by the great change.

I told him that though it was a great privilege to be born of pious parents, yet the religion of heaven was not hereditary not a thing that ran in the blood; that as to his belonging to the true church, that could not save him, for Judas outwardly belonged to the true church, and yet went to hell; that his baptism could not save him, for Simon was baptized by the hands of an inspired Apostle, and yet “**had neither part nor lot in this matter.**”

I read the conversation of our Lord with Nicodemus, and urged upon him the necessity of a change of heart.

He now became very solemn, said he knew that he had not attended to these things as he ought, but, that of late he had become a changed character; that for the last few weeks he had read three chapters out of the Bible, and prayed three times every day, and if that was not religion he did not know what it was.

I tried to show him the purity and far-reaching nature of GOD's law; that as a sinner the curse of that law was upon him, and that, though he could begin from that moment, and live a perfectly holy life, till the moment of his death, even then he could not be saved, for his past sins, in all their condemning power would still be against him.

I tried to lead him to Calvary for salvation.

Pointing him to a finished work that his own good works, and prayers, and tears could add nothing to, I told him that at that moment, there was nothing between him and pardon, but his own unbelief.

He was urged to believe that Jesus died for him as if he had been the only sinner in the world.

He received the testimony of GOD, and was soon able to say with Paul, "**He loved me, and gave himself for me.**"

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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