

ILLUSTRATIONS OF BIBLE TRUTH

by

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CHAPTER TEN

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THE BIBLE A MIRROR

“If any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was” (James 1:23-24).

I ran across an illustration the other day that I think pictures this admirably. An elderly gentleman, who was very nearsighted, prided himself on his ability as an art critic. On one occasion he was accompanying some friends through a large gallery and was seeking to display his real or fancied knowledge of pictures to these friends. He had left his glasses at home and not able to see things very clearly. Standing before a large frame, he began to point out the inartistic features of the picture there revealed.

“The frame,” he said, “is altogether out of keeping with the subject and as for the subject itself (it was that of a man) it is altogether too homely, in fact, too ugly, ever to make a good picture. It is a great mistake for any artist to choose so homely a subject for a picture if he expects it to be a masterpiece.”

The old gentleman was going on like this when his wife managed to get near enough to interrupt. She exclaimed, “My dear, you are looking into a mirror.” He was quite taken back to realize that he had been criticizing his own face.

Now the Word of God is such a mirror. It does not hide our deformities. It shows us up just as we are. But we are not to be occupied with our old selves. The Spirit of God would turn us away from self altogether to occupation with the risen Christ, and as we are taken up with Him, we are kept from sin.

It is when we get our eyes off Christ and become self-occupied or taken up with the world around us that we fail. And who of us does not so fail? We all have to confess our failures from day to day, but our ever living Saviour is not only our High Priest to minister all needed grace and help, but even when we fail to avail ourselves of that as we should, He is our Advocate still.

The moment we fail, He takes up our case with the Father. Mark, it does not say, “If any man confess his sin, we have an advocate,” but rather, “**If any many sin, we have an advocate.**” The moment we fail He is in the Father’s presence about us, and as a result of His gracious advocacy, the Spirit continues His work in our hearts, bringing us to repentance and confession, and “**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**”

THE BLOOD COUNTS FOR SOMETHING

“**The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin**” (I John 1:7).

A friend of mine, himself an evangelist, lay for many weary months in a Roman Catholic hospital in the city of Oakland, California, because of injuries received in an automobile accident. On a nearby bed lay a young priest, evidently a sincere and earnest man, but he was greatly troubled in view of possible death. An aged priest came from time to time to hear his confessions, and to grant him absolution. My friend longed to speak to him, but found him very difficult to approach.

One day, however, as the older priest was about to leave, he overheard the young one say to him, something like this, “Father, it is very strange: I have done everything I know to do. I have sought to carry out all that the church has asked, and yet I have no peace. How can I be sure that God has put away my sins?”

The other looked at him compassionately, and then exclaimed, “Surely the blood of Christ ought to count for something!”

As though a flash of divine light had entered his soul, the young priest’s countenance changed. He looked up eagerly to exclaim, “Ah, yes, it counts for everything. I can trust that.”

And it was evident afterwards that his soul had entered into peace. Can you trust the precious blood shed by that Holy Son, who drank the cup of judgment for your sins upon the cross? If so, God declares that your sins which are many are all forgiven. Thus, redeemed to God and justified, you will enter, as never before, into the inner meaning of the garden and the cross.

“Gethsemane, can I forget,
Or there Thy conflict see,
Thine agony and blood-like sweat,
And not remember Thee?
When to the Cross I turn mine eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God my sacrifice,
I must remember Thee.”

THE CLEANSING WORD

“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of the water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26).

The Word is for cleansing as well as for instruction, and if it keeps going through you it will have a marvelous effect upon your mind and heart and life. It will cleanse and purify you and fit you to be a real worker for the Lord Jesus Christ.

You remember the story of the Scotch laddie who was one of those inquisitive youngsters who always wanted a reason for everything he was told to do? He was working for a farmer and when the old man told him to do anything, the lad generally asked, “Why?” This disturbed his employer.

On one occasion he said to the boy as he handed him a market basket, “Take this basket down to the creek and fill it with water.” When the laddie asked, “Why?” and started to explain that it would not hold water, the old man replied, “None o’ yer ‘whys.’ I’m paying for your time; you do as I tell you.”

So the boy started for the creek with the basket in his hand. Wading into the water, he dipped the basket into the creek and lifted it up. Of course, the water all ran out.

Disgusted, he said, “It will no’ hold the water.”

The old farmer replied, “Fill it up again.”

Again the lad obeyed, and once more the water all ran through.

His master said, “Fill it again.”

This time the boy answered, “I’ll fill it up once more, but if it does no’ hold this time, you will no make me a fool again.”

So he dipped it into the creek the third time, and as he held it up, the water all ran out. Angry, he flung the basket over into the grass, saying, “Take your auld kreen; I’ll no be a fool fer ye or anybody else.”

The old man picked it up good naturedly and then held it between him and the sun. As he examined it carefully, he explained, “It’s a guid deal cleaner than it was, and that’s what it needed.” The water running through it had cleaned away the dirt, and this is how the Word of God affects our lives.

Our Lord Jesus prayed, **“Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.”**

We are sanctified by the washing of the water by the Word. We cannot give too much time to the study of this blessed Book. I do not mean merely studying it in order to get sermons out of it, but what we need is a daily, thoughtful, prayerful study of the Word for the nourishment of our own souls, for building ourselves up in our most holy faith.

THE CONVERSION OF THOMAS SCOTT, A UNITARIAN

**“That all should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.
He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him”** (John 5:23)

It is related of the eminent commentator of the eighteenth century, Thomas Scott, that he was for some years opposed to the precious and important truths of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like most Unitarians, the lower his thoughts were as to the Son of God, the higher they were as to himself and his own righteousness. A proud Pharisee, he fancied that he was quite able to save himself, if indeed he needed saving at all.

Through a careful, thoughtful study of the Scriptures (afterwards his food for forty years), he was awakened to see his lost condition and his deep need of a Saviour and Mediator. Relating his experience in *“The Force of Truth,”* he says: “I clearly perceived my very best duties, on which my main dependence had hitherto been placed, to be merely specious sins; and my whole life appeared to be one continued series of transgressions. I now understood the apostle’s meaning when he affirms that **‘by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified before God’**” (Galatians 2:16).

Thus aroused, he saw that none but a divine Saviour could avail for so great a sinner as he now realized himself to be; and so, trusting in the Lord Jesus, he found peace and joy.

Unitarianism, like so-called Christian Science, Theosophy, and various other human religions, will do well enough for a man with a drugged or sleeping conscience; but the gospel of the grace of God alone can meet the need of an awakened sinner who has learned that God is holy and cannot look upon iniquity. To such there is a sweetness and healing balm in such words as John 3:16, of which the other knows nothing. **“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.”**

THE FULLNESS OF THE SCRIPTURES

“The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah” (I Kings 17:16).

In this, the barrel and the cruse were like the Word of God itself, whether we think of the Scriptures as a whole, or any separate passage or text.

No matter how often we may have read it, nor how many sermons we may have heard upon it, there is always more to be discovered, as we ponder it anew under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Evangelist Gibbud, the New York missionary of some fifty years ago, used to like to tell of the uncouth lad who attended a school in the lower east side district of that great metropolis. He was very fond of his teacher because of the kindly interest she had taken in him. One day he approached her desk, after school was in session, holding out a very dilapidated-looking orange in his dirty, grimy, little hand. "Here, teacher," he said, "is an orange I've brung yer. It's been squz some, but there's lots in it yet!"

So it is with every portion of the Bible. No one has been able to exhaust the priceless treasure it contains. There is always more to be obtained from it for the refreshment of the soul.

THE GIFT OF GOD

"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

You cannot earn a gift. It would cease to be a gift if it were purchased with money, or paid for, in whole or in part, in any other way.

Years ago, a wealthy lady in New York built a beautiful church. On the day of dedication her agent came up from the audience to the platform and handed the deed of the property to the Episcopal Bishop of New York. The bishop gave the agent \$1.00 for the deed, and by virtue of the \$1.00, which was acknowledged, the property was turned over to the Episcopal Church.

You say, "What a wonderful gift!" Yes, in a certain sense it was, for the passing over of \$1.00 was simply a legal observance. But after all, in the full Bible sense it was not a gift, for it cost \$1.00; and so the deed was made out, not as a deed of gift, but as a deed of sale. It was sold to the Episcopal Church for \$1.00.

If you had to do one thing in order to be saved, if you had even to raise your hand, to stand to your feet, had but to say one word, it would not be a gift. You could say, "I did thus and so, and in that way earned my salvation." But this priceless blessing is absolutely free.

"If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6). That is what the Spirit of God tells us in the Word.

THE HANDS OF THE SAVIOUR

"They pierced my hands and my feet" (Psalm 22:16)

“What are these wounds in thine hands?” (Zechariah 13:6)
“Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands” (John 20:27)

The wounds in the hands of Jesus will remain, I take it, throughout eternity as the marks of His love for us. When He left this world He bore the nail-marks are when He returns to reign He will be recognized by them as the very same Jesus who died on the cross for sinners.

Some years ago, a poor woman – baptized a Roman Catholic, was lying very ill in a city hospital. Fearing she must die, who was in great distress of mind because of the weight of her sins pressing down upon her guilty conscience.

A sweet-faced nun, passing through the ward, was called to the bedside of this dying woman, and to her she told the story of years of sin and shame. The nun promised to get in touch with the parish priest and to send him to see her, so he might hear her confession and administer the last rites of the church.

In the meantime, a Christian lady was visiting the patients and came to the woman’s bed and found her very ready to hear the gospel story of free and full salvation through the crucified and risen Saviour. Eagerly the poor, distressed one drank in the living water, came to Christ confessing her sins, and was soon rejoicing in the knowledge of forgiveness and acceptance with God.

When the priest arrived he found her as happy now as she had been miserable. But he at once began to make preparations to hear her confession and then to administer the last sacraments of the church. He begged her to make a good confession, that he might absolve her from all her sins and so prepare her for death.

She looked up earnestly and said, “Let me see your hand first.” Thinking her mind was wandering, he pleaded with her again, as the time was getting short, to confess all her sins and obtain forgiveness. Once more came the insistent demand,

“Let me see your hand first, father.” In order to humor her, he held up his hand. She took it in one of hers and held it carefully; then she exclaimed,

“It won’t do, father. The hand of the One who forgives all my sins has a nail-print in it.”

As she was deaf to all entreaties to confess to him, the priest left, feeling her case was hopeless. But instead of that, hers was a sure and certain hope, founded on the Word of God, **“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins”** (Acts 10:43). She bore a faithful testimony to saving grace and died triumphantly.

The hands of Christ seem very frail,
For they were broken by a nail.
For only they reach heaven at last,
Whom those frail broken hands hold fast.”

THE HEN AND THE LIZARD

“Look not thou upon the wine when it is read, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder” (Proverbs 23:31-32).

Sometime ago, a friend of mine, an evangelist, and his wife, living in Southern California, were watching a flock of chickens at feeding time, when they noticed one hen that seemed to be attempting a swallow a large lizard. She was fluttering wildly about and a lot of the other hens were cackling loudly as they gathered about her. Going over to see what was taking place, they found that while the hen had evidently pecked at the lizard, the slimy, twisting creature had turned about and had the hen by the throat and would have choked her to death had not my friends intervened.

How like that lizard is the alcoholic cup! One begins to toy with cocktails, or other spiritous liquors, only to find that at the last the drink habit becomes so strong it masters the one who thought he could drink or let it alone as he pleased. Can any folly be greater than that of deliberately starting something which one knows he may have no power to stop, and yet he is fully aware that the matter in question may mean his moral, physical, and spiritual ruin?

Yet how many there are who think it an evidence of weakness to refuse to touch alcoholic beverages, and consider it a mark of good fellowship and even manliness to drink with the crowd and so win the approval of careless worldlings, who have no fear of God or of consequences in their hearts. These glory in leading others to follow their evil example and are never better pleased than when they can point to some poor, foolish youth who has begun to tread the downward path at their behest. Recognizing the fact that nothing that is physically harmful can ever be morally right, consecrated, Christian young manhood and young womanhood must stand firmly against all such wickedness.

THE HUMAN FLY

**“They . . . weave the spider’s web: . . .
neither shall they cover themselves with their works”** (Isaiah 59:5-6).

Some years ago there came to Los Angeles, the great metropolis of Southern California, a so-called “human fly.” It was announced that on a given day he would climb up the face of one of the large department store buildings, and long before the appointed time, thousands of eager spectators were gathered to see him perform the seemingly impossible feat.

But slowly and carefully he mounted aloft, now clinging to a window ledge, anon to a jutting brick, again to a cornice. Up and up he went, against apparently insurmountable difficulties.

At last he was nearing the top. He was seen to feel to right and left and above his head for something firm enough to support his weight, to carry him further. And soon he seemed to spy what looked like a grey bit of stone or discolored brick protruding from the smooth wall.

He reached for it, but it was just beyond him. He ventured all on a spring-like movement, grasped the protuberance and, before the horrified eyes of the spectators, fell to the ground and was broken to pieces. In his dead hand was found a spider's web! What he evidently mistook for solid stone or brick turned out to be nothing but dried froth!

Alas, how many are thinking to climb to heaven by effort of their own, only to find at last that they have ventured all on a spider's web, and so are lost forever.

THE LORD'S SPECTACLES

“We are made a spectacle . . . to angels and to men” (I Corinthians 4:9)

One of the black students of the Southern Bible Training School of Dallas, Texas, was praying and besought the Lord as follows: “O Lord, please keep your spectacles clean so that sinners can see you through us, ‘cause you know, Lord, we are your spectacles.”

He did not know that the Greek word “*theatron*” means a show or display, but supposed it referred to eyeglasses. How we all need to remember that unsaved men can only see Christ through us; and if our lives are unclean, the vision of the Saviour will be blurred!

THE NEW MAN

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin (that is, practice) sin; for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (I John 3:9).

It is the grace of God working in the soul that makes the believer delight in holiness, in righteousness, in obedience to the will of God, for real joy is found in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. I remember a man who lived a life of gross sin. After his conversion, one of his old friends said to him,

“Bill, I pity you – a man that has been such a high-flier as you. And now you have settled down; you go to church, or stay at home and read the Bible and pray; you never have good times any more.”

“But, Bob,” said the man, “you don’t understand. I get drunk every time I want to. I go to the theater every time I want to. I go to the dance when I want to. I play cards and gamble whenever I want to.”

“I say, Bill,” said his friend, “I didn’t understand it that way. I thought you had to give up these things to be Christian.”

“No, Bob,” said Bill, “the Lord took the ‘want to’ out when He saved my soul, and He made me a new creature in Christ Jesus.”

When we are born of God we receive a new life and that life has its own new nature, a nature that hates sin and impurity and delights in holiness and goodness.

THIS I KNOW

I do not know what next may come
Across my pilgrim way;
I do not know tomorrow’s road,
Nor see beyond today.
But this I know – my Saviour knows
The path I cannot see;
And I can trust His wounded hand
To guide and care for me.
I do not know what may befall,
Of sunshine or of rain;
I do not know what may be mine,
Of pleasure and of pain;
But this I know – my Saviour knows
And whatsoe’er it be,
Still I can trust His love to give
What will be best for me.
I do not know what may await,
Or what the morrow brings;
But with the glad salute of faith,
I hail its opening wings;
For this I know – that my Lord
Shall all my needs be met;
And I can trust the heart of Him,
Who has not failed me yet.

– E. Margaret Clarkson

GIVE UP?

Give up because the cross is heavy,
Sink down in weakness ‘neath its load?
Give up and say you can’t endure it,
Too rough, too toilsome is the road?
Ah, no; rejoice you have a cross,

A cross which none but you may bear;
Why, you are rich, when by that cross
You earn your right a crown to wear.

Give up while there is still in heaven
A God who notes the sparrow's fall?
Give up when He so longs to help you,
But only wants to hear you call?
He clothes the lilies, feeds the birds;
Would He to you, then, pay less heed?
Look up to Him with prayerful heart,
He will supply your every need.

– Grace B. Renfrow

THE OFFER OF THE IRISH LANDLORD

“I told you, and ye believed not” (John 10:25).

The unwillingness of the human heart to rely on the promise of grace in Christ Jesus is well illustrated in the story of an eccentric Irish landlord on whose vast estates dwelt a number of very needy tenants. Upon becoming converted, this wealthy man was anxious to make clear to these people the marvelous provision God had made for their salvation. So he caused to be posted in prominent places on his wide domains, notices to the effect that, on a given day, he would be in his office down by the lodge gates, from ten o'clock in the morning until twelve noon. During that time, he would be prepared to pay the debts of all his tenantry who brought their unpaid bills with them.

For days the notices were the cause of much excitement. People talked of the strange offer and some declared it a hoax. Others were certain “there must be a catch somewhere.” A few even thought it indicated that the landlord was going out of his mind, for “who had ever heard of any sane man making such an offer?”

When the announced day came, many of the people could be seen making their way to the office, and as the time approached a great crowd had gathered about the door. Promptly at ten the landlord and his secretary drove to the gate, left the carriage and, without a word to anyone, entered the office and closed the door. Outside a great discussion had begun; it became more vehement every minute. Was there anything to it? Did he really mean it? Would he only make a fool of one who brought the evidence of his indebtedness? Some insisted that it was his actual signature at the foot of the notices, and surely he would not dishonor his name. But an hour passed and no one had gone in to present his claim.

If one suggested to some one else to venture, he would be met by the angry response, “I don’t owe so very much. I have no need to go in. Let some one else try it first – some one who owes more than I do!” And so the precious moments slipped away.

Finally, when it was nearing twelve o’clock, an aged couple from the farthest bounds of the estate came hobbling along arm in arm; the old man had a bundle of bills clutched tightly in one hand. In quavering tones he inquired. “Is it true, neighbor, that the landlord be paying the debts of all who come today?”

“He ain’t paid none yet,” said one.

“We think it is just a cruel joke,” said another.

The old couple’s eyes filled with tears. “Is it all a mistake? We hoped it was true and thought how good it would be to be able to die free of debt.”

They were turning disconsolately away, when somebody said, “No one has tried him yet. Why not go in? If he pays your bills, come out quickly and tell us and we’ll go in, too.”

To this the old folks agreed and timidly opened the door and entered the office, where a cordial welcome awaited them. In answer to their question as to whether the notice was true, the secretary said:

“Do you think the landlord would deceive you? Let me see your bills.”

They were all presented, carefully tabulated, and a check made out to cover them. Overwhelmed with gratitude, the old man and his wife arose to leave, but the secretary said:

“Just be seated. You must remain here till the office closes at noon.”

They explained that the crowd outside was waiting for verification from them of the strange offer.

But the landlord said, “No, you took me at my word. They must do the same if they want their debts paid.”

As so the minutes passed. Outside, the people moved restlessly about, watching the closed door, but none lifted the latch. At high noon the door opened and the old folks came out first.

“Did he keep his word?” the throng asked.

“Yes, neighbors. Here is his check and it’s good as gold.”

“Why didn’t you come out and tell us?” angrily asked many.

“He said we must wait inside and you must come as we did and take him at his word.”

A moment later the landlord and his secretary came out and hurried to the carriage – the crowd pressing about them, holding out hands full of personal bills, and crying, “Won’t you do for us as you did for these folks?”

But rising in his carriage, the landlord said, “It is too late now. I gave you every opportunity. I would have paid for you all, but you would not believe me.”

Then he likened the events of the morning to the way that God’s offer to free the sinner of all that divine justice has against him. Solemnly he warned them of the folly of passing up so great salvation until the day of grace was over and it was too late to be saved.

THE ONE MEDIATOR

“To which of the saints wilt thou turn?” (Job 5:1).

My mother spent her last months on earth at Long Beach, California. My wife and I arranged to be with her so as to help in any way we could. Each afternoon I was in the habit of going down to the sands for a little rest and relaxation, and I always took my Bible with me.

While reading it one day, a young couple approached and, after introducing themselves, began to ask some questions about certain Scriptures. This led to a daily Bible study right on the beach. Eventually scores of people would gather with their Bibles and it was a joy to seek to open up the Word to them. For some weeks we studied the epistle to the Hebrews.

One day, as the meeting was closing, a warmhearted Irish woman, who had been sitting on the outskirts of the crowd, came over to me and expressed her appreciation of the message. She exclaimed,

“I am a Roman Catholic and this is the first non-Catholic conventicle I have ever attended. I’ve seen ye each day as I went by, but I did not think I ought to listen, but as I was passing this afternoon I heard you say something so good about my dear Lord Jesus that I felt it would not be wrong to hear more – so I came close and I have enjoyed it all. You’ve told me things about my dear Saviour today I never heard in all my life before, and I am so glad I came.”

I inquired, “You know Jesus as your own Saviour and Lord?”

“Indeed I do,” was the reply. “He’s been my Friend for years, and since my husband died He’s been like a husband to me, and a Father to my children. I go to Him about everything and He always answers my prayers and takes care of me. He died for me and I trust Him to keep my soul.”

Perhaps a bit mischievously, I asked, “But do you only pray to Him? Don’t you pray also to the virgin and to the saints when you are in trouble?”

I shall never forget her answer.

“Oh, bedad!” She exclaimed, “What would I be after bothering with the virgin and the saints for, when I can go direct to my blessed Lord Himself!”

Would that all might realize the blessedness of this. Because He ever liveth, we are invited to come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in every time of need. The Lord Jesus is interested in all that concerns us. Why then turn aside to any other?

THE PREACHER AND FRIED CHICKEN

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others”

(Philippians 2:4)

I have never been able to forget a story I heard evangelist Paul Rader relate on one occasion. I may not now be able to recall all the details, but so nearly as I remember, it was as follows:

Mr. Rader mentioned having known three ministers, all of whom came from a particular part of the South and were all characterized by a spirit of intense self-abnegation and kindly interest in the needs of others. To one of these Mr. Rader said, “I have known two other men from your part of the country and you have all commended yourselves to me by your unselfishness. How come that you are all so much alike?”

Modestly the preacher answered, “If we have any such marks as you speak of, we owe our unselfishness to a circuit-rider. When we were just boys he used to come to our section every two weeks.”

He then went on to describe him as a lean, cadaverous-looking man of the Abraham Lincoln type who, on the first Sunday he preached in the country schoolhouse, gave a sermon in the morning and another in the afternoon. Between the services the ladies of the congregation served a picnic lunch in the open air. Great platters of fried chicken, ham, and other meats were laid out on gleaming white tablecloths; these were surrounded by stacks of biscuits, corn pone, hard-boiled eggs, cakes and other delicacies. When all was ready, the assembled group sat down on the greensward to enjoy the repast.

A number of lively boys were always at the front, hoping to get nearest to the platter of chicken. But on this particular occasion, so great was the crowd, the boys were told to wait until their elders were all served. Angrily they went off back of a nearby shed and indulged in the pastime of shooting dice, in revenge for the unkind way they felt they had been treated. They appointed one lad as a watcher, to keep tab on the way the viands were disappearing. Ruefully, he told of piles of chicken disappearing: still, more came in from nearby wagons. Suddenly, in great excitement he exclaimed,

“Say, look at that preacher! The old squirrel! He’s eaten all he could and now when he thinks no one sees him, he’s filling those big pockets in the tail of his long coat.” All looked angrily and saw it was indeed true.

Just then one of the women exclaimed, “Why, look at the preacher’s plate. You all are neglecting him. Hand over the fried chicken.”

And she heaped his plate up with appetizing pieces; he nibbled a few minutes – then surreptitiously took two bandana handkerchiefs out of each breast pocket and, filling them with select pieces, stored them away.

Rising with the rest, the preacher backed off, as the boys thought, to hide his “loot” in his baggage. But after moving away from the crowd he turned, and hurried down to the back of the barn where the angry boys were waiting for the second call to lunch. “Boys,” he exclaimed, “I was afraid they were forgetting you, so I saved a lot of the white meat and the drumsticks for you.” Out came the four clean handkerchiefs and he passed the tender morsels around. The boys were captured. Amazed, they eagerly accepted the proffered dainties.

“This was characteristic of that preacher,” said Mr. Rader’s friend. “We felt we had found a real friend – a man who loved other people better than he loved himself. He could do anything with us. He led us all to Christ during the years of his ministry among us, sent several out as foreign missionaries, and we three into the ministry at home. It was the unselfish spirit he manifested that gripped our hearts and won our confidence; so that his sermons reached our consciences and brought us to know his Saviour as ours.”

THE RIBBON OF BLUE

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband (ribbon) of blue . . . that ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God” (Numbers 15:38-40).

Blue is the heavenly color. The ribbon of blue on the border of the Israelite’s robe was to be a constant reminder that he belonged to the God of heaven, and was responsible to so behave himself as to glorify his heavenly Master.

The story is told of a young dauphin, or crown prince, of France, who was placed under the care of an English tutor that he might be educated for his high and lofty station. The tutor often found it very difficult to control the young prince, who was very high-spirited and independent. Not possessing the authority to administer punishment to one in such an exalted position, the tutor finally hit upon a plan whereby he hoped to insure better behavior. One morning he produced a purple rosette, which he fastened upon the jacket of the prince, explaining that as it was the royal color, it was to be worn as an evidence of his regal station. “If,” said the tutor, “I ever find you behaving in an unprincely manner, I shall simply point to the rosette, and you will understand.”

It proved to be a most effective method of discipline, occasionally, the prince would indulge in an outburst of unseemly language or act in an unworthy manner.

The silent appeal to the purple was enough to bring him to his senses and to procure an apology and a promise of better self-control in the future.

So believers today are responsible to behave in accordance with their heavenly relationship – to **“walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called.”** The ribbon of blue is to be seen upon all our garments as we walk through this world to the glory of God.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:9).

I was talking to a large group at a college one day and an illustration came to my mind which I think all the co-eds understood. I said,

“Just imagine one of you girls working your way through college. You have very little with which to do; your parents are not able to provide for you; possibly you have no parents. There is going to be some great affair and all are supposed to be nicely dressed for this occasion; you do not like to be shabby, but you have so little to go on.

“Then you see that at the five and ten cent store there is a splendid sale on dress material for ten cents a yard. You have only a few dimes, but you go down and get a few yards and try to make a nice little gown so that you can go to that function. But you have never had much training as a seamstress and you have a lot of trouble. However, you work away on it, trying to make it look respectable.

“Then one day Lady Bountiful visits you; you have always dreamed about her, but never expected to see her. She takes a kindly interest in you and says, ‘Look, I want you to go down town with me.’ You go, wondering why she should be interested in you, and then she takes you into one of the most beautiful outfitting establishments of the city. You are stirred as you walk up and down those aisles; as she stops at the dress section, she says, ‘Now, my dear, pick out any dress you please – a gown for yourself, and one that you like.’

“‘Well, really,’ you say, ‘that seems too good to be true. I am afraid my taste would lead me to pick out something too expensive.’ But she says, ‘Go right on – anything you want.’

“And so your fancy for color leads you to select a certain one and you say, ‘Well, I think that would be very becoming.’

“‘All right,’ she says, and to the saleslady, ‘How much is it?’ The answer is, ‘Seventy-five dollars.’

“‘Oh,’ you say, ‘that price is altogether beyond a poor girl like me.’

“‘But that is all right,’ she says, ‘you like it and you are going to have it.’

“Imagine the girl coming back to her little room, seeing the poor old figured goods at which she had been working so long. She gets the new one out and tries it on and parades up and down before the glass. Finally, she calls in the other girls and says, ‘Oh, now I shall be found not having my own dress, this poor inexpensive thing, but this beautiful gown that has been given to me so freely!’”

Paul looked at it that way. He had been trying to work out his righteousness himself, trying to make a beautiful garment in which to stand before God; but when he got sight of the risen Christ, and learned that every believer is made the righteousness of God in Christ, he said, “Away with that thing of my own providing, now that I can be dressed up in the righteousness which is of God in Christ.”

THE TWO NATURES

“The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other” (Galatians 5:17).

An American Indian was giving his testimony in a gathering of Christian members of his tribe. He told of his conversion and of how in the beginning he felt as though he would never sin again; he was so happy in knowing His Saviour. But, he explained, as time went on he became conscious of an inward conflict, which he described somewhat as follows.

“It seems, my brothers, that I have two dogs fighting in my heart: one is a very good dog, and beautiful white dog, and he is always watching for my best interests. The other is a very bad dog, a black dog, who is always trying to destroy the things that I want to build up. These dogs give me a lot of trouble because they are always quarreling and fighting with each other.”

One of his hearers looked up and asked laconically, “Which one wins?” The other instantly replied, “Whichever one I say ‘Sic ‘im’ to.”

Surely there could not be a more apt illustration of the two natures in the believer. **“If we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.”** But if we pander to the flesh, we will be certain to go down in defeat.

THE UNSETTLED PAST

“God requireth that which is past” (Ecclesiastes 3:15).

A solemn instance of the danger of neglecting salvation came to my notice sometime ago. It is absolutely authentic.

An earnest evangelist, a personal friend of mine, was holding a series of meetings in a city in western Michigan. One night his text was Ecclesiastes 3:15. Faithfully he sought to show his hearers the impossibility of putting themselves right with God by reformation or human merit. Let the future be as it might, the past would have to be faced at the Great White Throne. Sin must be atoned for, and the guilty one could never atone for his own iniquity. He went on to show that God, in grace, had given Jesus to die, that His Precious Blood was shed to put away sins, that all who trusted Him could say,

“I have settled with God about my past now, for Jesus died for me. My sins are gone. He paid my debt. God requireth that which is past; but He has required it of Jesus and my soul is set free.”

In the audience sat a lady who listened with deepest interest. The day after the meeting she expressed herself as being concerned and anxious about her soul, but like many others, she procrastinated; and, instead of settling the matter at once, she chose to go on unsaved.

The next day she was drawing some gasoline for a customer in the little store where she worked. A lamp was near. Suddenly there was an explosion and then a mass of flame! She ran from the place, screaming for help. Neighbors came to her rescue, but it was too late to save her life. Conveyed to a hospital, she lingered some twenty-four hours and then passed into eternity.

As she lay in the ward, she was heard wailing hour after hour, “My sins! My sins! I haven’t settled with God about my past!”

Christian friends were there to point her to Jesus, who even now would save her if she accepted Him; but her agony was so great, none could tell whether she looked to Him or not. While hoping she had a saving glimpse of the One who died to reform her, her loved ones could only leave her with God.

The incident illustrates the grave danger of refusing to close at once with Christ.

Have you settled with God about your past? Are your sins washed away in His precious blood? If called as suddenly as she to face eternity, would your cry perhaps be as hopeless as hers? Oh, be persuaded, **“God is not mocked: For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”** The loss of your soul is too terrible to be unconcerned.

“To lose your wealth is much;
To lose your health is more;
To lose your soul is such a loss
As no one can restore.”

Come now to Jesus with all your sins; and owning your lost condition; trust in Him, while grace is free. **“He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”** (Proverbs 29:1).

THE WRONG DOOR

“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (John 10:9).

A young man who often listened to a great Scotch preacher wanted to be saved. He had a longing in his heart to know Christ as his deliverer and to know the blessedness of God's salvation; although he wept and prayed and sought, he could get no sense of forgiveness, no assurance that he was received by God. One night the minister preached on those words, **“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved”** and he showed that **“any man”** took in poor sinners, no matter how vile, how wicked, how corrupt they were. As he preached, he could see the cloud lift from this young man's face; at the close of the meeting, he came to the front and said, “I got in tonight.”

“What do you mean,” asked the preacher.

“Why, I got in at the open door tonight while you were preaching.”

“I am glad to hear it. But why did you not get in before? You have been troubled for a fortnight and I have been trying to help you, and others have been doing their best to help you. How was it that you did not get in until tonight?”

“Well,” said the young man, “I have been at the wrong door all the time. I have been knocking at the saint's door and I found it locked against me. I thought I had to become good enough for God to save me, but I said tonight, I will try the sinner's door, and when I came to it, it was open and I got right inside.”

THE WRONG REMEDY

“They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 8:11).

When I was a boy, I heard a North of Ireland preacher relate the following story, which he declared to be absolutely authentic. It is a striking illustration of the lack of understanding of spiritual problems prevalent in some quarters, even in our enlightened days. In a Scottish home the younger son, a lad in his late teens, named Robert (generally “Robbie” in the family), became troubled about his soul. Realizing he was a lost sinner, he sought in vain for some one who could make plain to him the way of peace with God.

His father, though a religious man and an esteemed office-bearer in the local kirk, could not understand why a lad brought up as his son had been should think himself lost and in need of salvation.

In his distress the boy sought out the minister, who after a long talk with him told him he should put away such gloomy thoughts and try to get his mind on brighter things. As the youth was musically inclined, the pastor suggested to the father to purchase a fiddle for his son and have him take violin lessons. This was done, but although Robbie tried to forget his “gloomy ideas” (as the minister called them) and resolutely set himself to learn the fiddle, he at last gave up in despair.

“I cannot fiddle,” he exclaimed, “when I am lost in my sins and may die any moment and go into hell because I cannot find how to be saved.”

A physician was called in, who, after examining the boy, advised that he be sent to a sanitarium for mental cases, as he felt sure he was losing his mind, and if not properly treated, might do something desperate.

So to the asylum the poor lad was taken. There for weeks he paced a narrow room in anguish of soul, as he exclaimed again and again, “Oh, that I knew how to get rid o’ my sins!”

One day, a lady who knew Christ came to that institution in order to help and comfort a friend of hers who had suffered a nervous breakdown. As she passed the room of poor Robbie she heard his sobs and wondered if it was a case of conviction of sin rather than incipient insanity. She was given an opportunity to speak with him and, after hearing his story, she pointed him to Christ and left with him a New Testament, marking several passages, which she asked him to read carefully. As he pondered these verses, telling of Christ’s finished work and the blood that cleanseth from all sin, light from heaven shone into his darkened soul and soon he was rejoicing in God’s salvation.

The change in his behavior was so notable that the attending alienist decided he was cured by the treatment received, and he notified the father that Robbie might now be safely be taken home. His brother James came for him and was delighted to find Robbie so calm and peaceful. Little was said until he arrived at home, when, in response to his anxious father’s question, “Are ye a’right noo, Robbie?” he exclaimed, “Aye, feyther, I’m a’right noo, for my sins are gone an’ my soul is saved!”

The shocked father cried out aghast, “Jamie, gang for the meenister. Tell him Robbie’s had a relapse, and to come at once.”

When the minister reached the house, Robbie greeted him somewhat sternly, “Meenister, meenister,” he exclaimed, “why did ye set me trying to fiddle my sins awa’? Why did ye no tell me o’ the bluid o’ Jesus that cleanses frae a’ sin. What the fiddlin could na’ do, the Lord Jesus has done for me.”

The embarrassed minister soon realized a work of God had taken place in the soul of the young man. Though he did not fathom it all, he understood enough to know it was what the Bible calls being “**born again**,” and so he assured the father he need not worry about his son’s mentality.

As the time went on, all knew that Robbie had indeed passed from death unto life and many were won to Christ through his testimony.

It is to be feared there are many in our days who are as unable to help a troubled soul as was Robbie’s pastor. Yet every one who professes to be a minister of God should be an expert at dealing with anxious men and women and showing them the only way of life and peace – through the Gospel of His grace.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

**“The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately (incurably) wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9).**

Many object to the doctrine of total depravity on the ground that all men are capable of some good even if unsaved. All of us recognize the value of decency in behavior, of a kindly spirit, of generosity in caring for the needy, and similar virtues, which are frequently seen in unconverted and even positively godless men and women. How, then, it is asked, can they be said to be totally depraved? Dr. Joseph Cook, the great Boston lecturer of the latter half of the nineteenth century, answers this question with the following illustration:

He said he had in his home a very beautiful and valuable clock. It had an exceedingly handsome case, a very fine set of works, a nice appearing dial and elegantly finished hands. It was altogether a good clock to look upon but it had one fault. It simply would not, or could not, keep time. It had been gone over by many different clockmakers, but no one had been able to correct this fault. As a timepiece it was totally depraved!

Is not this like man, even at his best, if he has not been born again? There may be much about him that others can admire, but he is positively unable to do the will of the Lord, because his heart is utterly estranged from God, and therefore so far as holiness is concerned, he is totally depraved. Only the new birth – regeneration by the Word and Spirit of God – can enable him to keep in line with the divine will as laid down in the Holy Scriptures. However righteous he may appear in the eyes of his fellows, because of this fatal defect all his righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God.

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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