

WORDS
of
WARNING

FOR THOSE WAVERING BETWEEN
BELIEF AND UNBELIEF

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WORDS OF WARNING

There are many people whose brother's blood cries to God from the ground (see Genesis 4:10).

There is the seducer. He spoke with flattering words and talked of love, but the poison of asps was under his tongue, for lust was in his heart. He came to a beautiful temple as a worshipper, but he committed infamous sacrilege, and left that to be the haunt of demons which once was the palace of purity.

Such men are received into society and are looked upon as gentlemen, while the fallen woman, the harlot, can only hide herself beneath the shadow of night. No one will make excuse for her sin, but the man, the criminal, is called a respectable and reputable man. He can fill places of trust and positions of honor, and there are none who point the finger of scorn at him. Sir, the voice of that poor fallen sister's blood cries to heaven against you, and in the day of judgment her damnation shall be on you. All the shame into which you have plunged her will lie at your door. Among the dreadful sights of hell, two eyes will glare at you through the murky darkness like the eyes of serpents, burning their way into your inmost soul. "You deceived me and lured me to the pit," she says. "Your arms dragged me down to hell, and here I lie to curse you forever and ever as the author of my eternal ruin."

There is one sinner who can look upon this in a serious light. Who is it who has gone down to the pit? You over there, who is it who died just a few days ago? The woman who loved you as she loved her own soul, who idolized you and thought you were an angel. Shall I say it before God and to your face? You ruined her! And

what next, sir? You cast her off as though she were only dirt, and you threw her into the gutter with a broken heart. Once she was there, she fell into despair, because her god cast her off, for you were her god. Her despair led to dreadful consequences and to deeper ruin still.

She has gone, and you are glad about it, because you think you will hear no more of her. Sir, you *will* hear of it! As long as you live, her spirit will haunt you. It will follow you to the filthy joy which you have planned for your future. On your deathbed she will be there to twist her fingers

in your hair, to tear your soul out of your body and drag it down to the hell appointed for such evil people as you. You spilled her blood, the blood

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of her who trusted you – a fair, frail thing, worthy to be an angel’s sister – and you pulled her down and made her a devil’s tool! God save you! If He does not, your damnation will be sevenfold. Oh, you son of the devil, what will your doom be when God deals with you as you deserve? Are these scorching words? Not half as scorching as I would like to make them. I would send them hissing into your soul if I were able, not so much to condemn you, but with the hope that though you cannot make good the trouble you have done, you can still turn from the error of your ways to seek the Savior’s blood and find pardon for this great iniquity.

Then there are those who educate youth in sin. These are Satan’s captains and marshals. They are strong men with corrupt hearts, who are never more

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pleased than when they see the buds of evil swelling and ripening into crime. We have known some such men who possess an evil eye, who not only loved sin themselves, but delighted in it in others. They patted the boy on his back when he uttered his first profanity, and rewarded him when he committed his first theft.

Satan has his Sunday-school teachers. Hell has its missionaries who travel sea and land to make one convert and make him ten times more a child of hell than they are themselves. Most of our villages are cursed with one such wretch, and is there even a single street in any big city on which one or more such fiends do not live? Wretch, have you sought to entangle them in your net? Have you, like the spider, thrown first one strand of web around them and then another, until you have them safely in your coils to drag them down to the den of Beelzebub? If so, then the voice of your brother's blood cries from the ground. At the judgment, this will be a witness that you will not be able to disprove – the witness of the blood of souls ruined by your sinful and evil training. Beware, you who hunt for the precious life!

Then there are some corrupt people who, if they see young converts, take pride in putting stumbling blocks in their way. As soon as they discover that there is a little working of conscience in someone, they laugh, sneer, and point their finger. How often I have seen this in a husband who tries to prevent his wife's attendance at a prayer meeting, or in the young man who ridicules his friend because he felt the power of God's Holy Spirit and begins to read the Scriptures,

pray, and think about changing his ways! This happens too frequently in our great establishments in London, where one young man kneels to pray, and many laugh at him and insult him. They are not content to perish themselves. Like dogs pursuing a deer, so the wicked will hunt the godly.

You who are the enlisting sergeants for the evil Prince of Darkness, you who seem never as happy as when you set traps for souls to entice them to destruction, I solemnly warn you. Heed the warning, to prevent God's avenging angel overtaking you without warning with the sword that will strike your neck and cause you to feel how terrible a thing it is to have tried to ruin the servants of the living God.

Then there is the infidel. He is the person who is not content to keep his sin to himself, but feels the need to publish his wickedness. He climbs to the top of the platform and blasphemes the Almighty to his face, defies the Eternal, takes Scripture to make it the subject of unholy jokes, and makes Christianity a theme for comedy. If this is you, be careful, for there will be a tragedy in the future in which you will be the chief sufferer!

What should I say of those men who are far more diligent than half of God's ministers, whose names we see engraved on plaques on every wall? They will go from town to town, and never seem content unless they are preaching against something that is pure, and lovely, and of good report, or proclaiming things that would make your cheeks drain of their color if you heard them. They are dreadful things against the Most

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High, such as David heard when he said, *Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law* (Psalm 119:53).

I address such people, because the voice of your brother's blood cries out to God. The young men you have deluded, the working men you have led astray, the sinners whose lullaby you have sung, the souls you have poisoned with your foul drinks, the multitudes you have deceived – all these will stand up in the end, a huge army, and pointing their fingers at you, they will demand your swift destruction, because you lured them to their doom.

And what shall I say of the unfaithful preacher? He is the slumbering watchman of souls, the man who gave testimony at God's altar that he was called by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word of God. He is the man upon whose lips people's ears waited with attention while he stood like a priest at God's altar to teach Israel God's laws. He is the man who performed his duties half-asleep, in a dull and careless manner, until others also slept and thought Christianity was not to be taken very seriously.

What shall I say of the pastor with an unholy life, whose corrupt practice outside of the pulpit has made the most meaningful things from the pulpit to be powerless. He has blunted the edge of the sword of the Spirit and turned the back of God's army in the day of battle.

What should I say about the preacher who has amused his audience with fine-sounding words and humorous stories when he ought to have stirred their consciences. He has been more concerned about fancy

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sermon outlines than of proclaiming the judgment of God. He has preached a dead morality when he ought to have lifted Christ on high as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness.

What should I say about those who have dwindled away their congregations, who have sown strife and division in churches of Christ that were once happy, peaceful, and prosperous? What should I say about the men who have joked from the pulpit about the most serious things, whose lives have been so devoid of holy passion and devout enthusiasm that people have thought truth to be a lie, Christianity a performance, prayer powerless, the Spirit of God a delusion, and eternity a joke? Among all who will need eternal compassion, surely the unfaithful, unholy, passionless minister of Christ will be the most to be pitied! What did I say? No, rather he is the most contemptible, the most despicable, and the most accursed! Surely, every thunderbolt will make his brow its target, and every arrow of God will seek his conscience as its mark.

If I must perish, let me suffer any way but as a minister who has desecrated the pulpit.

If I must perish, let me suffer any way but as a minister who has desecrated the pulpit by a slumbering style of ministry, by a lack of passion for souls. How will such men answer for it at the throne of God – the smooth things, the polite and agreeable words, the whitewashing of men with the watered-down paint of peace, when they should have dealt with them honestly as in God's name? Sirs, if we never play the part

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of the Sons of Thunder, we will hear God's thunders in our ears forever and ever, and we will be cursed of men and cursed of the Most High without end. In hell we will have this lament peculiar to ourselves: "We preached what we did not feel. We testified of what we did not know. People did not receive our witness, for we were hypocrites and deceivers, and now we go down, richly deserving it, to the very lowest depths of eternal punishment."

But the voice of your brother's blood cries to God from the ground, even though you are not an infidel lecturer, even though you have not been degenerate, even though you never taught heresy, and even though you have spread no schism. If your life is unholy, your brother's blood is on your own head.

"Oh," says one, "If I sin, I sin to myself."

Impossible!

The deadly contagious illness might say, "I am deadly to myself alone." Cholera might say, "My deadly breath is for myself only." Your example spreads. You, like the leper, leave uncleanness on everything you touch. The very atmosphere which surrounds you breeds disease. What others see you do, they learn to do. Some may even rival you and exceed you, but if you taught them their lessons and they learn to read in hell's book better than you, all that they learn afterwards will come to your door, because they learned the elements of sin from your practice.

I am afraid many people never look at their transgressions in this light. You cannot help being leaders and teachers. If in your own house you are a drunkard,

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your boys will be drunkards too! I have heard of a man who flogged his son for swearing, swearing at him the whole time he did it. We know instances of people who feel as if they would sooner bury their children than see them grow up like themselves, but how can it be helped?

Your practice must and will influence your children, and not only your children, but all with whom you come into contact in the world. Do not think, if you are an employer, that your employees can know how you live your life without being affected by that knowledge. There may be some among them who have an inward principle that will not yield to temptation, but I know of hardly anything more dangerous than for a number of people to constantly come into contact with one whom they look up to as a teacher who is also a teacher of the arts of sin and a leader of damnation to their souls. Be careful; if not for yourselves, then for others, or the voice of your brother's blood will cry unto God from the ground.

What should the cry be against open sinners and unbelievers? It would be an awful thing to pray for a man's damnation, but there are some people I know of who do so much harm while they live, that if they were dead, people would breathe more freely. I know a village where there lives a man who contaminates half the population. There is a malicious look upon his face that causes virtue to blush and a contemptuous smirk that causes courage to cower. He is a wretch, so well taught and so deeply instructed in the realm of iniquity, that wherever he goes he finds no one a match for him, either in his reasoning or in the infamous conclusions

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that he draws. He is a man who is a deadly upas tree, dropping black poison upon all beneath his shadow.⁴

I once thought that I would half pray that the man would die and go to his destruction, but one must not do that. Yet, if he were gone, the saints might say, "It is well." Just as the saints will say "Hallelujah!" over Babylon when it is destroyed and the smoke of her torment goes up forever (Revelation 19:3), I thought that same shout of "Hallelujah!" might be said when those people against whom the blood of many young people cries out to God from the ground go to their doom, for God has judged the great sinner who made the people of the earth drunk with the wine of his fornication (Revelation 18:3).

What can we do to be rid of the past? Can tears of repentance do it? No. Can promises of change make a blank page where there are so many blots and blemishes? No. Nothing we can do removes our sin. But can't the future make up for the past? Cannot future zeal wipe out past carelessness? Cannot the endeavor of our life yet to come make amends for the idleness or vice of the life that is past? No. The blood of our brothers has been shed, and we cannot gather it up. The harm we have caused cannot be undone!

Souls that are lost through us cannot now be saved. The gates of hell are so shut that they can never be opened. There is no restitution we can make. The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceases forever. The sin cannot be washed away by repentance or

4 The upas tree is a tropical Asian tree, the sap of which contains poisonous glycosides. The sap has been used for poison arrows. The tree was once thought to have given off a poisonous gas.

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removed by reformation. What then? There would be hopeless despair for every one of us if there were not another blood – the blood of One called Jesus. It cries from the ground, too, and the voice of that blood says, *Father, forgive them. Father, forgive them* (Luke 23:34).

I hear a voice that says, “Vengeance, vengeance, vengeance,” like the voice of Jonah in Nineveh, enough to make everyone clothe himself

in sackcloth; but a sweeter and

louder cry comes up, “Mercy, mercy, mercy.” The Father bows

His head and says, “Whose blood

is that?” The voice replies, “It is the blood of your only begotten Son, shed on Calvary for sin.”

Hate the sin that

is past and trust in

Jesus for the future.

The Father lays His thunder aside, sheathes His sword, stretches out His hand, and cries to you sons and daughters of men, “Come unto Me, and I will have mercy upon you. Turn, turn from your ways. I will pour out My Spirit upon you and you shall live. Repent and believe the gospel.” Hate the sin that is past and trust in Jesus for the future. He is able to completely save all who come to God by Him, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

Flee, sinner, flee! The avenger of the blood that you have shed pursues you in haste. With feet that are winged and a heart that is thirsty for blood, he pursues you. Run, man, run! The city of refuge is before you. It is there along the narrow way of faith. Fly, fly, for unless you reach that city before he overtakes you, he will smite you, and one blow will be your everlasting ruin.

Do not linger! Do not stop and look at the field on the

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left, for you will stain that field with your blood if you linger there! Do not stop at that tavern on the right. Stop for none of these things! He comes! Hear his footsteps on the hard highway! He comes, he comes, he comes now! Oh, that you may pass through the entrance of the refuge city! Trust the Son of God. Your sin will be forgiven, and you will have entered into everlasting life.

Chapter 10

Christ the Son of Man

How fond our Master was of the sweet title the “Son of Man”! If He had chosen, He might always have spoken of Himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counselor, or the Prince of Peace. He has a thousand wonderful titles, as magnificent as the throne of heaven, but He does not care to use them. To express His humility and let us see the lowliness of Him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light, He does not call himself the Son of God, but He speaks of Himself continually as the Son of Man who came down from heaven.

Let us learn a lesson in humility from our Savior. Never let us pursue great titles or proud degrees. After all, what are they but empty distinctions which allow one worm to be known from another? He who has the most is still a worm and his nature is no better than that of his colleagues. If Jesus called Himself the Son of Man when He had far greater names, let us learn to

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humble ourselves with others of low position, knowing that he who humbles himself will in due time be exalted.

I think, though, that there is a sweeter thought than this in the name *Son of Man*. It seems to me that Christ loved manhood so much that He always desired to honor it. Since it is a high honor, and indeed the greatest dignity of manhood that Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, He is inclined to display this name, so that He may, as it were, put a badge of honor upon the chest of manhood and put a crown upon its head.

Son of Man – whenever Jesus said that, He seemed to put a halo around the head of Adam’s children. Yet there is perhaps a lovelier thought still. Jesus Christ called Himself the Son of Man because He loved to be one of us. It was a huge step down for Him to come from heaven and to be incarnate. It was a mighty act of condescension when He left the harps of angels and the songs of cherubim to mingle with the common herd of His own creatures. But even though it was condescension, He loved it. You will remember that when He became incarnate, He did not become so in the dark. When God brought forth the only begotten into the world, He said, “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” It was proclaimed in heaven. It was not done as a dark secret that Jesus Christ would do in the night so that none would know about it. All the angels of God were brought to witness the arrival of a Savior as a tiny baby, sleeping upon a virgin’s breast and lying in a manger.

Ever afterwards, and even now, He was never ashamed to confess that He was man. He never looked back upon His incarnation with the slightest regret,

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but always regarded it as a joyous remembrance that He had become the Son of Man. All hail, blessed Jesus! We know how much You love us. We understand the greatness of Your mercy toward Your chosen ones, inasmuch as You always use the sweet name which acknowledges that we are bone of Your bone and flesh of Your flesh, and that You are one of them, a brother and a close relation.

I will tell you the people Christ will save. He will save those who are lost to themselves. Just imagine a ship at sea passing through a storm. The ship leaks, and the captain tells the passengers he fears they are lost. If they are far away from the shore and have sprung a leak, they pump with all their might, as long as they have any strength remaining. They seek to keep down the devouring element, and they still think they are not quite lost as long as they have power to use the pumps.

He will save those who are lost to themselves.

Finally, they see the ship cannot be saved. They give it up for lost and leap into the lifeboats. The boats are floating for many days, full of people who have barely any food to eat. “They are lost,” we say, “lost out at sea.” But they do not think so. They still cherish a hope that perhaps some stray ship might pass that way and pick them up. There is a ship on the horizon, and they strain their eyes to look at her. They lift each other up and wave a flag. They tear their clothes to make something which will attract attention, but the ship passes away. Night comes and they are forgotten. In the end, the

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very last mouthful of food has been consumed, and their strength fails them. They lay down their oars in the boat and lay themselves down to die.

You can imagine then how well they understand the awful meaning of the word *lost*. As long as they had any strength left, they felt they were not lost. As long as they could see a sail, they felt there was still hope. While there was still a dry biscuit or a drop of water remaining, they did not give up all for lost. Now the biscuit is gone and the water is gone; the strength has departed, and the oar lies still. They lie down to die by each other's side, mere skeletons. They should have been dead days earlier if they had died when all enjoyment of life had ceased. Now they know what it is to be lost, and across the shoreless waters they seem to hear their death-knell pealing forth that awful word: Lost! Lost! Lost!

In a spiritual sense, these are the people Christ came to save. Sinner, you too are condemned. Our father Adam steered the ship off course, she split upon a rock, and she is filling even to her deck now. No matter how hard you may pump your own morals and philosophy, you can never keep the waters of her depravity low enough to prevent the ship from sinking. We see that human nature is lost; it has gotten into the boat. She is a fair boat called the boat of Good Attempts. In her, you are striving to row with all your might to reach the shore, but your strength fails you.

You say, "I cannot keep God's law. The more I strive to keep it, the more I find it to be impossible for me to do so. I climb, but the higher I climb, the higher the

top seems to be above me. When I was in the plains, I thought the mountain was only a moderate hill. Now I seem to have ascended halfway up its slope. There it is, higher than the clouds, and I cannot see the summit.”

However, you gather up your strength and you try again. You row once more, and in the end, you are unable to do anything. So you lay down your oars and realize that if you are saved, it cannot be by your own works. Still, you have a little hope left. There are a few small pieces of dry biscuit remaining. You have heard that by participating in certain ceremonies you might be saved, and you chew your dry biscuit. Ultimately, that fails you, and you find that neither baptism, the Lord's supper, nor any other outward rite can make you clean, for the leprosy lies deep within.

Knowing this, you still look out on the horizon. You still hope that there might be a sail coming, and while floating upon that deep of despair, you think you detect in the distance some new dogma or some fresh doctrine that may comfort you. It passes, however, like the wild phantom ship. It is gone, and you are left with the burning sky of God's vengeance above you and the deep waters of a bottomless hell beneath you. With fire in your heart and emptiness in that ship that was once so full of hope, you lie down in despair and cry, “Lord save me, or I perish!”

Is that your condition, my friend, or has that ever been your condition? If so, Christ came into the world to seek and to save you, and you He will save, and no one else. He will only save those who can claim for their title, “Lost,” those who have understood in their own

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souls what it is to be lost in regard to all self-trust, all self-reliance, and all self-hope.

I can look back to the time when I knew that I was lost. I thought that God intended to destroy me. I imagined that because I felt myself to be lost, I was the special victim of Almighty vengeance. I even said to the Lord, “Have You set me as the target of all Your arrows? *Am I a sea, or a dragon, that thou settest a watch over me?* (Job 7:12). Have You sewed up my iniquities in a bag and sealed my transgressions with a seal? (Job 14:17). Will You never be gracious? Have You made me to be the center of all sorrow, and the chosen one of heaven to be cursed forever?” I was a fool! I didn’t know then that those who have the curse in themselves are those whom God will bless – that we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in Him who died for us and rose again.

Can you say that you are lost? Was there a time when you traveled with the caravan through this wild wilderness world? Have you left the caravan with your companions to find yourself in the midst of a sea of sand – a hopeless arid waste? Do you look around you and see no helper, and do you cast your eyes around and see no trust? Is the vulture circling in the sky, screaming with delight, because he hopes to soon feed upon your flesh and bones? Is the water bottle dry and does the bread fail you? Have you consumed the last of your dry dates and drunk the last of that unpleasant water from the bottle? Are you now without hope, without trust in yourself, and ready to lie down in despair?

Listen! The Lord your God loves you. Jesus Christ

has bought you with His blood. You are, and you shall be His. He has been seeking you all this time, and He has found you at last, in the vast howling wilderness. Now He will take you upon His shoulders and carry you to His house rejoicing, and the angels will be glad over your salvation.

Such people must and will be saved, and this is the description of those whom Jesus Christ came to save. Those He came to save, He will save. You – you lost ones who have lost all hope and self-confidence – will be saved. Even though death and hell would stand in the way, Christ will fulfill His promise and accomplish His plan.

For the most part, though, Christ finds His people in His own house. He finds them often in the worst of tempers and in the most hardened conditions. He softens their hearts, awakens their consciences, subdues their pride, and takes them to Himself; but they would never come to Him unless He went to them. Sheep go astray, but they do not come back again of themselves. Ask the shepherd whether his sheep come back, and he will tell you, “No, sir. They will wander, but they never return.” If you ever find a sheep that came back on its own, then you may hope to find a sinner who will come to Christ on his own. No; it must be sovereign grace that seeks the sinner and brings him home.

When Christ seeks them, He saves them.

When Christ seeks them, He saves them. Having caught him at last, like the ram of old, in the thorns of conviction, He does not take a knife and slay him

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as the sinner expects, but He takes him by the hand of mercy and begins to comfort and save. The Christ who seeks you today and who has sought you for a long time by His providence will save you. He will first find you when you are emptied of self, and then He will save you. When you are stripped, He will bring you the best robe and put it on you. When you are dying, He will breathe life into your nostrils. When you feel yourselves condemned, He will come and blot out your iniquities like a cloud, and your transgressions like a thick cloud (Isaiah 44:22). Do not fear, you hopeless and helpless souls, for Christ seeks you today, and He will save you. He will save you here, save you living, save you dying, save you in time, save you in eternity, and give you – even you, the lost ones – a portion among those who are sanctified.

Chapter 11

The Great Remedy

We can learn nothing of the gospel except by feeling its truths. No single truth of the gospel is ever truly known and really learned until we have tested and tried and proved it, and its power has been exercised upon us. I heard of a naturalist who thought himself to be exceedingly wise regarding the natural history of birds, yet he had learned all he knew in his office, and had never so much as seen a bird either flying through the air or sitting upon its perch. He was just a fool, although he thought himself to be exceedingly wise.

There are some men who, like him, think of themselves as great theologians. They might even claim to have a doctor's degree in divinity. Yet, if we got to the root of the matter and asked them whether they ever saw or felt any of these things of which they talked, they would have to say, "No. I know these things in the letter, but not in the spirit. I understand them as a

matter of theory, but not as part of my own consciousness and experience.”

Be assured that just as the naturalist who was merely the student of other people’s observations knew nothing, so the person who pretends to be pious but has never entered into the depths and power of its doctrines or felt the influence of them upon his heart knows nothing, and all the knowledge he pretends to have is just disguised ignorance. There are some sciences that can possibly be learned by the head, but the science of Christ crucified can only be learned by the heart.

No one can know the magnitude of sin until he has felt it, because there is no measuring rod for sin except its condemnation in our own conscience when the law of God speaks to us with a terror that may be felt.

Some people imagine that the gospel was devised, in some way or other, to soften the harshness of God towards sin. How mistaken is that idea! There is no more harsh condemnation of sin anywhere than in the gospel.

The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). There lies the darkness; here stands the Lord Jesus Christ. What will He do with it? Will He go and speak to it and say, “This is no great evil. This darkness is just a little spot”? No. He looks at it and says, “This is terrible wickedness, darkness that may be felt. This is an exceeding great evil.” Will He cover it up? Will He weave a mantle of excuse and wrap it around the iniquity? No. Whatever covering there may have been, He lifts it off, and He declares that when the Spirit of Truth is come, He will convince the world

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of sin, lay the sinner's conscience bare, and probe the wound to the bottom. Then what will He do? He will do a far better thing than make an excuse or pretend in any way to speak lightly of it. He will cleanse it all away and remove it entirely by the power and meritorious virtue of His own blood.

Nor does the gospel in any way give us hope that the claims of the law will be in any way loosened. Some imagine that under the old dispensation God demanded great things of man – that He placed burdens upon them that were too heavy to carry.

They think that Christ came into the world to put a lighter

The gospel did not come into the world to soften down the law.

law upon the shoulders of men, something that would be easier for them to obey, a law that they can more easily keep, or that if they break, would not result in such terrible punishment.

This is not so. The gospel did not come into the world to soften down the law. *For verily I say unto you, Until heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle shall pass from the law until all is fulfilled* (Matthew 5:18). What God has said to the sinner in the law, He says to the sinner in the gospel. If He declares, *The soul that sins, it shall die* (Ezekiel 18:20), the testimony of the gospel is not contrary to the testimony of the law. If He declares that whoever breaks the sacred law will certainly be punished, the gospel also demands blood for blood, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth, and does not relax a solitary jot or tittle of its demands, but is as severe and as intensely just as the law itself.

Do you reply that Christ has certainly softened down the law? I reply, then, that you don't know the mission of Christ. That is no softening of the law. It is, as it were, the grinding of the edge of the dreadful sword of divine justice to make it far sharper than it seemed before. Christ has not put out the furnace; rather He seemed to heat it seven times hotter. Before Christ came, sin did not seem to be a big deal to me, but when He came, sin became exceedingly sinful to me, and all its dreaded ugliness became clear in the light.

Someone might say, "Surely the gospel, in some degree, removes the enormity of our sin. Doesn't it soften the punishment of sin?" No. Ezekiel says, *The*

Our Lord Jesus Christ was all love, but He was all honesty, too.

soul that sins, it shall die, and his sermon is alarming and dreadful. He sits down. Now comes Jesus Christ, the man of a loving countenance. What does He say regarding the punishment of sin? Our Lord Jesus Christ was all love, but He was all honesty, too. *Never has anyone spoken like this man*, it was said of Jesus when He spoke of the punishment of the lost (John 7:46). No other prophet but Jesus was the author of such fearful expressions as these:

He will burn up the chaff with fire that shall never be quenched. (Matthew 3:12)

And they shall go away into eternal punishment. (Matthew 25:46)

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*Where their worm does not die, and the fire
is never quenched.* (Mark 9:44)

Stand at the feet of Jesus when He tells you about the punishment of sin and the effect of iniquity, and you will have far more reason to tremble there than you would have done if Moses had been the preacher and if Sinai had been in the background to conclude the sermon. No, the gospel of Christ in no sense whatsoever helps to make sin less. The proclamation of Christ is the same as the utterance of Ezekiel of old: *The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great* (Ezekiel 9:9).

Our sins are immense. Every sin is significant, but there are some that in our comprehension seem to be more substantial than others. There are crimes that an ordinary person could not mention. I could go to great lengths in describing the degradation of human nature in the sins that it has invented. It is amazing how the ingenuity of man seems to have exhausted itself in inventing fresh crimes. Surely there is not the possibility of the invention of a new sin, but if there is, man will invent it before long, for man seems to grow in his deceptiveness and is full of wisdom in the discovery of ways to destroy himself and in his attempts to offend his Maker.

There are some sins that show an evil extent of degraded thinking – some sins of which it is shameful to speak and disgraceful to think. But *the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleanses us from all sin* (1 John 1:7). There may be some sins of which we cannot speak, but there

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is no sin that the blood of Christ cannot wash away. Blasphemy, however profane; lust, however depraved; covetousness, however far it may have gone into theft and robbery; breach of the commandments of God, to whatever extent it may have run – all these may be pardoned and washed away through the blood of Jesus Christ. In all the long list of human sins, though that is as long as time, there stands only one sin that is unpardonable. No sinner has committed that one sin if he feels within himself a longing for mercy, because once that sin is committed, the soul becomes hardened, dead, and insensitive, and never afterward desires to find peace with God.

Therefore I declare to you, trembling sinner, that however serious your iniquity may be, whatever sin you may have committed, however far you may have exceeded all your fellow creatures, though you may have surpassed the Pauls and Magdalenes and all of the most wicked offenders in the wicked race of sin – the blood of Christ is still able to wash your sin away. I do not speak lightly of your sin, for it is exceedingly serious, but I speak more highly of the blood of Christ. As considerable as your sins are, the blood of Christ is greater still. Your sins are like great mountains, but the blood of Christ is like Noah's flood. Upward this blood will prevail, and the top of the mountains of your sin will be covered.

Whatever I may not be, one thing I know I am – a sinner, guilty, consciously guilty, and often miserable on account of that guilt. The Scripture says, *This is a faithful saying and worthy of acceptation by all, that*

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Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

“And when thine eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
Thus, at His footstool, bow the knee,
And Israel’s God thy peace shall be.”⁵

Let me put my entire trust in the bloody sacrifice which He offered on my behalf. I will not depend upon my prayers, my good deeds, my feelings, my tears, my sermons, my thinking, my Bible reading, nor any of that. I will desire to have good works, but I will not put a shadow of trust in my good works.

“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”⁶

If there is any power in Christ to save, I am saved. If there is an everlasting arm extended by Christ, and if that Savior who hung there was *God over all things, blessed for all the ages* (Romans 9:5), and if His blood is still displayed before the throne of God as the sacrifice for sin, then I cannot perish until the throne of God breaks and the pillars of God’s justice crumble.

5 From “This Man Shall Be the Peace” by John Kent (1766-1843).

6 From “Rock of Ages” by Augustus M. Toplady (1740-1778).

Chapter 12

The Kiss of Reconciliation

The kiss is a token of enmity removed, of strife ended, and of peace established. You will remember that when Jacob met Esau, although the hearts of the brothers had been long estranged – fear had dwelt in the heart of one, and revenge had kindled its fires in the heart of the other – when they met, they were at peace with each other. They fell upon each other’s neck and they kissed. It was the kiss of reconciliation.

The very first work of grace in the heart is for Christ to give the sinner the kiss of His affection and to prove His reconciliation to the sinner. In this same way, the father kissed his prodigal son when he returned (Luke 15:20). Before the feast was spread, before the music and the dance began, the father fell upon his son’s neck and kissed him. Our part is to return that kiss. Just as Jesus gives the reconciling kiss on God’s behalf, it is our part to kiss Jesus and to prove by that

deed that we are *reconciled with God by the death of his Son* (Romans 5:10).

Sinner, until now you have been an enemy of Christ's gospel. You have hated His Sabbaths and neglected His Word. You have despised His commandments and cast His laws behind your back. You have, as much as was in your power, opposed His kingdom. You have loved the wages of sin and the ways of iniquity better than the ways of Christ.

What do you have to say for yourself? Does the Spirit now strive in your heart? Then I urge you to yield to His gracious influence and let your quarrel be at an end. Throw down the weapons of your rebellion, pull out the feathers of pride from your helmet, and cast away the sword of your rebellion. Be His enemy no longer, for rest assured that He desires to be your friend. With arms outstretched and ready to receive you, with eyes full of tears weeping over your stubbornness, and with a heart moved with compassion for you, He speaks through me and says, *Kiss the Son* (Psalm 2:12); be reconciled.

The very message of the gospel is *the ministry of reconciliation* (2 Corinthians 5:18). We speak as God has commanded us. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did exhort you by us; we beseech you in Christ's name, be ye reconciled to God* (2 Corinthians 5:20). Is this a difficult thing we ask of you, that you should be friends with Him who is your best friend? Is this a harsh law, like the commands of Pharaoh to the children of Israel in Egypt, when God

asks you to simply shake hands with Him who shed His blood for sinners?

We do not ask you to be the friends of death or hell, but we beg you to dissolve your association with them. We pray that grace may lead you to reject their company forever and be at peace with Him who is incarnate love and infinite mercy. Sinners, why will you resist Him who only desires to save you? Why treat with contempt Him who loves you? Why trample on the blood that bought you and reject the cross, which is the only hope of your salvation?

Why treat with contempt Him who loves you?

Mankind is utterly ruined and destroyed. He is lost in a wild waste wilderness. The goatskin bottle of his righteousness is all dried up, and there is not so much as a drop of water in it. The heavens refuse him rain, and the earth can yield him no moisture. Must he perish? He looks above, beneath, around, and he discovers no means of escape. Must he die? Must thirst devour him? Must he fall upon the desert and leave his bones to bleach under the hot sun?

No, for the Scriptures declare that there is a fountain of life. *For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light* (Psalm 36:9). Ordained in eternity past by God in solemn covenant, this fountain, this divine well, takes its spring from the deep foundations of God's decrees. It gushes up from the depth which lies beneath, it comes from that place that the eagle's eye has not seen and the lion's cub has not passed over. The deep foundations of God's government, the depths of

His own essential goodness and of His divine nature – these are the mysterious springs from which the water of life gushes forth which will do good to us.

The Son dug this well and bored through massive rocks which prevented this living water from springing upward. Using His cross as the grand instrument, He has pierced through rocks. He has descended to the lowest depth and has broken open a passage by which the love and grace of God, the living water that can save the soul, may well up and overflow to quench the thirst of dying men and women.

The Son has commanded this fountain to flow freely. He has removed the stone that covered the mouth of the fountain, and now having ascended on high, He stands there to see that the fountain will never stop its life-giving course, that its floods will never be dry and its depths will never be exhausted. This sacred fountain, established according to God's good will and pleasure in the covenant, opened by Christ when He died upon the cross, flows this day to give life, health, joy, and peace to poor sinners who are dead in sin and ruined by the fall. There is a water of life.

Pause awhile and look at its floods as they come gushing upward, overflowing on every side and satisfying people's thirst. Let us look with joy. It is called the water of life, and it richly deserves its name. God's favor is life, and in His presence there is pleasure forevermore. *In thy presence is fullness of joy; in thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore* (Psalm 16:11). This water is God's favor, and consequently, it is life. This water of life is intended to bring God's free grace and

God's love for you, so if you come and drink, you will indeed find this to be life to your soul; for in drinking of God's grace, you inherit God's love, and you are reconciled to God. God stands in a fatherly relation to you. He loves you, and His great infinite heart is filled with compassion toward you.

It is not living water simply because it is love and life, but it also saves from impending death. The sinner knows that he must die because he is unworthy. He has committed sins so tremendous that God must punish him. God would cease to be just if He didn't punish the sins of mankind. When conscious that he has been very guilty, man stands shivering in the presence of his Maker, feeling in his soul that his doom is signed and sealed and that he must certainly be cast away from all hope, life, and joy.

Come, you who are doomed because of your sin. This water can wash away your sins, and when your sins are washed away, then you will live, for the innocent must not be punished. Here is water that can make you whiter than driven snow. Even though your heart is as black as Kedar's smoky tents, here is water that can cleanse you and wash you to the whiteness of perfection and make you as beautiful as the curtains of King Solomon. These waters fully deserve the name of life, since pardon is a condition of life. Unpardoned we die, we perish, we sink into the depths of hell. If pardoned, though, we live, we rise, we ascend to the very heights of heaven. This ever-gushing fountain will give life from the dead to all who take of it, by the pardon of their sins.

“But,” one might say, “I have a longing within me that I cannot satisfy. I feel sure that if I am pardoned there will still be something that I need – that nothing I have ever heard of or have ever seen or handled can satisfy. I have within me an aching void that the world can never fill.”

“There was a time,” says another, “when I was satisfied with the theater, when the amusements and the pleasures of people of the world were very satisfying to me. I have pressed that olive until it no longer yields its generous oil, but it is only the contaminated, thick dregs that I can now obtain. My joys have faded. The beauty of my lush valley has become as a faded flower. I can no longer rejoice in the music of this world.”

O soul, I am glad that your cistern has become dry, because until people are dissatisfied with this world, they never look out for the next. Until the god of this world has utterly deceived them, they will not look to Him who is the only living and true God. Listen, you who are wretched and miserable. Here is living water that can quench your thirst! Come and drink, and you will be satisfied, for he who believes in Christ finds enough for him in Christ now, and enough forever.

The believer is not someone who has to pace his room saying, “I find no amusements and no delight.” He is not someone whose days are weary and whose nights are long, for he finds in Christ such a spring of joy, such a fountain of consolation, that he is content and happy. Put him in a dungeon and he will find good company. Place him in a barren wilderness, and he would still eat the bread of heaven. Drive him away from friendship,

and he will find the *friend that sticks closer than a brother* (Proverbs 18:24). Take away all his shade and shelter, and he will find shadow beneath the Rock of Ages. Destroy the foundation of his earthly hopes, but since the foundation of his God stands sure, his heart will still be firm, trusting in the Lord (Psalm 112:7).

There is such a fulness in Christianity that I can honestly testify that I never knew what happiness was until I knew Christ. I thought I did. I warmed my hands by the fire of sin, but it was a painted fire. When I tasted the Savior's love just once and was washed in Jesus's blood, that was heaven

begun below. Oh, if you knew the joys of true Christianity, if you only knew the sweetness of love to Christ, surely you could not stand at a distance. If you could catch

just a glimpse of the believer when he is full of joy, you would renounce your wildest fun and your greatest joy to become the lowest child in the family of God. You see that it is the living water. It is the water of life, because it satisfies our thirst and gives us the reality of life that we can never find in anything beneath the sky.

In the name of Almighty God, stay away from everything that keeps the willing sinner from Christ. Away with you, away with you! Christ sprinkles His blood upon the way, and He cries to you, "Vanish, be gone, leave the road clear. Let him come. Do not stand in his path. Make his way straight before him. Level the mountains and fill up the valleys. Make a highway straight through the wilderness for him to come, to

Stay away from everything that keeps the willing sinner from Christ.

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drink of this Water of Life freely. Let him come! Oh, that is a precious word of command, because it has all the might of Omnipotence in it! *God said, Let there be light, and there was light* (Genesis 1:3). He says, *Let him that is thirsty come*, and come he will and must. He must be willing to come. *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely* (Revelation 22:17). Sinner, remember – God says, *Come*. Is there anything in your way? Remember, He adds *Let him come*. He commands everything to move out of your way. Will you come?

Chapter 13

Though One Rose from the Dead

Human beings are very reluctant to think poorly of themselves, and most are very prone to make excuses for sin. They say, "If we had lived in better times, we would have been better people. If we had been born into this world with better examples, we would have been holier. If we had been placed in better circumstances, we would have been more inclined to do right."

The majority of people, when they seek the cause of their sin, seek it anywhere but in the right place. They will not blame their own nature for it or find fault with their own corrupt heart, but they will lay the blame anywhere else. Some of them find fault with their peculiar position. "If," says one, "I had been born rich instead of being poor, I would not have been dishonest."

"If," says another, "I had been born into the middle class instead of being rich, I would not have been exposed to such temptations of lust and pride as I am now; but

my very position is so unfavorable to piety, that I am compelled by my place in society to be anything but what I ought to be.”

Others turn around and find fault with the whole of society. They say that the whole structure of society is wrong. They tell us that everything in government, everything that concerns the state, and everything that melts people into societies is all so bad that they cannot be good while things are what they are. They believe they must have a revolution and change everything before they could ever be holy!

Many, on the other hand, throw the blame on their training. If they had not been brought up by their parents in a certain way or if they had not been exposed to certain things in their youth, they would not have been what they are. It is their parents' fault. They lay the sin at their father's or their mother's door.

Or it is their physical constitution. Hear them speak for themselves: “If I had the same demeanor as So-and-so, what a good person I would be! But with my stubborn disposition, it is impossible. It is all very well intentioned to talk to me, but people have different characters, and my personality is such that I couldn't by any means be sincerely pious.”

Others go a great deal farther and throw the blame on the ministry. They say, “If the minister had been more passionate in preaching, I would have been a better person. If it had been my privilege to sit under sounder doctrine and hear the Word more faithfully preached, I would have been better.” Some lay the blame at the door of professors of Christianity and say,

“If the church were more consistent, if there were no hypocrites and no formalists, then we would change!”

You are putting the saddle on the wrong horse and laying the burden on the wrong back. The blame is in your heart, and nowhere else. If your heart were renewed, you would be better. Until that is done, if society were remodeled to perfection, if ministers were angels and professors of Christianity were seraphs, you wouldn't be any better. Having less excuse, you would be doubly guilty, and you would perish with a more terrible destruction. However, people will always make the excuse that if things were different, they would be different too. If they see the truth, though, they know that the difference must be made in themselves.

The blame is in
your heart, and
nowhere else.

If a preacher came from another world to preach to us, we would naturally suppose that he came from heaven. Even the rich man did not ask that he or any of his companions in torment might leave hell to preach (see Luke 16:19-31). Spirits that are lost and given up to unutterable wickedness could not visit this earth, and if they did, they could not preach the truth or lead us on the road to heaven that they had not traveled themselves. The occurrence of a damned spirit upon earth would be a curse, a blight, a withering blast. We have no reason to suppose that such a thing ever did or could occur. The preacher from another world, if such a person could come, would come from heaven. He must be a Lazarus who had lain in Abraham's bosom as a pure, perfect, and holy being.

Imagine for a moment that such a one had descended upon earth. Suppose that we heard that a revered spirit who had been buried for a long time had suddenly burst from his grave clothes, lifted up his coffin lid, and was now preaching the Word of Life. What a rush there would be to hear him preach! What place in this wide world would be large enough to hold the massive congregations? How many thousands of pictures would be published of him, showing him in his grave clothes or as an angel fresh from heaven? Faraway nations would soon hear the news, and every ship and plane would be filled with passengers bringing men and women to hear this wondrous preacher and traveler who had returned from the great unknown. How you would listen, and how solemnly you would gaze at that unearthly spirit! Your ears would pay attention to his every word! His faintest syllable would be recorded and published everywhere throughout the world – the utterances of a man who had been dead and was alive again.

We might want to suppose that if such a thing happened, there would be numberless conversions, thinking that surely the congregations attracted by this would be immensely blessed. Many hardened sinners would be led to repent, and hundreds of those who had been putting off a decision would be made to decide, and much good would be done.

Stop! Even if the first part of the imaginary dream occurred, the second would still not happen. If someone rose from the dead, sinners would not be any more likely to repent through his preaching than through the preaching of any other. God might bless such preaching

to salvation if He desired, but in itself there would be no more power in the preaching of the risen dead man or of the glorified spirit than there is of feeble man today. *And he said unto him, If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, even though one rose from the dead* (Luke 16:31).

If the testimony of one man who had been raised from the dead were of any value for confirming the gospel, would not God have used it before now? It is undoubtedly true that some have risen from the dead. We find accounts in Holy Scripture of some men who by the power of Christ Jesus, or through the instrumentality of prophets, were raised from the dead, but you will note this memorable fact, that not a single one of them spoke one word that is recorded, telling us what they saw while they were dead. Oh, what secrets he could have told us, who laid in his grave four days (see John 11)! Do you not suppose that his sisters questioned him? Do you not think that they asked him what he saw, whether he had stood before the burning throne of God, if he had been judged for the things done in his body, and whether he had entered into rest? They may have asked, but it is certain that he gave no answer. Had he given an answer, we would know it now. Tradition would have cherished the record.

Do you remember when Paul preached a long sermon, even until midnight, and there was a young man in the third-floor window named Eutychus (see Acts 20:7-12)? He fell asleep, fell down, and was taken up dead. Paul came down and prayed, and Eutychus was restored to life. Did Eutychus get up and preach after he

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had come back from the dead? No. The thought never seems to have struck a single person in the assembly. Paul went on with his sermon, and they sat and listened to him. They did not care one bit about what Eutychus had seen, because Eutychus had nothing more to tell them than Paul had. Of all the ones who by divine might have been brought back from the shades of death, we don't have one secret told or one mystery unraveled by any of them.

Even if someone would rise from the dead and confirm the truth of the gospel, the unbeliever would be no more near believing than now. Here comes Mr. Infidel Critic. He denies the evidences of the Bible that so clearly prove its authenticity that we are required to believe that he is either blasphemous or senseless, and we leave him his choice between the two. He dares to deny the truth of Holy Scripture and insists that all the miracles it contains are untrue and false.

Do you think that one who had risen from the dead could persuade such a man as that to believe? What? When God's whole creation having been ransacked by the hand of science has only testified to the truth of revelation? When the whole history of buried cities and departed nations has only provided evidence that the Bible was true? When every strip of land mentioned in the Bible has been an exposition and a confirmation of the prophecies of Scripture? If people are still unconvinced, do you suppose that one dead man rising from the tomb would convince them?

No. I see the critical blasphemous already armed for his prey. Listen to him: "I am not quite sure that you

were ever dead. Sir, you profess to be risen from the dead, but I do not believe you. You say you have been dead and have gone to heaven. My dear man, you must have been in a trance. You must bring proof from the obituaries that you were dead.”

The proof is brought that he was dead. “Well, now you must prove that you were buried.” It is proved that he was buried, and it is proved that some grave digger in old times took up his dry bones and cast his dust in the air.

“That is very good. Now I want you to prove that you are the identical man who was buried.”

“Well I am. I know I am. I tell you as an honest man, I have been to heaven and have come back again.”

“Well then,” says the unbeliever, “it is not consistent with reason. It is ridiculous to suppose that a man who was dead and buried could ever come to life again. I don’t believe you, and I tell you so straight to your face.”

That is how people would answer him. Instead of having only the sin of denying many miracles, they would have to add to it the guilt of denying yet another; but they would not even be as much as a tenth of an inch nearer to being convinced. Certainly, if the wonder were done in some far-off land and only reported to the rest of the world, I can imagine that the whole unbelieving world would exclaim, “Simple childish tales and such traditions have been accepted elsewhere, but we are sensible people and do not believe them.”

Even if an entire church graveyard would come to life and stand up before the unbeliever who denies the truth of Christianity, I do not believe there would be

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enough evidence in all the graveyards in the world to convince him. Unbelief would still cry for something more. It is like the horse leech mentioned in Proverbs 30:15. It cries, “Give, give!” Prove a point to an unbeliever, and he wants it proved again. Even if it’s as clear as the light of noon to him from the testimony of many witnesses, he still will not believe it. In fact, he does believe it, but he pretends not to, and is an unbeliever in spite of himself. Certainly the dead man’s rising would not be worth much to convince such people.

The most numerous class of unbelievers are people who never think at all. There are a great number of people in this land who eat and drink, and do everything else except think. At least they think enough to open their shops in the morning and close them at night. They think enough to know a little about the stock market, or the interest rate, or something like how their merchandise is selling, or the price of bread; but their brains seem to be given to them for nothing at all, except to meditate upon bread and cheese.

To them, following Jesus is a matter of very small concern. They will say that the Bible is very true and that Christianity is alright, but these things do not concern them much. They suppose they are Christians because they were baptized when they were babies. They must be Christians, or at least they suppose they are, but they never stop and ask what real Christianity is. They sometimes go to church, but it does not mean much to them. One minister might contradict another, but they do not know; they dare say they are both right. One

minister might be far from another in almost every doctrine, but it does not matter to them.

They pass over Christianity with an unorthodox idea. They say, "God Almighty will not ask us what we believed or if we went to a church that taught what the Bible says." They do not exercise good judgment at all. Thinking is such hard work for them that they never trouble themselves at all about it. If someone were to rise from the dead tomorrow, these people would never even be startled. They would go and see him once, just as they go and see any other curiosity, like the living skeleton or Tom Thumb. They would talk about him a good deal and say, "There's a man risen from the dead!" Some winter evening, they might possibly read one of his sermons, but they would never trouble themselves to consider whether his testimony was true or not.

If someone were to rise from the dead tomorrow, these people would never even be startled.

No. They are so set in their ways that they could never consider any other. If a dead person raised to life were to come to any of their houses, the most they would feel would be that they were somewhat frightened, but as to what the person said, that would never exercise their dull brains or stir their stony senses to even consider truth. Even if one would rise from the dead, the great majority of these people would never be affected.

If Moses and the prophets have failed, no outward means in the world can ever bring you to the footstool of divine grace and make you a Christian. All that can

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be done now is that God the Spirit must bless the Word to you; otherwise, conscience cannot awaken you, reason cannot awaken you, powerful appeals cannot awaken you, and persuasion cannot bring you to Christ. Nothing will ever do it except God the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 14

The Castle of Self

Strange to say, the majority of those who are saved are the most unlikely people in the world to have been saved, while many of those who perish were once the very people whom we would have expected to see in heaven. There is one who as a child found himself in trouble and in foolishness all the time. His mother often wept over him, and cried and groaned over her son's wanderings. With his fierce spirit that could not be bridled and with his constant rebellions and eruptions of fierce anger, she said, "My son, my son, what will you be like in your later years? Surely, you will smash law and order to pieces and be a disgrace to your father's name."

He grew up. In his youth he was wild and shameless, but wonder of wonders, all of a sudden he became a new man, altogether changed. He was no longer like what he was before, any more than angels are like lost spirits. He sat at his mother's feet and cheered her heart,

and the lost, fiery one became gentle, mild, humble as a little child, and obedient to God's commandments.

You say, wonder of wonders! Here, though, is another man. He was a beautiful child and often talked of Jesus. Often, when his mother had him on her knee, he asked her questions about heaven. He was a great example and a wonder of piety in his youth. As he grew up, tears rolled down his cheeks under any sermon. He could scarcely bear to hear of death without a sigh. Sometimes his mother found him alone in prayer.

What is he now? He has become a slave to sin. He has become a corrupt, desperate lowlife. He is deeply entrenched in all types of wickedness, lust, and sin,

God has taken the low things of the world and has picked His people out from among the very roughest of men.

and has become more corrupt than others could have ever imagined. His own evil spirit, once confined, has now developed itself, and he has learned to play the lion in his manhood, just as he used to play the fox in his youth.

This is very often the case. Some abandoned, wicked fellow has had his heart broken and has cried to God for mercy and renounced his vile sin, while some nice church-attending young girl by his side has heard the same sermon, and if there was a tear, she brushed it away. She still continues just as she was, *having no hope, and without God in the world* (Ephesians 2:12). God has taken the low things of the world and has picked His people out from among the very roughest of men, in

order that He may prove that it is not natural disposition, but that *saving comes of the LORD* alone (Jonah 2:9).

With sinners, this doctrine is a great battering ram against their pride. I will give you an example. The sinner in his natural condition reminds me of a man who has a strong and nearly impenetrable castle into which he has fled. There is the outer moat, a second moat, and high walls. After that, there is the dungeon and main tower, into which the sinner will withdraw. The first moat that goes around the sinner's trusting place is his good works. "Ah!" he says, "I am as good as my neighbor. I have always paid my debts; I am no sinner. I give to some charities. I'm a good respectable gentleman indeed."

Well, when God comes to work with him, to save him, He sends his army across the first moat. As they go through it, they cry, *Salvation is of the Lord*, and the moat is dried up, for if it is of the Lord, how can it be of good works? But when that is gone, he has a second entrenchment – that of ceremonies.

"Well," he says, "I will not trust in my good works, but I have been baptized, I have been confirmed, and I religiously take the sacrament. That will be my trust."

"Over the moat! Over the moat!" And the soldiers go over again, shouting, *Salvation is of the Lord*. The second moat is dried up, and the trust in ceremonies is gone. Then the soldiers come to the first strong wall. The sinner, looking over it, says, "I can repent. I can believe whenever I like. I will save myself by repenting and believing."

Up come the soldiers of God and His great army

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of conviction, and they batter this wall to the ground, crying, *Salvation is of the Lord!* Your faith and your repentance must all be given to you, or you will neither believe nor repent of sin.

The castle is now taken. The man's hopes are all cut off, and he feels that salvation is not of self. The castle of self is overcome, and the great banner upon which is written "Salvation is of the Lord" is displayed upon the battlements.

But is the battle over? Oh, no. The sinner has withdrawn to the tower in the center of the castle, and now he changes his tactics. "I cannot save myself;" he says, "therefore, I will despair. There is no salvation for me."

This second part of the castle is as hard to take as the first, for the sinner sits down and says, "I cannot be saved. I must perish." But God commands the soldiers to take this castle, too, shouting, *Salvation is of the Lord.* It is not of man, but it is of God. *He is able also to save to the uttermost,* even though you cannot save yourself (Hebrews 7:25).

This sword, you see, cuts two ways. It cuts pride down, and then it cleaves the skull of despair. If anyone says he can save himself, it cuts his pride in half at once; if someone else says he cannot be saved, it dashes his despair to the earth, for it affirms that he can be saved, seeing that *salvation is of the Lord.*

What is the opposite of this truth? *Salvation is of God;* therefore, damnation is of man. If any of you perish, the blame will not lie at God's door. If you are lost and cast away, you will have to bear all the blame and all the tortures of conscience yourself. You will lie

THE CASTLE OF SELF

forever in hell and reflect, “I have destroyed myself. I have made a suicide of my soul. I have been my own destroyer, and I can lay no blame on God.” Remember, if you are to be saved, you must be saved by God alone, and if you are lost, you have lost yourselves. *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* (Ezekiel 33:11).

Chapter 15

Wavering Between Two Opinions

Most of the people prior to Elijah thought that Jehovah was God, and that Baal was god, too. For this reason, the worship of both was quite consistent. The great majority of people did not reject the God of their fathers wholly, nor did they bow before Baal wholly. As polytheists, believing in many gods, they thought both gods could be worshipped, and each could have a share in their hearts.

“No,” said the prophet when he began, “this will not do; these are two different positions. You can never make them one. They are two contradictory things which cannot be combined. Instead of combining the two, which is impossible, you are wavering between the two, which makes a vast difference.”

“I will build in my house,” said one of them, “an altar for Jehovah here, and an altar for Baal there. I am of one position. I believe them both to be God.”

“No, no,” said Elijah, “it cannot be so. They are two, and they must be two. These things are not one, but two distinct positions. You cannot unite them.”

Many say, “I am worldly, but I am religious, too. I can go worship God on Sunday. I can also go to the races any other time. I go, on the one hand, to the place where I can serve my lusts, and I am met with entertainment in every room of every description. At the same time, I say my prayers most devoutly. Is it not possible to be a good Christian and a man of the world, too? Can I not hold with the hounds as well as run with the hare? May I not love God and serve the devil, too, taking pleasure from each of them, while giving my heart to neither?”

We answer, “No. They are two positions. You cannot do it, because they are distinct and separate.”

Mark Antony yoked two lions to his chariot, but there are two lions which no man has ever yoked together: the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the pit. These can never go together. You can hold two opinions in politics, perhaps, but you will be despised by everybody unless you are of one opinion or the other and act as an independent person. However, you cannot hold two opinions in the matter of your soul and Christianity. If God is God, serve Him and serve Him fully. If this world is god, serve it and do not claim to be a Christian.

If you think the things of the world are the best, serve them; devote yourself to them, grieve your conscience, and run into sin. But remember, if the Lord is your God, you cannot have Baal too. You must have

WAVERING BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS

one thing or the other. *No one can serve two masters* (Matthew 6:24). If you serve God, He is your master. If you serve the devil, he will be your master, and you cannot serve two masters.

Be wise and do not think that the two can be mingled together. Many a respectable deacon thinks that he can be covetous and greedy in business and try to take advantage of the poor, and still be a saint. He is a liar to God and to man! He is no saint. He is the very chief of sinners.

Many a very excellent woman is received into church fellowship among the people of God and thinks herself one of the elect, but is found full of wrath and bitterness. She is a slave of mischief and sin, a tattler, a slanderer, and a busybody. She enters into other people's houses and turns everything like comfort out of the minds of those with whom she comes in contact. Still she believes that she is the servant of God and of the devil, too! No, my lady, this will not work. The two can never be served completely. Serve your master, whoever he is. If you do profess to be a Christian, be so completely. If you are not a Christian, do not pretend to be. If you love the world, then love it, but cast off your mask and do not be a hypocrite.

If you do profess to be a Christian, be so completely.

The double-minded person is the most despicable of all people. He is the follower of Janus, who wears two faces. He can look with one eye upon the (so-called) Christian world with great delight, and donate a little money to the Tract Society, the Bible Society, and the

Missionary Society, but he has another eye over there, with which he looks at the casino, the pub, and other pleasures, which I do not care to mention, but which some may know more of than I wish to know. Such a person is worse than the most corrupt, in the opinion of anyone who knows how to judge. He might not seem worse in his open character, but he really is worse, because he is not honest enough to go through with what he professes.

Tom Loker, in *Uncle Tom*, was pretty near the mark when he shut the mouth of Haley, the slaveholder, who professed religion, with the following common-sense remark: “I can stand most any talk of yours, but your pious talk – that kills me right up. After all, what’s the odds between me and you? ’Tain’t that you care one bit more or have a bit more feelin’ – it’s clean, sheer, dog meanness, wanting to cheat the devil and save your own skin; don’t I see through it? And your getting religious, as you call it, after all, is a deal too mean for me. Run up a bill with the devil all your life, and then sneak out when pay time comes.”

How many do the same every day in London, in England, and everywhere else! They try to serve both masters, but it cannot be. The two things cannot be reconciled. God and greedy gain, Christ and Belial – these never can meet. There can never be an agreement between them, and they can never be brought into unity. Why would you even want to do so? *Two opinions*, said the prophet. He would not allow any of his hearers to profess to worship both. *And Elijah came near unto all the people and said, How long shall ye halt between two*

opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people did not answer him a word (1 Kings 18:21).

It was a day to be remembered when the multitudes of Israel were assembled at the foot of Carmel, and the solitary prophet of the Lord came forward to defy the four hundred and fifty priests of the false god. We could look upon that scene with the eye of historical curiosity, and we would find it rich with interest. Instead of doing that, however, we will look at it with the eye of attentive consideration and see if we cannot improve our lives by its teachings.

There are three kinds of people upon that hill of Carmel and along the plain. First, we have the devoted servant of Jehovah, a solitary prophet. On the other hand, we have the decided servants of the evil one – the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. However, the great majority of people that day belonged to a third group. They were those who had not fully determined whether to worship Jehovah – the God of their fathers, or Baal – the god of Jezebel.

On the one hand, their ancient traditions led them to fear Jehovah, and on the other hand, their interest in pleasing their leaders and keeping their positions led them to bow before Baal. Therefore, many of them were secret and half-hearted followers of Jehovah, but public worshippers of Baal. All of them at this time were wavering, or halting, between two opinions.

Elijah does not address his sermon to the priests of Baal. He will have something to say to them later, as he will preach them dreadful sermons in deeds of blood.

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Nor does Elijah have anything to say to those who are dedicated servants of Jehovah, for they are not there. His discourse is directed specifically to those who are wavering between two positions.

“Now,” says the prophet, “if the Lord is God, follow Him. Let your conduct be consistent with what you claim to believe. If you believe the Lord to be God, live it out in your daily life. Be holy, be prayerful, trust in Christ, be faithful, be upright, be loving. Give your whole heart to God and follow Him. If Baal is god, then follow him, but do not pretend to follow the God of Israel.”

Let your conduct back up your opinion. If you really think that the foolishness of this world is best, and if you believe that a fashionable life, a life of frivolity and fun, flying from flower to flower while getting honey from none, is the most desirable, then live it out. If you think the life of the pleasure seeker is so very desirable, if you think his end is to be desired, if you think his pleasures are right, then follow them. Go all the way with them. If you believe that to cheat in business is right, put a sign up over your door: *I sell dishonest goods here.*

Do not deceive the public. If you intend to be a real Christian, follow your conviction completely; but if you intend to be worldly, go all the way with the world. Let your conduct follow your opinions, and make your life conform with what you say. Live out your beliefs, whatever they are. But you don't dare to do so, because you are too cowardly to sin honestly and openly before God, as others do. Your conscience will not let you.

How long will you halt between two opinions? You middle-aged men, you said when you were youths, “When we begin our careers, we will follow Jesus. Let us sow our wild oats while we are young, and then we will begin to be diligent servants of the Lord.” Now you have come to middle age and are waiting until your new home is built and you will retire; then you think you will serve God. Sirs, you said the same when you began your careers and when your business began to increase. Therefore, I demand of you, “How long will you halt between two opinions?” How much time do you want?

How long will you halt
between two opinions?

Young man, you said in your early childhood, when your mother’s prayer followed you, “I will seek God when I become a man.” You have passed that day. You are a man, and more than that, and you are still wavering. *How long shall ye halt between two opinions?*

Many of you have attended church for years. You have been under the conviction of the Spirit of God many times, but you have wiped the tears from your eyes and said, “I will seek God and turn to Him with full purpose of heart.” Now, you are just where you were then. How many more sermons do you need? How many more Sundays must be wasted? How many warnings, how many sicknesses, how many times must the bell toll to warn you that you must die? How many graves must be dug for your family before an impression will be made upon you? How many plagues and pestilences must ravage this city before you will turn

to God in truth? *How long shall ye halt between two opinions?* I pray that you would answer this question and not allow the sands of life to drop, drop, drop from the glass saying, “When the next one goes I will repent,” yet that next one finds you unrepentant still.

You say, “When the glass reaches a certain point, I will turn to God.” No. It is pointless to talk this way, because you may find your glass empty before you thought it had begun to run low. You may find yourself in eternity when you thought you would get around to repenting and turning to God.

The prophet cries, *If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him* (1 Kings 18:21). In so doing, he states the basis of his practical claim. Let your conduct be consistent with your beliefs.

Another objection is raised by the crowd. “Prophet,” someone says, “you come to demand practical proof of our affection. You say, ‘Follow God.’ Now, if I believe God to be God, and that is my opinion, I still do not see what right He has to lay claim to my beliefs.”

Now, pay attention to how the prophet puts it. He says, *If the LORD is God, follow him*. The reason I claim that you should put action behind your opinion concerning God is that God is God! God has a claim upon you, as creatures, for your devoted obedience.

Someone replies, “What profit would I have if I served God completely? Would I be happier? Would I do better in this world? Would I have more peace of mind?”

No. Those are secondary considerations. The only thing for you to consider is, *If the LORD is God, follow him*. Not if it is more advantageous to you, but

If the LORD is God, follow him. A worldly religious person might plead for Christianity on the grounds that Christianity might be the best for this world and best for the world to come. Not so with the prophet. He says, “I do not base it on that reasoning. Instead, I insist that it is your bound duty that if you believe in God you must serve Him and obey Him simply because He is God. I do not tell you it is for your advantage; it may be, and I believe it is, but I put that aside from the question. I demand of you that you follow God if you believe Him to be God. If you do not think He is God, if you really think that the devil is god, then follow him. His pretended godhead will be your plea, and you will be consistent; but if God is God, if He made you, I demand that you serve Him. If it is He who puts breath into your nostrils, I demand that you obey Him. If God is really worthy of worship, and you really think so, I demand that you either follow Him, or else deny that He is God at all.”

How long shall ye halt between two opinions? I will tell them. You will halt between two opinions, all of you who are undecided, until God answers by fire. Fire was not what these poor people who were assembled there wanted. Elijah proclaimed that *the God that answers by fire is God* (1 Kings 18:24).

I imagine that I hear some of them saying, “No, the God who answers by water, let Him be God. We need rain badly enough.”

“No,” said Elijah, “if rain would come, you would say that it was the common course of nature, and that would not lead you to decide.” I tell you, nothing that

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comes from God and nothing that God sends into your life will cause you who are undecided to decide. God may surround you with His care, influences, and intervention. He may surround you with frequent warnings from the deathbed of your fellow men, but these things will never cause you to make a decision.

It is not the God of rain, but the God of fire who will do it. There are two ways in which you who are undecided will be decided in the future. You who have decided to follow God will need no decision. You who have decided to follow Satan will need no decision; you are on Satan's side and must dwell forever in eternal burning.

However, you who are undecided need something to help you decide. You will have one of two things: you will either have the fire of God's Spirit to lead you to decide, or your decision will be made by the fire of eternal judgment.

Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God and that thou shalt convert their heart back again to thee. (1 Kings 18:37)

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Charles H. Spurgeon – A Brief Biography



Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born on June 19, 1834, in Kelvedon, Essex, England. He was one of seventeen children in his family (nine of whom died in infancy). His father and grandfather were Nonconformist ministers in England. Due to economic difficulties, eighteen-month-old Charles was sent to live with his grandfather, who helped teach Charles the ways of God. Later in life, Charles remembered looking at the pictures in *Pilgrim's Progress* and in *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* as a young boy.

Charles did not have much of a formal education and never went to college. He read much throughout his life though, especially books by Puritan authors.

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Even with godly parents and grandparents, young Charles resisted giving in to God. It was not until he was fifteen years old that he was born again. He was on his way to his usual church, but when a heavy snowstorm prevented him from getting there, he turned in at a little Primitive Methodist chapel. Though there were only about fifteen people in attendance, the preacher spoke from Isaiah 45:22: *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.* Charles Spurgeon's eyes were opened and the Lord converted his soul.

He began attending a Baptist church and teaching Sunday school. He soon preached his first sermon, and then when he was sixteen years old, he became the pastor of a small Baptist church in Cambridge. The church soon grew to over four hundred people, and Charles Spurgeon, at the age of nineteen, moved on to become the pastor of the New Park Street Church in London. The church grew from a few hundred attenders to a few thousand. They built an addition to the church, but still needed more room to accommodate the congregation. The Metropolitan Tabernacle was built in London in 1861, seating more than 5,000 people. Pastor Spurgeon preached the simple message of the cross, and thereby attracted many people who wanted to hear God's Word preached in the power of the Holy Spirit.

On January 9, 1856, Charles married Susannah Thompson. They had twin boys, Charles and Thomas. Charles and Susannah loved each other deeply, even amidst the difficulties and troubles that they faced in life, including health problems. They helped each other spiritually, and often together read the writings of

Jonathan Edwards, Richard Baxter, and other Puritan writers.

Charles Spurgeon was a friend of all Christians, but he stood firmly on the Scriptures, and it didn't please all who heard him. Spurgeon believed in and preached on the sovereignty of God, heaven and hell, repentance, revival, holiness, salvation through Jesus Christ alone, and the infallibility and necessity of the Word of God. He spoke against worldliness and hypocrisy among Christians, and against Roman Catholicism, ritualism, and modernism.

One of the biggest controversies in his life was known as the "Down-Grade Controversy." Charles Spurgeon believed that some pastors of his time were "downgrading" the faith by compromising with the world or the new ideas of the age. He said that some pastors were denying the inspiration of the Bible, salvation by faith alone, and the truth of the Bible in other areas, such as creation. Many pastors who believed what Spurgeon condemned were not happy about this, and Spurgeon eventually resigned from the Baptist Union.

Despite some difficulties, Spurgeon became known as the "Prince of Preachers." He opposed slavery, started a pastors' college, opened an orphanage, led in helping feed and clothe the poor, had a book fund for pastors who could not afford books, and more.

Charles Spurgeon remains one of the most published preachers in history. His sermons were printed each week (even in the newspapers), and then the sermons for the year were re-issued as a book at the end of the year. The first six volumes, from 1855-1860, are known

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as *The Park Street Pulpit*, while the next fifty-seven volumes, from 1861-1917 (his sermons continued to be published long after his death), are known as *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. He also oversaw a monthly magazine-type publication called *The Sword and the Trowel*, and Spurgeon wrote many books, including *Lectures to My Students*, *All of Grace*, *Around the Wicket Gate*, *Advice for Seekers*, *John Ploughman's Talks*, *The Soul Winner*, *Words of Counsel for Christian Workers*, *Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith*, *Morning and Evening*, his autobiography, and more, including some commentaries, such as his twenty-year study on the Psalms – *The Treasury of David*.

Charles Spurgeon often preached ten times a week, preaching to an estimated ten million people during his lifetime. He usually preached from only one page of notes, and often from just an outline. He read about six books each week. During his lifetime, he had read *The Pilgrim's Progress* through more than one hundred times. When he died, his personal library consisted of more than 12,000 books. However, the Bible always remained the most important book to him.

Spurgeon was able to do what he did in the power of God's Holy Spirit because he followed his own advice – he met with God every morning before meeting with others, and he continued in communion with God throughout the day.

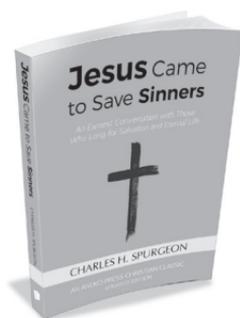
Charles Spurgeon suffered from gout, rheumatism, and some depression, among other health problems. He often went to Menton, France, to recuperate and rest. He preached his final sermon at the Metropolitan

Tabernacle on June 7, 1891, and died in France on January 31, 1892, at the age of fifty-seven. He was buried in Norwood Cemetery in London.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon lived a life devoted to God. His sermons and writings continue to influence Christians all over the world.

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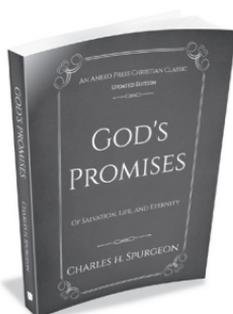




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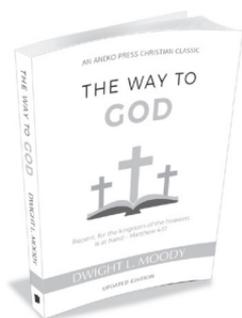


God's Promises, Charles H. Spurgeon

The first part of this book is meant to be a sieve to separate the chaff from the wheat. Use it on your own soul. It may be the most profitable and beneficial work you have ever done. He who looked into his accounts and found that his business was losing money was saved from bankruptcy. This may happen also to you. If, however, you discover that your heavenly business is prospering, it will be a great comfort to you. You cannot lose by honestly searching your own heart.

The second part of this book examines God's promises to His children. The promises of God not only exceed all precedent, but they also exceed all imitation. No one has been able to compete with God in the language of liberality. The promises of God are as much above all other promises as the heavens are above the earth.

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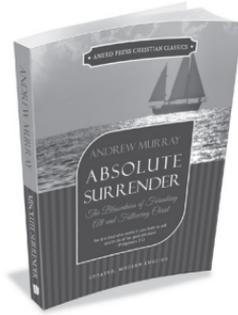


The Way to God, Dwight L. Moody

There is life in Christ. Rich, joyous, wonderful life. It is true that the Lord disciplines those whom He loves and that we are often tempted by the world and our enemy, the devil. But if we know how to go beyond that temptation to cling to the cross of Jesus Christ and keep our eyes on our Lord, our reward both here on earth and in heaven will be 100 times better than what this world has to offer.

This book is thorough. It brings to life the love of God, examines the state of the unsaved individual's soul, and analyzes what took place on the cross for our sins. *The Way to God* takes an honest look at our need to repent and follow Jesus, and gives hope for unending, joyous eternity in heaven.

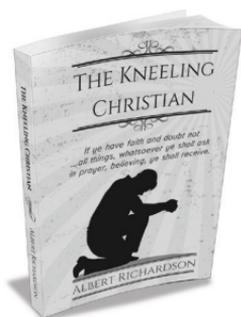
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God waits to bless us in a way beyond what we expect. From the beginning, ear has not heard, neither has the eye seen, what God has prepared for those who wait for Him (Isaiah 64:4). God has prepared unheard of things, things you never can think of, blessings much more wonderful than you can imagine and mightier than you can conceive. They are divine blessings. Oh, come at once and say, "I give myself absolutely to God, to His will, to do only what God wants." God will enable you to carry out the surrender necessary, if you come to Him with a sincere heart.

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***The Kneeling Christian*, by Albert Richardson**

Lord Jesus is as powerful today as ever before. The Lord Jesus is as anxious for men to be saved as ever before. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, but He does stretch forth His arm unless we pray more – and more genuinely. Prayer, real prayer, is the noblest, the sublimest and most stupendous act that any creature of God can perform. Lord, teach us how to pray.

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