

God's Love for Man

The world, though fallen, is not all sorrow and misery. Nature and revelation alike testify of God's love. In nature itself are messages of hope and comfort. "God is love" is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty green trees—all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy. Yet these but imperfectly represent His love. Though all these evidences have been given, the enemy of good blinded the minds of men, so that they looked upon God with fear; they thought of Him as severe and unforgiving. Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice,—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men.

Our Need of Christ

In his sinless state, man held joyful communion with God, but after his sin, he could no longer find joy in holiness, and he sought to hide from the presence of God. Such is still the condition of the unrenewed heart. It is not in harmony with God, and finds no joy in communion with Him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce and outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the

springs of life. The idea that it is necessary to develop the good that exists in man by nature, is a fatal deception. There must be a power working within from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God. Jesus said, "Except a man be born from above," unless he receive a new heart, new desires, purposes, and motives, leading to a new life, "he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Repentance

It is only through Christ that we can be brought into harmony with God, with holiness; but how are we to come to Christ? Many are asking the same question as did the multitude on the Day of Pentecost, when, convicted of sin, they cried out, "What shall we do?" The first word of Peter's answer was, "Repent" (Acts 2:37, 38), but true repentance is beyond the reach of our own to accomplish. Just here is a point on which many err, and hence they fail of receiving the help that Christ desires to give them. They think that they cannot come to Christ unless they first repent, and that repentance prepares for the forgiveness of their sins. It is true that repentance does precede the forgiveness of sins; for it is only the broken and contrite heart that will feel the need of a Savior. But must the sinner wait till he has repented before he can come to Jesus? Is repentance to be made an obstacle between the sinner and the Savior? The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

Surrender

Many are inquiring, "How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?" You desire to

give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now choose to be Christians. You cannot control your thoughts and you feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, you will have strength from above to hold you steadfast. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him and your thoughts will be in harmony with Him. Thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith.

Faith and Acceptance

As your conscience has been quickened by the Holy Spirit, you have seen something of the evil of sin, but the more you struggle to escape, the more you realize your helplessness. You cannot atone for your past sins; you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. Just believe the promise. Confess your sins and give yourself to God. As surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you. If you believe the promise, – believe that you are forgiven and cleansed, – God supplies the fact; you are made whole. It is so if you believe it. Do not wait to feel that you are made whole, but say, "I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised." Here is where thousands fail; they do not believe that

Jesus pardons them personally, individually. They do not take God at His word. Put away the suspicion that God's promises are not meant for you. Away with such thoughts! Look up, you that are doubting and trembling; for Jesus lives to make intercession for us. Thank God for the gift of His dear Son. Come with your whole heart to Jesus, and you may claim His blessing.

Test of Discipleship

We do not earn salvation by obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith. That so-called faith in Christ which professes to release men from the obligation of obedience to God, is not faith, but presumption. "By grace are ye saved through faith." But "faith, if it hath not works, is dead" (Eph. 2:8; Jas. 2:17). Before He ascended to heaven Jesus declared, "I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10). The Bible says, "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3). The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been, perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.

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