

THE DIVINE CHARACTER WOEFULLY SLANDERED

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False Theology Drives Many Away from God and the Bible—Predicted Hour of Trial Upon the Whole World Has Come—Balm for the Wounded Soul— "Come Unto Me All Ye Weary and Heavy Laden."

"That ye may...know the love of Christ, which, passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."—Eph. 3:17-19

The word Love is as warming and cheering correspondingly as the words Hatred and Selfishness are cold and discouraging. To some who all their lives have been immersed in a world of selfish frigidity the real quality of the word Love is disallowed, disputed, claimed not to exist. Nevertheless, in every human being there is a craving for love, pure and sincere, even though expected never to be found.

For the majority inevitable reverses and failures take the place of anticipated successes. However strong, courageous, or even brutally fierce has been the warrior in the battle for bread, fame and glory, he craves ultimately, in his partial or complete disaster, the love which he has neither shown to others nor ever really expected that others would show to him. Whether he succumbs to financial disaster, to immorality, to narcotic stimulants or to disease, the balm of Gilead for the wounded soul is Love.

Sometimes this love comes from the partner of life—the wife or the husband; sometimes from parents or children, sisters or brothers. Thank God for these sometimes and for the evidence they afford us of some measure of the image of God in humanity! But alas! in a vast majority of cases the failure, the disaster suffered, not only shatters hope, but cools friendship and destroys the semblances of love, which were merely emotional or perfunctory or admiration. At such a time the Message of the Love of God and Christ is a balm indeed, if it comes to the wounded and discouraged one.

It is our thought that particularly at this time such discouragement is being borne in upon large numbers of the human family. With the opening of the year many properly made resolutions to themselves, or to their friends or to the Lord; that they would live more noble lives, that they would be loyal to their Creator, to their companions, to themselves and to all their interests and obligations. But as the year slips away it brings trials, testings, and to many defeat and discouragement.

"Come Weary and Heavy-Laden"

Now is the opportune moment to these discouraged ones to hear the voice of Him that speaketh from Heaven, telling them of His love, His sympathy and His willingness to aid

all who will accept His assistance. Harkening obediently to His voice, such may change the hour of defeat to the hour of victory by the Lord's assisting grace; just as, many a time in earthly warfare, victory has been wrested from defeat by the arrival of reinforcements at the opportune moment. The moment of discouragement, of loss of confidence in earthly progress, and of hopeless despair, is the opportune moment for the discouraged one to recognize his need of the Savior, to cry unto Him and forthwith to receive the reinforcements from Him who has declared, "My strength is made perfect in your weakness"; and again, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give thee rest."

But it requires faith to believe in a Savior whom we have never seen, with whom we have not been acquainted, and especially One who has been so frequently misrepresented to us as having prepared from before the foundation of the world for our eternal torment. How can we assure ourselves of His Love? How may we know that He is not the cruel One that has been pictured to us? How may we know that He is a loving, generous, kind, faithful Friend—a God who delighteth not in our trouble, who rejoiceth not in iniquity, who rejoiceth not in eternally tormenting His creatures, nor even in destroying them eternally in the Second Death; but, conversely, in doing us good, in exhibiting towards all who will receive it His loving kindness and tender mercy, enabling them more and more, in the language of our text, to appreciate the height, the length, the breadth and the depth of His Love—a God who eventually will have all men saved (recovered) and brought to a knowledge of the Truth, to obedience and character development, to life everlasting in the Paradise of God?

We see the difficulty of such; and it cries aloud to those of us who have learned the way of the Lord more perfectly, to let our light shine, to let the world who are not completely blinded by the Adversary see the true character of our God and of the Son of God, to let them see the Scriptural presentation of the love, the mercy and the abundant provision arranged for in the Divine Purpose.

What the world needs is to get over its fright respecting the Lord and the future and to see the Love of God and His gracious provision in Christ. This alone will win the heart in the proper sense of the word. Fear may bring torment, but only the Truth can sanctify and happyfy—fulfil our Redeemer's prayer, "Sanctify them through Thy Truth; Thy Word is Truth."

The fright that is upon the world came from the Dark Ages and is echoed by all the creeds of orthodoxy, breeding in the hearts of men distrust, hatred of God and of the Bible, which is falsely accredited with being the fountain from which have been drawn these brackish waters of tradition presented by the creeds. It is time that every true Christian should take his stand for the right, the Truth, for the Word of God, for the exposition of the falsehoods which have slandered the Almighty Character, which have benumbed the

zeal of the saints, and which have repelled the weary and heavy-laden as they looked for relief and balm in the direction of their Creator.

Is it not time that all ministers of the Gospel announce and manifest their freedom from the creedal misstatements of the Divine character and purpose, which in their hearts they have rejected long ago? It is well that all should lift up their voice like a trumpet, and give no uncertain sound to the masses of the groaning creation, who are awakening and are hungering and thirsting for the Bread and the Water of Life, which alone can satisfy their longings.

Bible Study the Great Need

This is the Message which we bear to the troubled and discouraged ones. Until they have time to take up with us a thorough study of the Scriptures and demonstrate the fact to themselves, they must take our word for it that the Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power of God are all enlisted on behalf of Adam and his race—to save us from our sins and from the dead and dying condition in which we find ourselves, mentally, morally and physically. Nor should it be very difficult to exercise this degree of faith. The Scripture: declare, “He that cometh unto God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” (Heb. 11:6) This involves a faith in the Justice of God that, having invited us, He will not spurn us when we respond to His call.

Moreover, it should appeal to every reasonable mind that God should be just and loving towards all. The thought of an angry, vindictive, torture-loving Creator should be rejected instantly by every rational mind as being ungodlike, demoniacal. No doubt this would have been so had it not been that the misconception on the subject, which the Apostle calls the “doctrines of devils,” was imposed upon our minds from our very earliest childhood, and often by those whom we loved and whose piety we revered, but who were themselves deceived.

It is high time that more reverential, more loving, theological views were seen by all mankind. It is the lack of this true theology that is driving many away from the Lord and His Word into vain philosophies and “science falsely so-called”—Higher Criticism, Christian Science, Evolution, Theosophy, etc., etc.,—1 Timothy 6:20

The world has discovered that the bonds of ignorance and superstition have been holding it for centuries, and that its eyes of understanding have so long been covered that now they blink in the dazzling light of the dawning Millennial Day. At one bound the so-called scientific world has left God’s Word and leaped into a refined agnosticism, which professes a faith not possessed. The middle and the lower classes are ever ready to follow their leaders; this means, shortly, what the Bible predicts—“a Time of Trouble such as was not since there was a nation”—a social, religious, financial, political upheaval—
anarchy.

Where Judgment Begins

Thank God for the assurances of His Word that the spasm will be a brief one! “short work will the Lord make with the earth.” Everything has been prepared for the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom upon the ruins of present systems. It is folly to think of holding the people back, of bandaging the eyes of their understanding, and of enslaving them again in ignorance and superstition. Those who are thus endeavoring to meet the situation show clearly that they do not understand it. The tidal wave of liberty of mind can no more be repressed than can the ocean tide be stayed with a broom.

There is just one remedy—the correct understanding of the Bible teachings. Whoever fails to receive the Truth fails of everything with respect to the present life. This statement applies not only to the world in general but also to the Church of Christ.

The hour of trial predicted to come upon the whole world is now upon us; and the Apostle Peter’s declaration is that it must begin with the Church—the House of God (1 Peter 4:17) The statement of the Prophet is that one thousand will fall to one that will stand—“A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.” (Psalm 91:7) St. Paul’s exhortation respecting the same time of trial is, “Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the Evil Day, and having done all, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:11-13). Who shall be able to stand? is the question.

The Measurements of Love Divine

We are not able to tell the wonderful measurements of God’s Love—nor can others tell them. Indeed, as the Apostle suggests, the privilege of appreciating these measurements is granted only to the saints, and to these in proportion to their saintliness. Thus a babe in Christ, though beloved of the Lord and carefully cherished, cannot comprehend these measurements of the Divine character because he is only an infantile saint.

When first he believed in the Lord he saw something of Divine Love and Mercy, which influenced him, drew him to the exercise of faith and the renouncement of sin. From the standpoint of Justification by Faith, he could see more of the Lord and could appreciate more the measurements of Divine greatness. Then, called and appreciating the call, he bowed his heart before the Lord and made a full surrender to Him in response to the invitation, “I beseech you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

Having thus done all in his power and having laid himself at the Lord’s feet, he received the begetting of the Holy Spirit, not with outward show or demonstration, but with inward grace and enlightenment of the eyes of his understanding. From this new standpoint of consecration and harmony with the Divine will, he began to see more of the

length, more of the breadth, more of the height, more of the depth of God's Love. If he has lived up to his privileges faithfully, he has been growing hourly, daily, monthly, yearly—growing in grace, in knowledge, in ability to see the measurements of the Divine character.

Note that this is the very expression of our text and context: The reception of Christ into our hearts by faith brought, as a rule, mighty strengthening by His Spirit in the inner man—to the new nature. As this Spirit of Christ dwelt, or resided, in our hearts by faith, it tended to root us and to ground us in His character-likeness, which is the same as that of His Father—Love. This experience enables us to comprehend with all saints these measurements of our Creator's character as others cannot appreciate them. Yet, as the Apostle says, even we who now know only in part shall, after experiencing the resurrection change from earthly to Heavenly nature, see our Lord as He is, and shall know as we are known.

“Filled with the Fullness of God”

So in our text, which applies to the present life, the Apostle declares that even the saints cannot know the Love of Christ; for it passes knowledge. He then gives a further intimation of how this keen appreciation of the glorious character of God comes to His consecrated ones—by their being “filled with all the fullness of God.” This means, not only the renouncement of sin, not only faith in the Lord as our Redeemer, not only consecration to Him, but also a filling with His Spirit, His disposition. This, as already stated, is a gradual work. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord.”

The Spirit of the Lord is one of holiness—not only of separateness from sin, but of opposition to it; not only of sympathy with righteousness but of activity on its behalf; not only of putting away from our hearts every sympathy with the unfruitful works of darkness, but also of the receiving of that spirit which condemns them by daily life and a word fitly spoken; not only by an appreciation of the fruits and grace of God's Spirit—meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love—but so great an appreciation of them as more and more induces us to stamp these gracious characteristics of God upon our own thoughts, words and deeds.

Not only did the great Apostle Paul preach Christ and shun not to declare the whole counsel of God, but he never once referred to eternal torment or to anything akin to it—and his writings constitute more than one-half of the New Testament Scriptures! The severest penalty that he ever declared is that of everlasting destruction, the Second Death, from which there is no hope of deliverance. Undoubtedly he was right in this course. On the contrary, he preached and wrote not only about the length and breadth and height and depth of the love of Christ, but in the context he tells us that he prayed for the Church, that they might be able to attain such and more of the Love of God. Undoubtedly this is the great need of the Church today.

From this attainment comes our blessing and also the world's blessing. The light from the great Sun of Righteousness, which shortly is to flood the world, will be "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God"—of Divine Mercy and Love.