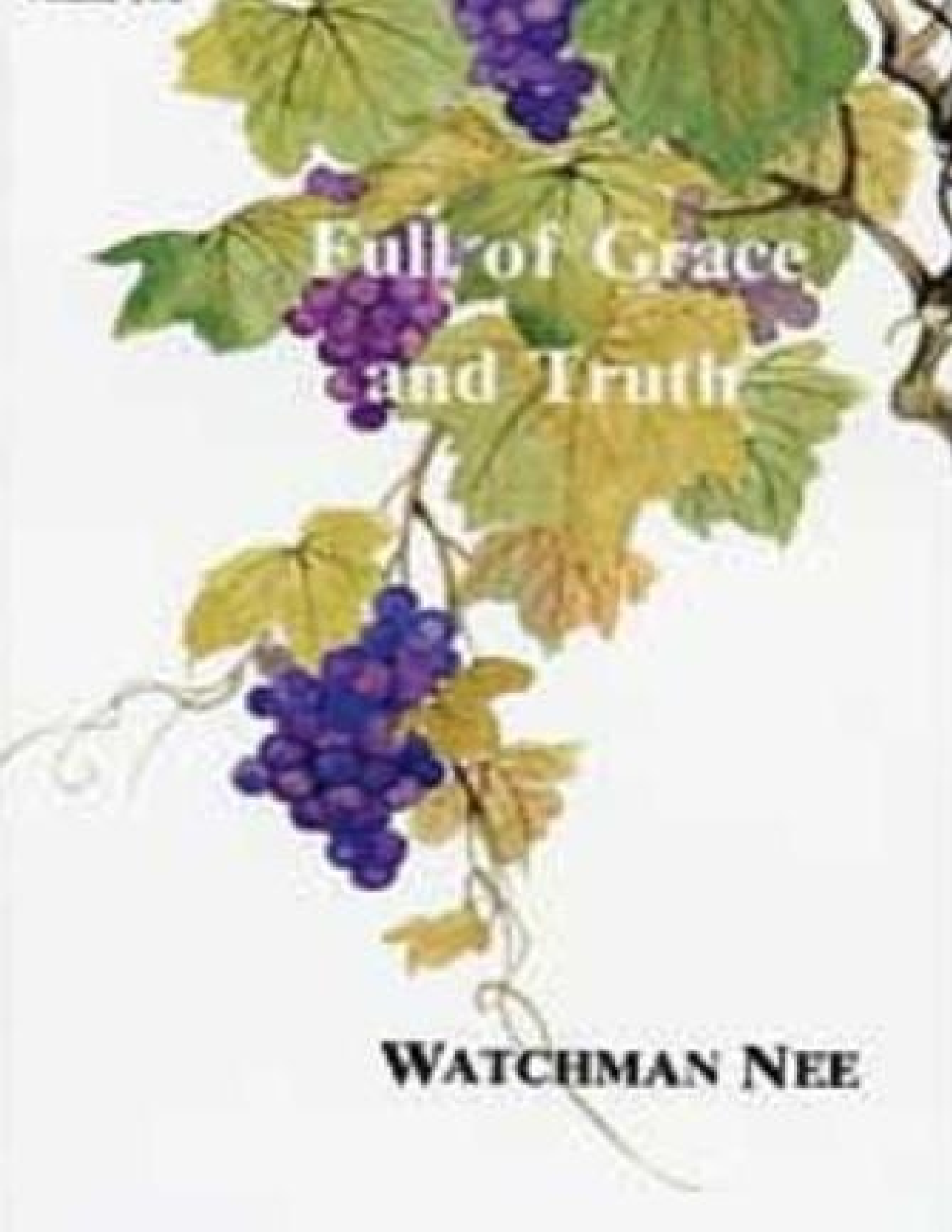
Full of Grace
and Truth
WATCHMAN NEE

Gospel Message Series—Volume 2

Full of Grace and Truth

WATCHMAN NEE

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

In the early days of his anointed ministry, especially in the late 1920's and early 1930's, Watchman Nee was greatly used by the Lord in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, thereby winning many souls to the Lord. Though gradually he began to spend more time in building up the believers, and eventually towards the end of his active ministry in the late 1940's he seemed to be occupied with ministering to those who ministered, he nevertheless remained at all times a herald of the glorious gospel of salvation.

In this second of two volumes in this series, eight more of the gospel messages which he gave in his early years have been selected to form a further

presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are translated from the Chinese and appear in English for the first time.

May the Spirit of God speak to the hearts of all who read this book and bring them into the glorious freedom which only Christ can give.

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Scripture quotations are from the

American Standard Version of the Bible

(1901), unless otherwise indicated.

1

1 God Is Willing—Are You?

God so loved the world, that he gave his only

begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3.16)

To be misunderstood is one thing on earth which

most people greatly dislike. A person means well and

yet what he does is misinterpreted as being for ill. He does something in love, but it is misconstrued as being just the opposite. Oh, how many things there are in the world which irk people, and to be misunderstood is certainly one of them. Yet, I want to speak to you today about the One who is most misunderstood—even God himself, who is so badly misunderstood *by the entire world!*

A few days ago I read in the newspaper about the story of an elderly pastor who recently met a young man on the street who said to him, “Alas, I have run up against a most unfortunate circumstance.” As he spoke, his tears flowed down his cheeks.

“What is it?” asked the pastor. “It is most terrible,” replied the young man, and he continued to cry. Under further questioning, the young man pulled a letter from his pocket and said: “This is a letter sent me by a lawyer.” “Have you read it?” asked the pastor. “No, I dare not read it, for something terrible must have happened,” answered the young man. “Why don’t you read it and find out?” “A letter from a lawyer never conveys good news; it is always unlucky. And besides, I do not like to receive any lawyer’s letter.” So the pastor said, “Let me read it for you.” “All right,” responded the young man.

The pastor opened the letter, and after he had read it he asked the young man if he had truly not read the letter. Given an affirmative answer, he told the young man: “This letter from the lawyer is to notify you that one of your relatives is dead and has left a part of his estate to you. The executor is now in a certain place where you may go and claim over twenty thousand dollars of inheritance!”

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Full of Grace and Truth

Let me here observe that our attitude towards God is not any different from that of the young man towards the lawyer. As soon as we hear the word “God” we immediately become unhappy and grow uncomfortable, as though we believe, that this God were someone who had not one good thought towards men. We thus have two groups of people in the world: one group has already heard about God and has believed in the Lord Jesus; the other group has not yet believed in

God and the Lord Jesus. I would think that all those who have already believed would most likely testify that before they believed, they had felt uneasy at the very mention of God or Jesus.

They had most probably reacted just as the young man had towards the lawyer. But upon really believing, they without exception had most likely said, “How I wish I had believed earlier!”

The benefit of believing in the Lord Jesus far exceeds that of receiving an inheritance. What God says to the believer is far better than what the lawyer could ever say to the young man. For the word of God tells us that in believing the Lord Jesus we will go to heaven and have eternal life. I too dare to testify to the truthfulness of this statement. The first thing I would ask of you is for you not to be afraid of hearing about God, nor for you to think that His thought towards you is evil. For if you will hear me out, you will know what a good God He actually is.

Several years ago I was preaching the gospel in Southeastern Asia. There I met a boy whom I tried to persuade to believe in Christ.

“Mr. Nee,” he said, “it is all right for us to be friends, but to believe in Jesus is not good.” The next time I met him, I talked to him again about believing in Jesus. And he gave me the same response. I asked him to explain. “I have a brother,” he said, “who believed in Jesus when he was six years old, but later he died. If I believe in Jesus, will not I die too like my brother? That is not good.” How this young lad misunderstood God! He misunderstood the very heart of God! Think for a minute. What kind of God do you think He is? Perhaps you conceive of Him as dark-faced, fierce and harsh. Or you may

imagine Him as taking pleasure in seeing people sin so that He may send them to hell. How do you picture Him?

Once in my relative’s house, I met another kinsman of mine who was a PhD professor at Northeastern University. When I attempted to persuade him to believe in the Lord Jesus, I received the following reply: “Your God is bad. He has nothing to do in heaven but to pass His time scrutinizing the people on earth.

He records whatever evil He sees in men and makes entries in a huge ledger. Then He judges them according to this record, condemning them to hell. So that your God is not good-hearted. He only records men's evils and loves to see people go to hell." What a misunderstanding this is! How he totally misinterpreted God's heart! You may imagine that God hates you, that He wishes to condemn you to hell instead of saving you.

But let me tell you, I know my God. Hence I wish to deliver a message to you, such, that by hearing it you will never let go of this God. Now hear His word!

"God so loved the world." Please notice, God is love! How wonderful it is that God not only thinks of you, cares for you, notices you and is merciful to you, but He also loves you. Several days ago I was walking in the park. I ran into a former schoolmate whom I attempted to persuade to believe in the Lord Jesus. No matter how I tried, though, he would not believe. I was on the verge of crying. I thought to myself, If only he knew how much this God *loves* him!

Yet what is most misunderstood concerning God is His love!

You may be wondering what kind of God He is. Will He save me?

Can He save such a man as I am? You are therefore full of doubts. I wish to tell you that God not only pities you, cares for you and notices you, He even loves you! Ever since time began, the most difficult thing for God to do was to love men. Yet the very first thing He did after man had sinned against Him was to love. His thought towards men is good. How He longs for them to be saved. But you may entertain the thought that God is most fierce and cruel, that He

desires you to be far away from Him. However, the Book which God gives to us declares that He is love! You are a sinner, yet God loves you. You are far away from Him, yet He loves you.

Again and again, God sent His servants to convey this very message to man. For example: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that he should not have compassion on the son of her womb?

yea, these may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Is. 49.15). Oh, how

He loves us! He even illustrates His love with an extreme example:

“They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man’s, will he return unto her again? will not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith Jehovah” (Jer. 3.1).

How very willing God is to receive us sinners, yet this very fact—

that God loves men—we are unwilling to believe. People are continually reflecting on how God could ever be so good.

Nevertheless, I must tell you that God is indeed love! He so loved the world that He finally conceived a plan whereby He himself would come into this world as a man that He might tell us of His love.

A few years ago I was resting in Kuling Mountain. I love the flowers, the grass and the birds of the mountains. Moreover, I dislike putting birds in cages; I would rather see them freely flying about.

One day many of them came and ate up the rice I had left on the veranda. I thought this was very sportive of them. So I went to fetch another bowl of rice for them. But who would have thought they would all fly away when I returned! Yet as soon as I again left, the birds all came back. Now I had not the slightest idea of catching them or hurting them. On the contrary, I loved to have them feed on my rice. And I would have liked to have sat among them and allowed them to surround me. What a joy that would have been.

Nevertheless, these birds did not understand my heart. They always avoided me.

But then I thought that if I wanted the birds to understand me, I must become a bird and chatter like them, and then I could fly into their midst and tell them of my heart desire. Only then would they not misunderstand me. But I could not turn myself into a bird; I therefore had no way to reveal my heart to these creatures.

It is the same with God towards us. He loves us, He likes us, He wants us to be near Him. But we do not understand His heart. The word of God informs us how in olden times through His servants God revealed to mankind His heart desire of love towards us by diverse portions and in diverse manners (see Hebrews 1.1,2), but

man failed to comprehend. He thus had no other way but to come himself to this world to become a man, and this man is Him whom we know of as Jesus Christ. Had I been able to become a bird, I would have been acclaimed as having been humble. Yet for God to become a man, how much more humble *He* must be.

The God of glory condescends himself to be a man. What

humility is this! He who is far above all has emptied himself and taken upon himself the likeness of a man. Let me say that the entire earthly life of the Lord Jesus was for the purpose to express the loving heart of God towards men. If you read the biography of Jesus, you will discover He is not just a good man but is the God of heaven becoming man. Formerly we misinterpreted God as hating us, but now He has become man. As Jesus is, so is God. In His thirty-three years on earth, Jesus manifested nothing less than the heart of God.

The way He treated people on earth is the way God always treats us.

Once a leper came and did Jesus homage, saying, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean” (Matt. 8.2). It would have been easy

for Jesus to have cleansed him with merely a word, yet He “stretched forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou made clean”

(v.3). Imagine the filthiness and bad odor of a leper. The Lord nonetheless stretched forth his hand and touched him. He showed His infinite sympathy towards this man. It is as though the Lord were

saying, Why are you not willing to come to Me; yet if you come, I will touch you.

On another occasion an adulterous woman was brought to the Lord. Her Jewish accusers said that according to their law such a woman must be stoned to death.

The Lord Jesus could not deny that she had sinned; nevertheless, He did not have the heart to see her stoned. So He challenged the crowd: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8.7b). The consciences in

these accusers convicted them of their own sins, and hence, one by one—from the oldest even to the youngest—they departed from the scene. Jesus was left alone, and the woman was standing in her original place. How did the Lord then speak to her? “Did no man condemn thee?” asked Jesus. And she answered, “No man, Lord.”

Then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way; from henceforth sin no more” (vv.10b,11). Let me say to all who are listening: God does not hate you, He loves you.

On still another occasion, a tax-collector by the name of Matthew invited Jesus as well as many publicans and sinners to his home.

According to the consensus of that time, the publicans (or tax-collectors) were most detested by the people. For during that period Judah as a nation was destroyed and was under the rule of the Roman government. Any citizen of that conquered nation who would work for the country that had conquered his nation and had ill-treated his own countrymen was considered despicable indeed. Those

countrymen would never seat themselves at the same table with such a person. But the Lord Jesus went and broke bread with many publicans at Matthew’s house. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to the disciples of Jesus, “Why eateth your Teacher with the

publicans and sinners?” (Matt. 9.11) They began to discuss and

criticize. How did the Lord Jesus answer his critics? He said this:

“They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. . . . For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (vv. 12,13).

Do you see here that the Lord Jesus has opened up the heart of God for men to

see. You may perhaps deem yourself such a wicked sinner that you wonder whether God would ever have you. Or you may have been a robber, an adulterer, a liar, or a licentious sinner.

Would God ever accept you, you think to yourself. Yet the Lord Jesus has opened up God's heart for you to see. He tells you that God wants you and that He loves you. What He means is that He is like a physician who is not afraid of the sick. But by the same token, should the sick one be afraid of the physician? No, he should not. Yet perhaps some may say that hereafter they are determined to be good, that they will not lose their temper anymore, that they will not gamble. Nonetheless, in two or three days they will be back to these habits once again. Now some might therefore think that God does not love them and wants them to perish. But that is not at all true. On the contrary, God wants them, because He loves them. Oh, I fervently hope you will do this one thing today: that you will remove the veil from your eyes so you may see that God has no evil intent against you. He instead loves you.

During the First World War, a preacher led a young girl to Christ.

Later this girl went to Paris to be a nurse in the Red Cross there.

Somehow she fell morally and departed from God. One day she attended a church service, and it happened that the same preacher who had led her to the Lord was there preaching. She contemplated saying something to prick his heart. After the preacher finished speaking, he came to shake hands with her. "Let me tell you something which you will not like," said the girl. "I am now very happy in the *world* without Jesus." "You may be happy in the world without Jesus, but the Lord Jesus needs you to be happy in heaven,"

answered the preacher.

How true this is. All who know the word of God can testify that He is joyful only when He has us. This is because He not only pities us and cares for us, He also loves us. If a mother loves her son, God loves us with a far deeper love. If a couple love each other, God

loves us with a greater love. You may never have thought about the way God treats people. I wish to inform you today that He loves each one of you!

Now since God is love, He did two things on earth. He knows only too well that the world cannot love Him, draw nigh to Him and worship Him because of one reason—all have sinned. Sinners must therefore perish and go to hell. Consequently, God first of all came into the world in the person of His Son and died for us on the cross of Calvary outside Jerusalem. God's Son bore our sins that we may not perish but have eternal life.

You frequently hear us preachers declare that men have sinned and must go to hell but that the Lord Jesus bore our sins and died on the cross in our stead. Have you ever wondered why we choose to deliver such a message to you? It is because a person need only commit one single sin—even a sin of only one second's duration—

for that person to go to hell. Can it be that you have not sinned in a month, or a year? Can it be that you have never done anything bad nor said anything wrong? Perhaps within only a minute or even but a second, you entertained an improper thought which not even your parents or wife knew. Such a thought is enough to qualify you for hell. Let us all understand. that God hates sin intensely. Our human feeling against the grossest of sins cannot be compared with God's abhorrence of even the tiniest little sin.

Our detestation of all the sins of the world is far less strong than God's repugnance of our tiny lie. He knows men have sinned, and He is left with but one solution to the problem—which is, that He himself must come into the world and become a man and bear the sin of the world on a cruel cross. And this He did, showing forth His heart of love. And such was the first great thing God did on the earth.

In addition, though, God recognizes that in spite of the fact that the Lord Jesus has died for our sins, we still may transgress after

believing in Him. So for this reason, God gives the Holy Spirit (His very own Spirit) to dwell in us that we may have the power *not* to sin. And such was the second great thing God did. And this too showed forth His heart of love and concern for mankind.

Hence God offers us two great graces: the one caused the Lord Jesus to die for us that our sins may be forgiven; and the other causes the Holy Spirit to indwell those of us who believe so that we may have the power not to sin in the future.

Do any of you realize how difficult it is to overcome sin? Take honesty as an example. I wonder how many among us are honest. I have traveled greatly but I have not met many honest people. To say less than what is required is lying; to be pretentious is also lying. Try to be an honest person, and you will know how difficult it is. I had a friend who one day in Kuangtung Province encountered a bandit demanding money of him. Being a Christian, he thought he could not lie that he had no money. Yet if he said he *had* money, the bandit would take all and leave him nothing. He finally acknowledged the fact of his money and let the bandit take all he had in his pocket. In such an emergency, he could easily have lied to try to save himself; but if he were to be true to the Lord, he could not tell a lie.

Oftentimes you may have an evil thought in your mind which you cannot shake off. You may hate someone in your heart and will not forgive. You may wish to find fault with other people or to spread discord. You may frequently lie and work with your little cleverness.

God knows how much you have sinned. Yet He will not only forgive all your sins, He will put His Spirit in you as well so that you have the power to overcome sin and be a clean person. Such is the heart of God! And what God must do, He has already done. I dare to say today that concerning the matter of salvation, there is *no problem on God's side.* Today's problem is *on your side:* whether or not you believe. I dare today to say that *God wants you*. In this connection, *16*

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let me read you something which the Lord Jesus said himself while on earth.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! *how often would* I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not!* " (Matt. 23.37) God in Christ is willing, but

men are not willing. Jerusalem is a city, and the Lord Jesus wept over her. How He would have liked to have protected them in the city, for He loved them; but

they would not allow Him. If there is anyone here who has already realized that he is a sinner, then be informed that the Lord is saying: “I love you, I am willing to save you.” Are you willing today? There is no question with God, but are *you* willing? Who can blame God if one hears the gospel today but still goes to hell in the future? Let me reiterate the fact that God wants you and loves you. How often He says I will, but you will not.

There is another passage to be considered: God “would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim.

2.4). He wishes all men to be saved. This is the heart of God!

There is still one more Bible verse I would leave with you: “Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life” (John 5.40). It is not God

who is not willing to give us life; it is we ourselves who are not willing to receive life. Please understand, therefore, that if you have but a *little* desire to be saved, to have eternal life, to be delivered from sins, and to go to heaven, then understand clearly that you will have them all because God is so willing to give. For what would He have? He would have all men to be saved. Hence do not be afraid: there is no problem on God’s side; the problem is solely on yours.

Once a man met a preacher in London. He asked the preacher if he were the one who had once preached in Paris and if he knew that the one asking him this question had believed in the Lord Jesus at that time. The preacher responded by saying, “It is good that you

have believed.” The man continued: “That day I believed in the Lord Jesus because of one sentence you had uttered.” “What was that sentence?” inquired the preacher. “You observed that the latch of heaven’s door is on the outside.”

Yes, indeed, the latch of heaven’s door *is* on the outside. So that if you do not enter in, blame only yourself. For were the latch on the inside, you would not be able to get in even if you wished it. In that event, perhaps God would not be willing to lift the latch or else He may even have decided to seal the latch. In which case you would have to knock and knock from without. Yet know this,

that heaven's latch is on the outside. And thus there is no problem with God; it all depends on whether *you want* to enter in.

In closing, let me tell you a story. There was a professor at Oxford University who was a Christian, and he had several sons who all studied at the University. In his home they had family worship every day. His fourth son was a "black sheep" who always made excuses not to join in the family worship. He would either leave home before the worship time or he would come back just when it was almost over.

One day he returned home and the family was still praying. It came to his mind to listen to what they prayed. As he listened, his mother was saying: "O God, my fourth son is a prodigal who likes to play and spend money, and does not fear You," etc., etc. When he overheard this, he grew angry and said to himself, "Why did mother not pray for her first three sons but prayed only for me the fourth? I cannot live in such a home." He immediately ran upstairs to his room, collected his things, took some of his father's money, and left a note for his parents which said: "I am not fit to be your son, and I am not willing to be your son. I now go away. Good-bye." Thus did he leave home.

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First, he stayed in a big hotel; and when his money dwindled, he moved to a friend's home. But his friend told him, "You may stay in my house, but not for too long. Though I am your schoolmate, your father is my professor. It will not be good if he learns about it."

Under these circumstances, he soon had to leave his friend's home and move to a small hotel where he stayed until his money was completely gone. When he became hungry and cold and was without shelter, he thought of returning home. But he was too ashamed to return during the daytime; and hence he waited till after midnight.

He ran home, thinking of climbing in through the window. Yet every window was firmly locked. Out of desperation, he tried the front door. As he pushed it, the door easily opened, for it was not latched. He thought he was very lucky. He cautiously slipped forward to his bedroom where to his surprise, as he pushed open the door, he found his father sitting in a chair facing the door. He was so

frozen that instantly he blurted out: “How careless this home is! Even the front door is not closed!” At this word, his father removed his spectacles and took hold of his son’s hand and said: *“My son, since the day you left home until now, for over a year, the front door has not been latched.”* Surely this expressed that father’s heart. Not only for a month, not only for half a year had the door been left unlocked, but the door had never once been latched since that day well over a year before when that father’s fourth son had gone away from home!

Such was the demonstration of that father’s loving heart!

How often we reflect upon ourselves by thinking, “I am a sinner; would God ever want me?” But let me tell you the good news that He has never ever shut the door. And thus there is absolutely no problem on God’s side; all the problem is on your side. If today a sinner is willing to come to God, saying, “I am a sinner, I have misunderstood You, but I know You are willing to accept me today,”

that one *will* be saved.

God Is Willing—Are You?

19

The Lord Jesus once spoke a parable about a son who had taken from his father all which was his and had gone off to a far country, spent everything he had, and finally decided to return to his home.

But while this prodigal son was still quite a distance from home, his father saw him, and, moved with compassion, ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him (see Luke 15.11-32). This too reveals God’s

heart. I declare to you today that God calls you to return home, for the Lord Jesus has already died for you and the Holy Spirit has also come.

No one need go to hell. You instead need to recall that God is love. You will be saved if today you are willing to say to Him: “O

God, I am a sinner, I am willing to come to You, for I want Your salvation.” And if this indeed happens, you as well as He will have great rejoicing.

For God is love.

2

2 Can Morality Save Us?

Can morality save us? The answer of the world to

this question is “Yes”; but the answer of God in the

Bible is an emphatic “No!” The power of our salvation

is in the hand of God and not according to our idea. For our salvation originates with Him; it is not something

we ourselves can arbitrarily decide. On this matter we need to listen to the voice of God. We need to hear what He says and not to imagine that our good works will save us. We must clearly understand that this matter of salvation is determined by God and by Him alone.

How blessed is the man who knows that morality cannot at all save him! Nowadays people usually view the idea of anyone preaching to them about “believing Jesus” as an attempt to persuade them to do good. Yet this very concept of persuasion demonstrates the fact that man can do no good. Even many believers do not fully comprehend that good works cannot save them. They reckon if they try their best to keep the faith, go to church, contribute money to it, and help in its activities—that is to say, if they try their very best to do good—that God will be pleased with them and save them. Yet how ignorant they are of the emptiness of all these things. For in the matter of salvation, these things will not help one whit! (I do not mean to say here that we should not keep the truth and so forth. I only say that we will not be saved by these things.)

It is vain to reason and to argue with human words. Let us instead hear the word of God. Whatever God says about a matter, it is settled.

“We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from

the works of the law” (Rom. 3.28). The phrase “the works of the

law” means doing good. Now the law is established by God. It

defines what man ought to do. If anyone could keep the law of God, he would be deemed the best person in the world. However, through the writer of this letter to the Romans God is telling us that it is absolutely clear and certain that a man is *not* justified by the works of the law. What is meant by being justified? It means God will not only forgive a person's sins but will also reckon that one as righteous. In other words, to be justified is to be saved. What God teaches us here is simply this: that we cannot be justified and saved by doing the works of the law. None of us can therefore trust in his or her good deeds as though such works could save. Hence let us cease from trusting our own good works, confess that we in ourselves are unrecoverable sinners, and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. And in so doing, we shall be saved.

Let God be praised, for He does not save because people do good.

Instead, He saves according to this principle—that "where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly" (Rom. 5.20b). Let

me ask, Do you know you are a sinner? Does your conscience accuse you? Have you not in your own heart concluded that a person like you is beyond recovery? Well, do not be deceived into thinking that you can be saved by doing good or by joining a church so as to sing and to pray your way into God's good graces. Do not try to use human means to remedy your sins. You are a sinner; and no matter how you try to make amends, you are still a sinner. Hence do not trust in your good deeds. Though yours sins may in fact be many, the precious blood of Christ can and will cleanse you. Come to Him now!

Charles H. Spurgeon was a preacher in England greatly used of the Lord. Once he made the statement that if the Lord wanted him to do good in order to be saved he would not like to be a Christian. He explained his statement by illustrating this point as follows: After I had done quite a bit of good, I presented my good to God and then asked if I was good enough to be saved. He, being the God of all good, was naturally dissatisfied with my good. So He would shake

His head and say, "Your good is not enough." Sadly I went away, but began

trying to do more good. Later, perhaps after several years, 1

again took my good to God and once more asked if this was sufficient for my salvation. But again, He would answer, “Your good is still not enough; you cannot be saved.” This could go on indefinitely, with God never being satisfied. In that case, how would I ever know that I might eventually be saved. If God were really to demand of me to do good to be saved, I most likely would have to work until my death and still not be saved because He would still be dissatisfied. How pitiful! For this reason, therefore, I would not like to be a Christian if God required me to do good to get saved. For I might have to do good for a lifetime and still He would not be satisfied. Would not all my efforts be in vain?

But thanks be to God the Father that we are not saved by doing good but by believing in His Son. Even though He is not satisfied with *our* efforts (for we have no good whatsoever), He nonetheless delights in the good of His Son Jesus. He is fully satisfied with the righteousness which His Son has accomplished on the cross.

Although we ourselves cannot do good, we may be saved by believing in God’s Son—by accepting the merit of Jesus’ shed blood on the cross.

Do not let Satan deceive you into thinking that you can be saved by good works. Just as you are not able to build a ladder which can reach to heaven, so you will not be able to obtain God’s salvation by doing good. We are not justified by God through any of our good works but we are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”; for “if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace” (Rom. 3.24, 11.6). Are

not these two Scripture verses clear? We are justified and saved by God not because of works but because of His own grace.

Grace and works are two diametrically opposite principles.

“Grace” means that irrespective of man’s good or bad, God is willing *24*

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to save him. This or that man is not worthy to be saved, yet through the mercy of God he has salvation freely given to him. “Works,” on the other hand, is an entirely different matter. “Works” means that the good shall be saved while the

bad must perish. In other words, man must do good to save himself; and whoever cannot save himself in this fashion must go to hell. Now we know we are all sinners.

Though we may not commit such gross sins as murder or arson, yet our nature is totally corrupted and our thoughts and deeds are full of deceit. We are sinners indeed! How then can we ever be saved by works? Thank and praise God, however, He does not save us by our works, He saves instead by His grace—freely, and unreservedly.

Nowadays, many people have the idea that salvation is not only by the grace of God, it is also by our works: God's grace plus our works equals salvation: otherwise, we will still be lost. Alas! How the natural man always and forever seeks to get saved by his own efforts. Yet let us recall the words of Romans 11.6: "If it is by grace,

it is *no more of works* [Grace and works cannot co-exist. If it is not grace, it is works; if it is not works, it is grace. Salvation cannot be by *both* grace *and* works]: otherwise [and here the writer reverses the argument by in effect saying that if grace and works are joined together, then ...] *grace is no more grace* [The immeasurable special favor of God will be spoiled by the filthy rags of human works.]."

The works of men not only cannot fulfill the grace of God, such will in addition nullify His grace. Therefore, if you a sinner wish to be saved, do not dream of your works helping you. You instead should humble yourself—acknowledging yourself as a helpless sinner and accepting gratefully the grace of God through faith in the finished work of the cross of His Son. Such wonderful grace is given *freely* to sinners!

But let us read on further in the word of God. "A man is not justified by the works of the law"—"Not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified"—"For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse"—"Now that

no man is justified by the law before God, is evident" (Gal. 2.16; 3.

10,11).

Now I have already observed that the works of the law is the doing of good, and that to be justified by the works of the law means to be saved by works. But what do these Scripture verses from Galatians indicate? Not only can one not be saved by doing good but also he who seeks to be saved by doing good is *to be cursed*. The Bible tells us explicitly that no man is ever justified before God by the works of the law. Why, then, do you still attempt the impossible?

Instead, why not behold and embrace the finished work of Christ? He has already paid the entire price and for your sake was willing to be crucified. He has thus *accomplished* everything. So that now you need not seek salvation with great anguish. On the contrary, you can now be saved if you simply *accept* His finished work of salvation for you. Why should you any longer try your own way? Believe on Him, and after having believed, praise Him. For He has loved you so much as to provide you with a full and free salvation.

There are two Scripture verses which explain divine salvation most plainly. Paul, a servant of God, writes to the believers at Ephesus as follows: “By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man

should glory” (Eph. 2.8,9). We know immediately from this passage that it deals with the subject of salvation since at the beginning are the words, “ye have been saved.”

How had those to whom Paul writes been saved? Had it been by doing good? No. Had it been because they were stronger than other people? Again no. How, then, *had* they been saved? This Bible passage tells us of two things needful in their salvation: the *grace of God* and the *faith of man.*

Here is the first element. “*By grace* have ye been saved.” Grace is that which God gives us: He has provided a Savior for us—“Jehovah *26*

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hath laid on him [Christ] the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53.6b). God

caused Christ to die on the cross as our Sin-Bearer. Christ suffered and fully drank the cup of God’s righteous wrath that He might accomplish a perfect

salvation for us. How deep is this grace! This grace of God is the foundation of salvation. Here men render no help at all. God alone accomplishes all things for us. And He is now presenting this *completed* salvation before every sinner, even before you. How then can we be saved? Not by the works of law, nor by self-denial, nor by personal improvement, nor by going to church. It is by seeing the grace of God manifested on Calvary's cross.

Let us now turn to the other side involved in salvation. "By grace have ye been saved *through faith*." God indeed gives grace, but we must also *believe*. For if we do not believe, we will not be saved even though God has given grace. Since the sweeping grace of God has already provided for us a substitutionary salvation on Calvary's cross, we ought to believe in His provision—even the Lord Jesus—

and be saved.

What is meant by faith? Believing means receiving (John 1.12).

God has prepared the grace, and we are saved by receiving it.

Suppose a person sends a precious gift to you. The gift is obviously yours if you will but receive it. By the same token, God sends you this saving grace of His, which will be immediately yours by your receiving it. I beseech you not to delay anymore. Receive Him now.

Stretch out the hand of faith and receive the amazing grace of God.

We may perhaps use an illustration here. Once upon a time there lived a rich man. Observing that many poor people were nearly freezing in the cold, snowy winter, he decided to search out their names and addresses so that he might send his servant to donate coal to them. Accordingly, his servant went forth with a horse and carriage. When he reached the first house, he asked if this were one of the names and addresses included on the list. Being told in the affirmative by the poor man, the servant revealed his master's will to

donate coal. The poor man thought this must be a mistake. He did not have such

a benevolent friend, and therefore he closed his door and refused to accept the gift. What could the servant do but to proceed to the second house. There he met with the same treatment, the tenant of the second house likewise intimating that he had no such friend. No matter how the servant explained that this was no mistake, the poor man still doubted and refused to accept the gift. After having visited several houses and failing in them all (for none believed in such a good man who would give them coal free), the servant came to a poor widow's house. When she learned of the errand of the servant, she gladly accepted the coal and thanked the master for the gift. By means of the coal she received, she was able to pass successfully through the bitter winter.

Do see that the grace of God is like this—it is entirely free. And now that His servants have delivered the salvation of the Lord to the door of your heart, you can experience the warmth and joy of this salvation if you are willing to accept it. Do not be like those doubters; otherwise, you shall suffer self-inflicted eternal loss!

Simply receive, and the gift of salvation is yours.

Ephesians 2 teaches us "through faith" as well as "by grace." It further instructs us as to the nature of salvation, which is (1) "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," and (2) "not of works, that no man should glory." Salvation involves two "nots": "not of yourselves"

and "not of works." How clear this is!

Notice first that salvation is not of *yourselves*. However superior or inferior your morality is, and whether you are wealthy or penniless—none of these has absolutely any effect on salvation. If you are willing to accept the grace of God, you may be saved irrespective of your being wise or foolish, saintly or impious. But then, too, no matter what you are, you will perish if you refuse to accept the Savior. Hence salvation has nothing to do with what you are, it is *freely* given as a gift by God.

Notice also that salvation is not of *works*. "Yourselves" has reference to what you *are*, on the other hand, "works" has reference to what you *do*. God has not

said that by doing good one can be saved; for He says quite plainly here that salvation is not of works.

Consequently, you will not be saved even if you do the best in the world, nor will you necessarily perish because you do the worst.

Your being saved or perishing does not depend on your works but on whether or not you accept the grace of God. I would say this to you: do not think of your good, consider rather your sins more. Why not come to God with a contrite heart and confess that you are a sinner who has no good of which to boast and no merit on which to depend?

Why not simply trust in the grace which God gives you through His Son on the cross? I ask you to come quickly. Even today, at this very moment, kneel and pray—telling God that you now receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior and asking Him to forgive your sins and save you.

Why does God not save man by his works? There may be many reasons, but a very basic one given here is that "no man should glory." Were man to be saved by his works, he no doubt would boast in himself and not give glory to God. The greatest sin in the world is to be independent of God and not to trust Him. This judgment applies also to salvation. Why is it that man would rather be saved by his own works than by accepting the free salvation prepared for him by God? Because of the innate pride of man. How humbling it is to depend on God. It leaves no room for bragging. Man therefore desires to save himself by his works that he himself may boast. But God does not wish man to be saved in this way lest he glorify himself.

Let us read another Scripture verse: "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he

saved us" (Titus 3.5a). From this passage we learn that God does not save us because of our much accumulated righteousness, for as God has said through His Old Testament prophet Isaiah, "we are all

become one that is unclean, and *all our righteousnesses are as a polluted*

garment" (64.6a). We may account our righteousness to be quite worthy of praise, but in the sight of God it is less than nothing!

Should He save us according to our righteousness, we would all perish; for without exception, our righteousnesses are like a polluted garment. Can such righteousness ever be reckoned as true righteousness? How can it possibly save us? How can God in the least save us on the basis of such polluted garments? He absolutely cannot.

But thank God, He shows grace to us "according to his mercy."

He does not save us because of our righteousness nor by our own works, but in mercy. The meaning of mercy is that grace is given to the undeserving—in spite of one's wretchedness. As sinners we do not deserve to have the salvation of God. Yet He loves us without cause. Uninhibited by our transgressions, He causes the Lord Jesus to die on the cross for us in order to give grace to us. "According to his mercy he saved us."

Hence do not think you can be saved by doing good. Come quickly to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not demand of you any of your works; He is willing to save you without them. You do not need to accumulate merit; you only need to believe in Him.

Though you cannot do good, and though you are most sinful, He was willing to be crucified to atone for your sins—that is to say, to bear your sins of omission as well as commission. Come now, just as you are, and receive Him as your Lord and Savior. He will save you, accept you, and transform you.

Do not argue that you are already a member of a church or that you have already been baptized and have partaken of the Lord's table or even that you are a leader in the church. Realize and admit that these things do not and can never save you. Unless you believe in the Savior who has borne your sins and died for us all, you are a man of perdition—regardless of your morality or position. You are no *30*

different from anybody else. There is nothing to protect a sinner from the wrath of God except the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. Every good attempt will fail; only the work of the cross of Christ will stand.

Any way of salvation which depends on the works of self comes from the bottomless pit and will return there. For God has established but one way of salvation: the accepting of His grace through faith in the cross of Christ. In order to be saved, we must follow that way—

and that way alone.

In conclusion, let me leave you with one final Scripture verse: “I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought” (Gal. 2.21). If good works were

able to save, then Christ died in vain. Would God have been so foolish as to send His Son to the world to die an unnecessary death if men could have worked for their salvation to His satisfaction? The answer is obvious! Permit me to say that if you conclude that works may help you to be saved, you have automatically annulled the grace of God. All who are sinners must realize that “the foolishness of God is wiser than men” (1 Cor. 1.25a). He would never have sacrificed His beloved Son for nothing if men could have been saved by works.

The very fact that He caused His Son to bear our sins and die for us proves that we cannot be saved by our own good works. You and I will be saved only if we accept the Lord Jesus as Savior. We are truly sinners, yet God unquestionably loves us! He is most ready to receive us! Though we have neither good nor righteousness to brag about, His salvation is not for that reason diminished; it actually is that much more magnified. How wonderful this is!

I pray you will be moved by God’s love and come to Him in faith, confessing: “O God, I am truly a sinner. I know all my works are totally nothing in Your sight. I ask You to receive me and save me now for the sake of the substitutionary death of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Can Morality Save Us?

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“Him that cometh to me,” said Jesus, “I will in no wise cast out”

(John 6.37).

3

3

The Passover

Scripture Reading: Exodus 12

The children of Israel, God's people, had been slaves

in Egypt for many years. God saw their afflictions; He

sent ten plagues to punish the Egyptians in order to

compel them to set His chosen people free. But after the judgment of nine plagues, the Egyptians still remained hardhearted and refused to let their slaves go. Consequently, God was ready to send them the last plague by which He would finally accomplish His salvation as well as manifest His awesome power on behalf of His people.

What we will now see is how this last plague shows us the way of our salvation. God told the children of Israel He had decided to smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, making no distinction in His command between Israelite or Egyptian: "All the first-born in the

land of Egypt shall die" (Ex. 11.5a). However, God provided a way of salvation for His people. He ordered that each Israelite family should take a lamb without blemish, have it slain, put the blood in a basin, dip a bunch of hyssop in the blood, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts of the doors to their houses with the blood. At midnight, the Angel of the Lord would go through the land. If He did not see the blood smeared on the door, He would enter the house and slay the firstborn there. Midnight sounded and the Lord smote all the firstborn of the Egyptians whose lintels and side-posts had no blood on them. Those who did not die serve as a type today of the saved, whereas those who died serve as a type of the perishing.

First of all, we should know that all the firstborn in Egypt must die. Egypt was under God's judgment; and the children of Israel who lived there were therefore also under the judgment of God. The firstborn here represent all sinners (cf. 1 Cor. 15.46,47), Egypt stands

for the world, and Pharaoh serves as a type or representation of the

devil. Thus all who live in the world are sinners and are slaves to the devil—and hence under the judgment of God and deserving of eternal death. *All* have sinned, for there is no difference (Rom.

3.22,23). And the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6.23).

Do not be careless, neither forget this fact: that you are a sinner; your sins will be punished; and the punishment to be received is eternal perdition by suffering forever in the lake of fire. You ought to reflect more upon your sins! You should consider the matter of your punishment more! Whether you are in the church or outside the church, the wrath of God rests upon you if you are not yet saved from your sins (John 3.36). Hence do not forget that God is just and

He will surely judge sin.

Yet in spite of such a situation, we are not left completely hopeless and having no way of salvation. Truly in ourselves we have no way, but God has a way already prepared for us. But apart from the salvation which He has provided, *there is no other way*. For the Bible explicitly states that "in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4.12). God commanded the children of Israel to prepare a lamb. This lamb was their Savior. The blood of the lamb delivered them from death.

Plainly, this paschal or Passover lamb points indisputably to the Lord Jesus Christ. For in various places in the New Testament God

declares that "Our Passover . . . hath been sacrificed, even Christ" (1

Cor. 5.7b)—"Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of

the world" (John 1.29b)—"Knowing that ye were redeemed . . . with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even

the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1.18,19). Just as God used the Passover lamb to deliver the children of Israel in the former days, so He now uses the Lord Jesus —who is our Paschal Lamb—to save us today.

Just as the children of Israel were saved by the lamb, so we are saved today by *the* Lamb of God—the Lord Jesus Christ.

The

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Do you wish to be saved? If you do *not* wish to be saved, there is nothing more we can say. But if you are willing to confess you are a sinner under the judgment of God and you desire to be saved from His righteous punishment, then let it be known to you most assuredly that God has prepared a salvation for you.

The Lord Jesus Christ has been crucified for our sins. Salvation is already accomplished. All who receive Him as personal Savior shall be saved. Just as the children of Israel had no other way to be delivered except by trusting in the blood of the Passover lamb, so we have no other salvation except by trusting in the precious blood of the Lamb of God. Jesus' blood alone can today save sinners.

Perhaps we can illustrate it in this fashion: Suppose I were able to go with you back to an Israelite home in Egypt. We would see a father and his son sitting peacefully in the house. There I would ask the father, "I hear that by midnight tonight God is going to smite your son. How then can you sit here so calmly? Are you not afraid?"

The father answers: "Now I do not need to fear because God has prepared a lamb for us. The lamb is able to save our lives. Look how fat and white, how handsome and lovely is my lamb! Listen to how pleasant is the sound of its bleating! My lamb is certainly the best.

None of my neighbors' lambs is as good. Why should I therefore fear since I have such a good and precious lamb?"

What he says sounds good, but let me tell you that when midnight comes, his son will be killed by the Angel of God. Why is this so?

Has God's word failed to be true? Has not this man a lamb?

Indeed, he has a lamb. Yet what God wants is a lamb *slain*, not a living lamb. A living Christ cannot save us, only the Christ who has died can do so. The Lord cannot save us by His living on earth; He is able to redeem us only by His being crucified. Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Galilee will condemn us; only Calvary will give us eternal life.

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Do not be surprised at hearing this. How many would say Jesus is our example? That He is a great Teacher, a great Rabbi? Many will praise the Lord Jesus for His beautiful character, His high morals, His great power, and His noble personality. Yet may I observe that the better the Lord Jesus looks, the worse you appear to be. His good character and noble personality will not save you; rather, it condemns you. God looks at Him and is fully satisfied; but though we may try our best to imitate Him so as to satisfy God, nevertheless, the harder we try, the more manifest becomes our inward sinful nature and our outward evil actions. Do please recognize this fact, that our works can never please God. The more we attempt to learn of Jesus, the more we are aware we cannot, and do not want to, learn from Him.

Do not be deceived. Though you may acknowledge the excellency of the personality and morals of Christ, His excellency belongs to Him alone; you have no part in Him. Let us praise and thank God that His Son does not come into the world to be our example for us to imitate until we are gradually and finally saved. No, no! He sent His Son to this earth to *die* for us sinners, to accomplish salvation for us.

God does not require anything from us, since He has done all. We are sinners, and our penalty is death. Even so, the judgment and penalty which belong to us are now borne by the Lord Jesus. His death is substitutionary—that is to say, His death is really ours, and yet He has made it His own so that we need not be penalized for our sins:

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are

healed" (Is. 53.4,5).

We are sinners (see Rom. 3.9-20). We deserve to die (Ez. 18.4).

So that if the Lord Jesus comes only to live, with what can He save us from our sins and perdition? Fortunately, however, He came to die and not just to live. Jesus died for us, bearing our sins and enduring our penalty. Hence due to His substitution, we need not die anymore.

And now we have the way to be saved. But if any should still insist upon treating the Lord Jesus as a model and think of getting saved by imitating Him, he will without question be eternally lost. For no one in the world is able to imitate Christ nor be saved through imitation

(see Gal. 2). Only those who believe in His substitutionary death

shall be saved (Acts 16.31). The word of God says that "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9.22b).

But let us continue with our illustration of the Israelite homes in Egypt. Suppose I am able to visit a second Israelite home. There I ask the parents and their children if it is true that this night God will slay the firstborn. They say yes, and I ask again, "Why are you not afraid? Will not your firstborn soon be smitten?" And their reply is:

"We are not afraid, because God has devised a way of salvation. He has prepared a lamb for us, and that lamb is to be killed and to have its blood poured into a basin. Look, our lamb is already slain and the blood is also in the basin. We Israelites have sinned, but this lamb has died for us. Therefore, we are not afraid!"

Nevertheless, when midnight comes, the firstborn of that family is smitten by the righteous wrath of God. And if any of you are in a similar condition, you too will perish!

We need to see where this second household also went wrong.

The first home did not have the blood of the lamb; hence the firstborn must perish. But in this second house, they not only have a living lamb, their lamb was slain and its blood was shed. Why then should their firstborn die? Well, although they indeed had the blood, where was it? Let us understand that blood merely in a basin will not save anyone. The blood of the lamb must be smeared on the lintel and side-posts of the door, else it will save no one from death.

Are there not many of you who are like this family? Most likely you are members of some church. You have already heard the gospel of the Lord Jesus. You even know that He died for the sinners of the *38*

world. You have read about the truth of His substitutionary death in the Bible and perhaps in the newspaper, and have heard about it from the pulpit. But you have never specifically come to God, accepting His Son as your Savior. You understand that He died for the world, yet you have not accepted Him as the One bearing your sins. You have heard and known in your mind; nevertheless, you have not believed with your heart. You stop after you have heard and known; you do not proceed any further to seek the grace of God. You may even have become tired of hearing the word concerning the cross of Christ. Your problem is: you have not united or mixed faith with the

word you have heard (Heb. 4.2). So that you are still a perishing soul.

You know, but you have not believed and received the Lord Jesus as your Savior by faith; and hence your knowledge will not help you in the least. Alas, you still belong to hell. The blood which is in the basin but not on the lintel and side-posts cannot save you. What does it profit if your mind knows the gospel but your heart has not believed in the Lord Jesus (Rom. 10.10)? Knowing will not save you;

it is believing that saves (Acts 16.31; John 3.16).

Let me therefore ask if you have ever had the blood of Christ sprinkled on your heart? Have you ever accepted the Lord Jesus as your Savior in your heart? I do not ask how old you are or what your family background is or how advanced is your education or even how healthy you are. There is only one question in the

world which is of most vital consequence, and that is—Are you saved? Do you have eternal life? Has the precious blood of the Lamb been applied to your heart? This is the most important question with which anyone will ever be confronted.

Blood in the basin but not applied to the lintel and the door-posts of the heart will not save anyone. Although you may know how the Lord Jesus has died for you, you will still perish if you do not apply his blood on your heart by faith. The dark night of judgment is approaching. The Angel of God who punishes sinners is coming soon. Eternity is before you. Life or death is everlasting. Why then *The*

not appropriate the blood immediately? For what are you waiting?

Oh, may you stop and pray this sinner's prayer: "O God, have mercy on me a sinner. I am willing to believe in the Lord Jesus as my personal Savior now. Please forgive all my sins." If you do this sincerely, the Lord *will* save you; therefore, come!

That evening the children of Israel dipped a bunch of hyssop in the blood and put the blood on the outside of the door. If we depend on the precious blood of the Lord Jesus, we too must not be lacking in our "bunch of hyssop." According to the Bible, the hyssop is the smallest of all plants (cf. 1 Kings 4.33)—something easily to be despised. May I speak frankly? I have never seen a proud person willing to believe in the Lord Jesus. Unless we look upon ourselves as sinners and take the place of sinners, we will not accept Him as our Savior. Accordingly, let the proud be proud no more. Prostrate yourself at the feet of the Lord Jesus, acknowledge that you are a sinner, accept His salvation, and be saved.

When the blood was in the basin, the children of Israel were not safe; only when the blood was applied to the lintel and side-posts were they secure. Similarly for us today, if we know the salvation of the Lord Jesus yet do not accept it with faith, we shall always be in danger. But as soon as anyone believes in his heart and is cleansed by the precious blood, that one is forever secure. How sad, though, that many who have believed in the Lord Jesus do not realize they are

safe and will not be judged anymore!

Let us observe what happens as I go to visit another Israelite family in Egypt. I am now visiting the third household. When I come to the door, I see that the blood of the lamb has been put on the lintel and the side-posts. As I enter the house, I also see the slain lamb, the basin, and the bunch of hyssop. But the family is sitting together crying. Their firstborn is weeping and trembling. And his face is most pale. Such a sight indicates to me that a great calamity is about to befall this household. So I inquire of them why they are so *40*

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grieved. They answer: “Sir, do you not know that at midnight something disastrous is going to happen? God will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. And our son is among the list of those to be slain!” As they say this, they raise their voices and cry once again.

“But has not God provided for you a way of salvation?” I say to them. “Has He not commanded you to slay a lamb and put its blood on the lintel and the side-posts? And have you not already sprinkled the blood on your door? Why then are you so worried?”

“Truly God has so spoken, and we have done accordingly,” they answer, “but we now do not feel we are safe.”

I try my best to comfort them and tell them not to worry nor to cry because they have the precious blood and therefore they are on safe ground. Yet they still worry anyway, for they do not consider themselves safe simply by applying the blood according to the divine instructions.

Judge for yourselves if the worry of this family is warranted.

Should they be so grieved? You may laugh at their foolishness, for having put on the blood, they should now feel secure; and any worry or anxiety afterwards you may judge to be self-inflicted suffering.

Yet do not you and I frequently commit the same mistake? You have believed in the Lord Jesus and have accepted Him as your personal Savior. You have applied His precious blood on your heart’s door and have already entered into a position of peace. You are now saved and shall not perish. Why, then, should you still be

fearful? Why should you worry so? The moment you believe in the Lord Jesus, you are safe and secure. If you have not accepted Him as Savior, you *should* worry and cry because you continue to be condemned for

your sins (John 3.18). But if you *have* believed in the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross, you have neither reason nor obligation to worry and to cry because you are already a saved person. You *The*

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should rejoice and be glad for God has already saved you. You do not save yourself, but God has saved you. How amazing this grace is! You ought to begin to praise the Lord for His grace and to grieve no more. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life” (John 5.24). You are

today a saved person. Heaven is indeed yours.

Many people do not understand that they are saved simply by believing in the Lord Jesus. Their difficulty lies in their not *feeling* saved. People often tell me they have believed in the Lord Jesus as their Savior, yet they do not *feel* themselves saved. I would urge all

who are like this to please read Exodus 12.13b: “When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be upon you to destroy you.” Who sees the blood? God, not the firstborn. This blood is put on the outside lintel and the doorposts and hence the firstborn cannot see it. What would be the use even if he *were* able to see it?

But God affirms that *He* will see the blood, and that when He sees it He will not put anyone to death. Nobody really knows how precious the blood of Jesus is. We cannot comprehend how greatly God esteems the blood of His Son. Yet He declares emphatically that when He sees the blood, He will pass over. He will save all who have applied to their hearts the precious blood of His Son.

Consequently, your duty is to believe in the substitutionary death and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus on the cross. God himself will see this blood. And He

will save you whether you feel good or bad.

Your feeling has nothing to do with this matter of salvation, for the Bible does not say that if you *feel* saved you are saved, but that if you *feel not* saved you will perish. It simply but clearly states that when God sees the blood He will save you. For this reason, do not rely on your vacillating feeling. The word of God is alone trustworthy. He sees that you have believed in the Lord Jesus and thus He will save you. Why then be afraid? Though you may not feel anything, God has seen you. None of the children of Israel who stayed in any of the

houses could see the blood on the door. It is therefore no surprise that you do not feel anything.

Some believers often worry lest they not be saved. The reason is that though they have believed the Lord Jesus to be their Savior, they frequently fall and are weak. The more they look at themselves, the more they consider themselves neither saved nor worthy to be saved.

They honestly believe in the Lord Jesus and they know the grace of the Lord is great; nevertheless, when they reflect on their failures, they can hardly believe themselves to be saved. Man's word, however, is vain; let us read instead the word of God: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Ex. 12.13b). On what ground does God save us? What does He see? The Holy Spirit will answer that it is none other than the blood of Jesus. God does not save us because we have changed or we have done good works; He saves us purely because of the precious blood of His beloved Son.

The Bible does not say, "When I see your good works I will pass over you"; neither does it say, "When I see your perfect life I will pass over you"; it simply says, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." The *blood* is that to which we ought to pay attention.

What God sees is the *blood*, not us, nor our good works. Whether saved or lost is a matter judged according to blood or no blood. You may be the best person in the world, but if you do not believe in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus you are a perishing soul. On the other hand, though you may be the worst person in the whole world, you will be instantly saved if you apply the precious blood of Jesus by faith. The precious blood is able to save sinners! The precious blood is

especially used to save sinners! “By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory” (Eph. 2.8,9). Our salvation

depends completely on the grace of God. It has absolutely no relation to our works. If you look at yourself you will deem yourself unfit to be saved, and you will have no peace. Look instead at the Lord Jesus, and trust Him wholly so that you may find peace in your heart.

Though *you* are *un* trustworthy, He is trustworthy. The more you look at Him, the purer and holier you become.

The children of Israel were saved not because of their own merits, but because of the blood of the lamb. The Egyptians perished not because of their evil deeds, but because they did not have the blood of the lamb. In just the same way, our salvation or perdition depends solely on the precious blood of the Lamb of God. If there is the precious blood, we are saved beyond any doubt; otherwise, how precarious is our position!

Let us now leave the children of Israel and visit the Egyptians.

Suppose I enter one of their houses and I see that this Egyptian family is enjoying itself very much. I therefore ask the members of this family how they can afford to be merry when God has said that He will smite their firstborn that very night.

“Sir, our son is different from other sons,” they reply; “he has never killed anybody nor set fire to any house. He is just and honest.

He does everything according to his conscience. How could God punish such a good person as he?”

“But I notice you do not have any blood of a lamb on your door,”

I respond. “God will surely not pass over you but will smite you instead.”

“Other people may need the blood of the lamb,” they retort, “but for good people such as we are, we do not need any blood.”

Well, we know the story. The Angel of Death came upon that Egyptian family at midnight and their firstborn son lay dead as a result.

Let me warn you that the ultimate end of all who trust in their own righteousness and not in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus will be *44*

Full of Grace and Truth

eternal perdition. Granted that you may be better than your neighbours and that you may be fairly honest in the eyes of men, nevertheless, do you really believe your little amount of merits can deliver you from the wrath of the most righteous God? He looks at whatever righteousness *we* have with utter contempt. In His eyes, we are still sinners. We shall perish if we do not have the blood of the Lamb of God to atone for us. Although the children of Israel were stiffnecked (as we see them later in their wilderness experience), yet they are saved because they had the blood of the lamb to atone for their sins. The Egyptians might be good; they nonetheless must perish because they did not have the blood of the lamb to atone for their sins.

Whether we are saved or lost does not depend on ourselves nor on our works but solely on whether or not we believe and accept the Redeemer who died for us. In reading the last book of the Bible (Revelation) you will find that the people who are in heaven are there not because of their own works but because of the precious blood of the Lamb. The saved can go to heaven because “they [have] washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7.9-17, esp. v.14).

Day after day flies swiftly by until the hour of the judgment of God comes: “And it came to pass at midnight, that Jehovah smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt” (Ex. 12.29a). Such is the

consequence of not believing the gospel of Jesus Christ! For the sake of the coming eternity, I beg you not to trust in your own works. Do not make excuse nor delay any longer. Quickly believe in the Lord Jesus. As long as there is

today, come quickly: “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6.2b).

“There was not a house where there was not one dead” (Ex.

12.30c). Every Egyptian house had one dead in it, but in every house

of the Israelites none died. The fact was, however, that both in the house of the Israelite and in the house of the Egyptian there *was* one *The*

Passover

45

dead. Except that the one that died in every house of the Israelite was a lamb, whereas the one that died in the house of the Egyptian was a person. Hence there must be one dead in every house. If the one dead is not a person, then it must be a lamb. How fearful and how very serious! Either a person died or a lamb was slain!

I do not know which course you prefer—whether you wish to bear your own sins and die or to believe in the Lord Jesus the Lamb of God who has already died for you. Either you die or He dies! If you do not trust Him who died, then you yourself will also die. For someone *must* die. But praise and thank God that “while we were yet

sinners, Christ [already] died for us” (Rom. 5.8b). Today you *need not* die, you *need not* perish for your sins. If you continue to perish, it is not because you are a sinner but because you will not believe in the name of God’s only begotten Son (John 3.18). Do not let Christ

say to you, “Ye *will not* [to] come to me, that ye may have life”

(John 5.40). Yet “he that *will*, let him take the water of life freely”

(Rev. 22.17d). How I hope you *will* to come. Come to God with a believing heart and pray, “O God, I am a sinner deserving to perish, but I believe in Your Son who has died for me. Please forgive all my transgressions and save me hereafter.”

4

4 The Samaritan Woman

Scripture Reading: John 4.1-15,28,29

We are going to discuss a passage in the Bible

which records a most wonderful incident. In the event

recorded, the Lord Jesus spoke to a most degraded

woman and that woman turned to believe in Him.

“He [the Lord] left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs pass through Samaria. So he cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar . . . and Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw

water . . .” (vv.3-7a). Please notice that this happened at the sixth hour when a woman came out to draw water. What time was this?

We know it to have been at noontime. The Lord Jesus, wearied from his journey, sat by the well to rest awhile. At the same time, a woman came to draw water.

In reading the Old Testament we will notice that each time when women would come to draw water they did so in a group. And they usually did so either in the early morning or late in the afternoon. But here, when the sun was at its zenith and the temperature was the hottest, a woman came to draw water. Why did she not have companions? Did she have no neighbor? Would not other women come and draw water with her? Yet she had neither companion nor friend with her. Why? The following verses reveal that she was a most degraded woman and was therefore ostracized in the community. Hence she came to draw water at the hottest hour of the day.

This woman was a lonely person. No one accompanied her; none was merciful towards her. In the eyes of many of the women, she *48*

was a sinner, a defiled woman; hence they could not draw water with her. Not only were people fearful of *her*, she was also apprehensive of *them*. If she were to go out to draw water in the morning, she would be afraid people might point at her and heap scorn upon her as being a most immoral woman. If she were to go out in the late afternoon she would be fearful that people would see her and ridicule her as the most defiled of all women. So she would rather go to draw water alone at noontime. Forlorn and without sympathy, she was an isolated woman—despised by the world as well as in return despising the world herself.

However, when she came to the well, she met another lonely person. Just as she was solitary and despised, so was He. She was alone because of her sins; He was alone because of the jealousy of men. When this lonely sinner met this lonely Savior, she was saved!

"Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink" (v.7b). This is an

expression of intimacy. Usually you are afraid of God, but you will not be afraid of one who asks you for water. You are fearful of God, but you will not be fearful of the God who asks you for water. You are frightened because you think of God as high and distant and terrible. But if you know that this lonely, weary and perspiring One (even as you are lonely, weary and perspiring) is God, you will believe in Him. How approachable and friendly is our Lord Jesus towards men.

"The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?

... Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (vv.9,10).

The reason the Samaritan woman spoke in this manner was because the Jews and the Samaritans engaged in no social intercourse. But the reply of the Lord was that if she knew two things—(1) the gift of God; and (2) He who says, Give Me water to drink—she would have *The*

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asked of Him and He would have given her the living water. How sad that many people in the world today do not know these two things. You who are now being made aware of this may also be ignorant. Perhaps you feel depressed, perhaps you are tired and fainting because of the load of sins and the dissatisfaction of life. The path through this world is indeed rugged, and the waves of the sinful sea of life are high. If only you knew these two things, however, all would be well.

I. The Gift of God

God never sells anything. “Gift” means something freely given.

God always gives freely to men. And He will give to whoever asks.

God gives us sunlight without charge; He gives us rainfall without cost. He will also give you spiritual satisfaction in exactly the same fashion.

Once there was a child who loved his mother dearly. He thought of buying some flowers to please her heart. He had only two pennies in his pocket. That day he saw a most beautiful garden, and entered it thinking of buying some flowers. A gentleman was there to whom he expressed his wish. So the gentleman picked some flowers and handed them to him. The boy politely said that he could not take the flowers without paying. But the man replied: “My flowers are always given freely. If you want them, I will give them to you.” Who was that man? He was the Prince of Wales, and this was the royal garden.

Royal things are never for sale.

If you wish to be spiritually satisfied today, you may have it immediately; you do not need to wait till you do better. To prepare a book requires a lot of effort, but to receive it is so simple. It takes much time to prepare a good meal, though it takes hardly any time for you to eat it. It takes time and thought to make a dress, but to put it on needs very little of both. In the event of sorrow within and pressure without, you may immediately obtain comfort and strength *50*

if you desire them. You do not need to do anything, for God will give it to you.

The gifts of God are all freely given. He never sells anything.

The Gospel according to Luke (15.11-24) records the story of a prodigal son. When he was hungry, “he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him” (v.16). This is the principle of the world; he who has, has, and he who has not, has not—one for one, and two for two. This is also the principle of the devil. The world will only give when it is given; it will never give away anything freely. If you have nothing to give, then you must give your soul. But there was one place for the prodigal where giving was free, and that place was his father’s house.

It was therefore best for the prodigal son to go home.

Earlier he had demanded of his father: “Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me” (v.12); and his father had

given him his portion. But when he returned to the father’s home much later, did he have any right to eat a single meal or to wear one piece of clothing belonging to his father’s house? No, for everything now was grace since he had already squandered his portion away. So we see from this story that the way of God’s salvation is to give freely to you. It is not how much you give Him, but how much He gives you. Many think if they can do good and pray more, perhaps God will be willing to grant them salvation. This kind of thinking comes from our commercial mind. God never does things that way.

What is the gift of God? Let us read John 3.16: “God so loved the

world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.” This gift is neither gold nor silver, but the Son of God. God sent His Son to die for us so that He could put all our sins on His Son. From this we can see that He is giving us such a beloved Son.

I like to read John 3.16 and John 1.12 together. The first verse

says God gave His Son to us, and the second says you receive His Son. He gives and you receive. Is there anyone here who does not know how to be saved? It is simply this: just receive the Son of God.

Do not imitate the way of one lady who said that she had performed thirty years of good works in hope that God might save her. Such a way can only be termed the woe of hell. The Bible declares instead:

“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”

(Rom. 10.13). Simply call on His name, and you will be saved. The Bible also declares: “He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life”

(John 3.36a). If you only believe, you shall be saved. This is the glad tidings of God.

II. The Christ Sent by God

We must know not only the gift of God but also Him who says, Give me water to drink. For the One who sat by the well humble and weary and despised is the gift of God. To know that God gives gifts and that He gives freely is not enough. You must know that Christ who is today being opposed by men is the gift of God. This weary One who sits by the well, this despised Jesus whom people refuse to worship and believe is the very gift of God. Many people who go to hell believe in God. The one who heads the list is the devil, for he too believes in Him. All in hell believe in God, but Jesus none there believes. This lowly Man whom men accused as being a bastard, a rebel to the Roman Empire, even an imperialist, is the gift of God.

Had you known Him, you would have said: “You are the gift of God, therefore please give me living water that I may be satisfied.”

III. The Way to the Living Water

“Thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water” (John 4.10b). What kind of people may receive living water? Those who ask for it. You will get it if you merely ask Him, *52*

"Give me living water." In many places I have seen people simply say to God: "O God, save me," and they were saved at that very moment.

Do you recall from the Bible how a dirty tax-collector, who dared not raise his eyes towards heaven but beat his breast, said: "God, be thou merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18.13b)? It did not take him five minutes to utter such a prayer: it would not even take one minute.

What did the Lord Jesus declare about this tax-collector? "I say unto you, this man went down to his house justified" (v. 14a). In other

words, this man was saved. To put it another way, this man received eternal life.

Luke the Gospel writer also records the instance of another person who in his life had committed even more hideous sins—such as murder and arson. He was finally arrested and crucified. On that day, he witnessed the Lord Jesus also being crucified with him. At first he joined the other robber who was crucified in mocking Jesus. Later his heart was moved by hearing the prayer of our Lord on the cross ("Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do—"Luke

23.34). He began to realize there was a unique Person here. So he

asked of the Lord this one thing: "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom" (Luke 23.42). How long would the utterance

of such a prayer take? Five hours? He would have died in the meantime had it required that long. No, he simply asked to be remembered when the Lord came for His kingdom. What did the Lord in reply say to him? "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23.43). Yes, indeed, he was saved,

justified, and he now had eternal life.

Is there any sinner who will at this very moment lift up his eyes and believe in the word of God? If so, he shall be saved. The Lord said to the woman: "Thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." If you have asked, you have already received living water. Oh, it is not what we do but what God does. It *The*

is not by our works but through the redemptive work of our Lord. It is not how we are but what the Lord is before God.

IV. The Dilemma of the Woman

How did the woman respond? She said, “Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou that living water? ” (v. 11) She had two problems: one, the Teacher had nothing to draw with; and two, the well was deep. What she meant was, where could this Stranger get living water since He had nothing to draw with and He did not even know how deep the well was. This is how every unbeliever will react. I would like to have living water to quench my thirst, but who can fathom the depth of this well of living water? It is way beyond the reach of human hands. I long to be saved, to have eternal life, and to have the Holy Spirit relieve my thirst, but how far away salvation is from me! How distant eternal life is from me! How remote the Holy Spirit is from me! I have no way to obtain these blessings. Oh, the well is so very deep and the bucket to draw water with is so much lacking. How very far God and Jesus are from me. The well being so deep, the living water is too far away. Salvation is too far removed from me.

Perhaps some of you will think: I have no way of being saved. I cannot ascend to heaven to bring Christ down, nor can I descend to the abyss to bring Christ up from the dead. Since all this is so impossible, how can I ever be saved? Salvation to me is but a dream; it is not something I can expect in this life.

But may I ask you to listen to God’s pronouncement: “The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: . . . If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10.8,9). What does it say here? It says the word is not far from you and that you have no need to ask who will ascend to heaven to bring Christ down or who will descend to the abyss to bring Christ up from the dead.

This word is near you, the well is not deep at all. For the word is in two locations: in your mouth and in your heart. Do you have a mouth? You do. Do you have a heart? You do. So the word is right here, and the well is therefore quite shallow. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you have the living water. The water is close to you—in your mouth and in your heart. If you confess and if you believe, you have it. If you were to confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and to believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead but you nevertheless went to hell, it would mean that God is not righteous. But God cannot be *un* righteous. His word is trustworthy.

V. This Water

"Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this

water shall thirst again" (v.13). Do you know what it is to be really thirsty? Suppose a seafaring boat is sinking. All the people on it flee to the small lifeboat. In this lifeboat there is food but no drinking water. Though I am surrounded completely by water, I am becoming thirsty even to death. Physicians tell us that thirst is much harder to bear than hunger. Thirst speaks of unsatisfied desire, unfulfilled expectation.

The world in its beauty is most attractive, but even if it gives you its best, you will become thirsty. The world is great, but its greatness will never quench your thirst. For what the world can give you is always temporary, you will therefore be thirsty again soon. After one cup of wine you will ask for another. Upon seeing one movie, you will want to see another. After tasting an excellent meal, you will desire even more. Having gotten fame, you will then want wealth.

Having obtained wealth, you will desire a good family. Upon securing a good family, you will seek to have good children and grandchildren. And having obtained good children and

grandchildren, you will yearn for immortality. Whatever the world gives, from that you will drink but be thirsty again. You receive from the world one drink, yet it only increases your thirst for more drinks.

Hence the Lord states that “every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again.” “This water”—what is it? “This water” is all which the world can give to men. “This water” consists of all the worldly things which can temporarily satisfy people. The world can only whip up one’s appetite but never satisfy; the world can only make you thirsty but can never quench such thirst.

There was once a man whose father was a martyr during the Boxer Uprising in China. He thought if someone could help him finish elementary school, he might earn twenty or thirty dollars a month and then he would be satisfied. It so happened that someone did assist him through elementary school and he was able to earn those twenty to thirty dollars a month. After a while, though, he began to compare himself with other people and thought of going on to high school. Again, he was helped to finish high school. As soon as he left high school, he conceived the idea of entering college. And once again he was helped —this time through college. Upon graduating from college, he wanted to go abroad to study. If only he could obtain a PhD degree, he mused, he would then be satisfied and would ask no more. Once more he was helped in his education and he finally achieved his doctor’s degree overseas. The man returned home and became a professor in a college. But he confessed that he was no happier in having gotten a PhD degree than he had been in graduating from elementary school. One day, however, he obtained real satisfaction, and testified to what he had obtained—that he had received Christ whom the heavenly Father had given and who had died for him. He later went forth to preach the gospel and was no longer thirsty.

If anyone should reflect that if he could only be successful in education or in business he would be satisfied, I wish to state that these are but temporary satisfactions which will leave the person *56*

thirsty once again. There may be those today who have some strong desires which need to be satisfied. At present these may be mere dreams. Let me say

that even if your dream becomes fact and your desire is fulfilled, you will not be satisfied. You will simply dream again and experience once more an unfilled void within you. Do realize that all these are vanities which cannot quench one's thirst.

I know a friend and fellow-townsman who had studied in college and was once the chief of police in a city. One day he went to witness to his former colleague who was now a man of military power and influence. When the man he visited saw him coming dressed in a traditional Chinese gown, he asked my friend if he were happy. "Look at me," my fellow-townsman said, "and you will know I am quite happy." "Will you not come and join me so as to provide for the future of your wife and children?" asked my friend's host.

"There is One who cares for them, even the Lord Jesus," answered my friend. "But why do you not think of your future life?" the man of influence persisted. "God will be responsible for my future days,"

replied my fellow-townsman. The person visited was really surprised that a man who had been to college and had been a chief of police should have such peace in him after simply believing in the Lord.

When they parted, his old colleague told my friend: "I wish I could lay down everything I have in exchange for what you have." Neither political power nor superior position can satisfy people. If anyone is not satisfied, then whoever drinks of "this water" shall indeed thirst again. The water of the world can never satisfy.

VI. The Living Water

If you really wish to be satisfied, listen to the way of satisfaction which the Lord Jesus informs us of: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto

eternal life" (v.14). Why is it that whoever drinks of the water which *The*

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the Lord gives shall never thirst? Because that water shall become in him a well (or spring) of water. That you may be satisfied for three or five days? No, it will flow on to eternity. And that is what the Lord gives. Whatever comes from outside is useless in really satisfying anyone. But if a person receives Christ, the latter will become a spring *in* you so that you are daily satisfied. What we lack is *inner* satisfaction.

Once a man went to visit his doctor. He asked his doctor why he felt life was so tasteless and without hope. After he was examined, he was told that there was nothing physically wrong with him. So the man asked if there was any remedy for such depression. The doctor replied: “You should enjoy yourself. Why don’t you go see the theatrical play of a certain clown. He has great ability to make people laugh and to be happy.” “I am that clown,” said the man, “and I can make other people laugh, but I myself cannot laugh.” How sad, yet this is only what the world can give—perhaps a few laughs and some temporary joy.

Why is it, however, that in the church Christians can be so happy though they may lose everything? It is not because of a good environment or comfortable material life: it is due only to the One who satisfies them from within, even Christ. Some missionaries are willing to sail to distant islands and live with the natives. At times they can only receive letters from outside once a year. They endure more sufferings than the keepers of the lighthouses. How can they be so joyful? There is something in them which enables them to sing, and to shout Hallelujah. I can also say that though I know no music yet I will sing; and even if I could not sing, I could at least shout Hallelujah! I have often said that we Christians do not love the world not because we are tired of it or because we have experienced so much of it that we can no longer enjoy or be thrilled by it, but we have been able to overcome the world because we are already satisfied. Because Christ has satisfied our hearts, the world’s attraction just naturally fades into oblivion.

VII. The Woman Satisfied

“The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither

come all the way hither to draw" (v.15). The woman now began to ask of the Lord. Did she understand? No, she did not.

Despite her ignorance, however, she *did* ask. Would the Lord still give to her? The Lord would certainly give to her. For had He not said, "Thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given

thee living water" (v.10)? A. Paget Wilkes observed that by merely asking; the woman obtained it. How true this saying is. Let us realize that it is not an asking according to our understanding but according to the Lord's word that precipitates His giving satisfaction to us.

"So the woman left her waterpot, and went away into the city, and saith to the people, Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever

I did: can this be the Christ?" (vv.28,29). "Can this be" means "this is." According to grammatical structure, any question which begins with "Can this be" assumes an affirmative answer on the part of the questioner. This proves that the woman had already obtained the living water. Though she did not understand or even know what she had asked, she recognized that this was Christ. And that was sufficient for her. How many today are weary and thirsty! Just believe in Him and ask of Him and everything will be well.

A. Paget Wilkes once told a story of some sailors aboard a destroyer which later docked in a certain place. These sailors went ashore and heard the gospel preached by some lady missionaries.

One sailor, after he heard, believed. In the evening he knelt by his bunk bed and prayed. This man was nicknamed Old Seventy. Now among his fellow sailors he usually was the one who loved to play tricks. So when he knelt to pray, his companions said, "Look, Old Seventy is playing a new trick today; he is imitating a Christian at prayer." They threw their boots at him and made fun of him. But he paid no attention to them. They therefore said to one another: "Look here, today Old Seventy acts so real!" He got up from prayer and told *The*

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them that he had indeed believed in Jesus. They would not accept this explanation and insisted that though he had been acting very real, he was nonetheless only pretending.

The next day, Old Seventy met a half-Christian. He told the man that he had just believed in Jesus. But the man responded with these words: “A person who believes in Jesus should feel peace in his heart. He will feel so joyful as though he had already ascended to heaven. Now that you believe in Jesus, do you feel that way?” Old Seventy confessed that he did *not* feel that way. So he was told by this man that his faith was not dependable.

Quickly he went off to see those lady missionaries. He said to them, “You say that merely by believing in Jesus, I shall be saved.

Your word is not true. Others believe in Jesus and they feel very peaceful and joyful; how come I feel nothing at all?” So the missionaries said to him: “We do not ask you whether you *feel* any different, we only ask you if you *are* different.” He thought for a while and then leaped to his feet and said, “Why, there *is* a difference! Usually I make more trouble than anybody else on the ship. Whatever they could say, I could say more. But when I believed in Jesus, I returned to the ship and noticed that the words of my companions had really pierced my ears, for their words were so dirty.

And as a result, I began to think what would happen to these men who said such things. Then, too, usually it is I who beat them, but last night when they threw boots at me, instead of letting my temper go I felt sorry for them because they were so ignorant.” “Good,”

concluded the missionaries. “It is not important whether you *feel* changed or not; it is enough if you *have* changed.”

The Lord Jesus can so satisfy your heart that you will have no more vain desire. If you will say to Him, “Lord, I believe You, I give myself to You,” you will be saved. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of the Lord shall be fulfilled. It is unimportant if *60*

you do not feel it; as long as you believe, it is done. First believe, then feel it; do not try to feel the peace and joy first and then believe.

5

5 Reconciled to God

Have you ever been reconciled to God? This is a

most important question. Your salvation or perdition

depends entirely on this issue. How great is your

blessing if you *have* been reconciled to God! You have already passed out of death into life to enjoy the

blessing which God has prepared for you in the Lord Jesus. But how pitiful and how precarious is your case if you have yet to be reconciled to God! How terrible to have His wrath always resting on your head! You should honestly face this question—Have you been reconciled to God?

Do not be careless or foolish. You are either reconciled to God or hostile towards Him; there is no neutral position. If you have not drawn nigh to Him through the death of the Lord Jesus, then you are His enemy. For the world is at enmity with God. To be His enemy does not necessarily mean you are one who presses your rebellion all the way to heaven; it simply means you are doing things according to the flesh because you mind only its passions and lusts and not what God requires of you. The Bible declares that "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither

indeed can it be" (Rom. 8.7). Not only those who set their hearts and minds against God are His enemies; even those who mind the flesh are as well.

You may actually approve of religion, you may truly admire Christ, you may have even frequently helped the church—all these things may be quite good; nonetheless, these are no proofs that you are not an enemy of God. You ought to understand that according to the word of God, whoever minds the things of the flesh is at enmity with Him. To mind the flesh is to rebel against God's law. Now the word "mind" sounds at first so innocent and casual: you may not engage in any *outward* act of rebellion against God, you may only

mind it secretly in the hidden recesses of the heart. Yet that is enough to be at enmity with Him and in rebellion to His law!

Not only is man not subject to God's law, he *cannot* be—he does not possess the power and strength to do so. This betrays the utter deprivation of human nature! Do you know that man's nature is corrupt? Yet how holy and just is the law of God. Can you keep it?

Sometimes people really consider God's law as good and His command as just, and hence they would like to keep it. But what is the result? They do not and cannot keep it. Although at times we want to keep God's law, we find in us a power which holds us and compels us to mind the flesh instead of obeying His law. Human nature is so corrupt that the hope of keeping God's law must be completely abandoned. Is it not true that oftentimes people do not want to live wantonly and licentiously, yet they still sink into such mire? It is because of the corrupt human nature. Let us realize that we must acknowledge our utter corruption before the salvation of God can ever come to us.

Another evidence that we are enemies of God lies in the fact that our hearts love the world very much. Does not the glory and the praise of the world move our hearts? In the New Testament we find this revealing statement: "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? " (James 4.4a) This is

God's word, not mine. God calls people adulteresses who have committed the act of adultery in their flesh, but He calls others by that name also; for the more inclusive meaning of adultery here is the embracing of a friendship which ought not to be embraced. Now since the world has crucified Christ, how can anyone who befriends such a world not be considered an enemy of God? For will this world and its attitude ever change? Is the world better today than at the time of Christ? If it has not changed for the better, how can you have any fellowship with it?

Oh how beautiful the people of the world are, how interesting its affairs, and how lovely its things. And because of the people, affairs and things of this world, you have formed an unbroken bond with it.

Yet this is the very reason why you became God's enemy. Truly, the minds of those who have not been reconciled to Him and regenerated are set upon the people, affairs and things of the world day and night.

What they seek are its fame, profit and power. They set their faces towards the earth and their backs towards heaven. They disregard the demands of God and are at enmity with Him. Let me ask you, Have you been washed by the precious blood of the Lord? If not, and you are in friendship with the world, then you are an enemy to God.

Human conduct is also an unmistakable evidence of man being God's enemy. What God wants men to do they will not, but what He does not want them to do, that they do. Who can count the number of sins men commit day and night? The evil deeds of the body betray the enmity that is in the heart: "And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works" (Col. 1.21). Evil

works! Sins! Uncleannesses! These are the unfailing proofs of men's enmity with God. "There is none righteous," declares the Bible, "no,

not one" (Rom. 3.10). No flesh dares to claim itself righteous before God. For no one can be justified in His sight through one's own works. All the works of men are evil in His eyes. Although many works are deemed passable in the eyes of men, they are full of defects in God's eyes, and are therefore still reckoned as evil works.

Do your works bear witness before God that you are at enmity with Him? Do not think you are better than other people but recognize that your so-called good deeds embody many evils such as pride, fame and self-satisfaction. Therefore, confess your pathetic condition, and come to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ that you may be saved. Otherwise, because of your self-righteousness and self-contentment, you will die in your sins. May the Holy Spirit convict you of your sins and cause you to see your real condition. For unless people assume the position of a sinner, confessing that they are at

enmity with God, they shall not be able to receive His grace. How can anyone come to the cross seeking the salvation of God if he does not realize he cannot please Him and that his very own nature is against Him? Unless he recognizes his terrible state of being at enmity with God and its future consequence of eternal wrath, his confession of faith in Christ may not be real.

What are the people of the world? Are they not as dust? As insects? How small is the place they occupy in the universe! Is there any ground, then, for boasting? But God, who is He? He is the One Most High, the incomparable Sovereign. Heaven is His throne and the earth is His footstool. Hence who in this age can tell of His greatness? Oh! For such tiny men to be enemies of such a great God, how can they escape perdition? Does not the Bible declare that "the wrath of God abideth on [them]" (John 3.36)? For this reason, do not deceive yourself by considering yourself as having any good works.

Your very enmity with God could be fatal. Do not ever imagine it is of no consequence to be an enemy of His. Nothing else in the world is more serious than this.

We need to be reminded that God so loved the world that He would have all men to be saved. He is not willing to see them perish nor to condemn them for their sins. Though the world—which includes you and me—is hostile towards Him, He patiently forbears.

God sent His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus, to die on the cross for us so that He might be our propitiation (satisfaction) for the removal of God's righteous wrath. The penalty of our sins fell on Him. We have rebelled against God, and according to our nature, thoughts and deeds we deserve the evil consequence of perdition; but His Son Jesus has borne it all in our stead. For He stood on our behalf in the place of us rebels and sinners. And as a result, the Lord Jesus cried out at crucifixion: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27.46b) Jesus is the beloved Son of God, He is His delight, and He is always near to Him. Yet He has borne our sins, stood in our place of hostility, and suffered the righteous wrath of *Reconciled*

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God

God's judgment for us. Even His beloved Father God forsook Him, because he became sin for us and died for us once and for all.

Forsaken by His Father for our sake, He has nonetheless achieved peace and has fulfilled grace. What amazing grace this is!

Therefore, we can now be in the good of the finished work of Christ. We can be "reconcile[d] . . . unto God through the cross"

(Eph. 2.16a). Yet it is not that we have changed to be better, nor that we are able to control ourselves or to improve ourselves—such efforts as these cannot ever satisfy God's heart. No, "through the cross" is alone the sufficient means. The work is already finished, and we need not add anything to it: "*Having made* peace through the

blood of his cross" (Col. 1.20a). The blood which our Lord Jesus

shed while suffering on the cross speaks far better than the blood of

righteous Abel (see Heb. 12.24). And peace is thus achieved and

salvation is wholly accomplished for us.

Before Christ accomplished the work of salvation God could not draw near to men, neither could men draw near to Him. Though God loved the world, the sin of the world stood in the way. But now the Son of God has died. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5.19a). The relationship between God and men has now changed. Yet the death of Christ did not change the heart of God, for He has always loved the world; and neither did the death of Christ change the heart of men, for men are still in sin and refuse to be subject to God. But thanks be to God, the *enmity* between Him and men has been done away through the death of Christ. God has judged the world by judging His Son the Lord Jesus, so that now He may accept men without any hindrance.

We may illustrate it this way: A judge had an only begotten son whom he dearly loved. The son stole public funds in his father's house and fled. Though his father loved him dearly, the relationship between the father and the son had changed. What was their relationship now? If the son were arrested, the father would no

longer be able to treat him as his son. The father would have to judge him and condemn him as one of many criminals. However much the father loved him, he could do nothing for his son except sell the family property in order to reimburse the theft. Only then could the son be freed and the father receive him back without any hindrance.

We human beings have sinned against God; we therefore deserve to be judged and condemned to eternal perdition. But God loved us so much that He came to be a man (the Lord Jesus is God) in order to suffer on the cross that He might clear our debt of sin and restore the broken relationship between God and men. With the result that God is now able to receive us sinners since peace has been achieved between the two parties. Whether a person is saved or lost now depends on the person's willingness to accept this peace.

I return again to my opening question: Have you been reconciled to God? Are you a saved person? Have you made peace with God through the Lord Jesus? The divine way of reconciliation is that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"—that we are

"reconciled to God through the death of his Son" (Rom. 5.1,10a).

You do not make peace with God through your so-called good works. For although you may already be a church member—having been baptized and having received the Lord's supper—or have often attended church worship and frequently read the Bible and prayed, or have even sometimes asked people to believe in the Lord or have preached and led in the church, you are still a lost sinner and an enemy to God if you have not been reconciled to Him through the death of the Lord Jesus by believing that Christ died, bore your sins and accomplished the work of redemption for you. Do not conceive the idea that your good works and zeal will reconcile you to God.

No, the price for reconciliation is not that cheap. If God views the death of the Lord Jesus to be absolutely necessary, then anything short of His death is totally unacceptable. Men will either be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ or continue to be enemies of His by trusting in their own works.

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God has paid all the cost for reconciliation. He has already accomplished the work of perfect redemption. The Lord Jesus has achieved everlasting salvation. Whether to be saved or lost is now the question which is put before you. You cannot be saved by your own righteousness, yet neither must you perish because of your sins.

Whether you are saved or lost depends upon your willingness to accept the salvation the Lord Jesus has accomplished for you.

During the American Civil War a victorious general issued an order to his defeated foes which went something like this: I now set apart several miles of land as a refuge of peace. All who lay down their arms and pass over into this parcel of land shall be saved; all others will be killed without mercy. Many believed the order. They laid down their arms and entered the designated area. These were all saved. But some were doubtful and refused to enter the land of refuge; with the result that they were all eventually killed.

God has designated Calvary's cross to be the land of peace for all men. You, like so many in this world, have been at enmity with Him; yet if at this moment you are willing to lay aside your sins and stand at the foot of the cross, trusting in the peace which Christ has achieved for you, you shall be saved. But if you still doubt and do not believe, you shall die in your sins. In the Civil War incident there was no difference between those who lived and those who died except as to whether they entered or did not enter the appointed area of land. Some might have moved to within a foot of the land, where they could easily enter in with but one step. Yet they were killed because they remained outside the land. Hence do not delay any longer. Do not be lost for lacking only one brief step. Trust in the Lord and you shall be saved. "He that will, let him take the water of

life freely" (Rev. 22.17d). Why not do it today?

Now if you are truly willing to accept the peace which the Lord has achieved, you will be delivered from both your sins and their penalty. For the Bible declares that "God was in Christ reconciling *68*

the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (2

Cor. 5.19a,b). Moreover, what joy we experience when we are no longer under accusation!—"We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the

reconciliation" (Rom. 5.11).

I would ask one final time, Have you been reconciled to God?

You should answer quickly. Your future depends on your answer today. "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye

reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5.20). "He came and preached peace to you that were far off [the gentiles], and peace to them that were nigh

[the Jews]" (Eph. 2.17). May the Holy Spirit touch the heart of

anyone who receives this message, causing him to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.

"O Lord, I was Your enemy, but now I am willing to believe You because of the love You manifested on the cross and because of the peace which You have achieved. O Lord, save me, a sinner!"

6

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Judgment

Inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die,

and after this cometh judgment. (Heb. 9.27)

This most solemn verse from the Bible is

uncomfortable to read and unpleasant to hear. That

which is appointed is twofold: that men will die, and

that after death there is judgment. If you can escape God's first appointment, you will be able to escape His second. If the first appointment, men's death, is fulfilled, the second appointment, judgment, will also be fulfilled. Hence the question need not be asked first as to whether or not you will be judged; the first question should rather be whether or not you will die. Yet the subject before us for consideration is not death but judgment. This is a matter none of us likes hearing or takes pleasure in discussing. But there can be no escape from it, for if death is a sure thing, judgment too is certain.

If you will die, then you will also be judged. Unless you can avoid the first appointment, you cannot avoid the second.

The Bible tells us certain facts. Whether or not you believe these to be true, they nevertheless are true. A fact will not become a fiction merely because of your unbelief. A fact is forever a fact.

Now the first fact which the Bible teaches is, that God is. You may or may not believe in Him, yet God is a fact. As with the sun in space, a blind man may or may not believe there is a sun; nonetheless, the fact of the sun still remains.

The second fact which the Bible teaches is, that there is sin. Once again, men may or may not believe that sin exists, yet the fact of its existence still remains.

The Bible teaches us not only that there is a God and that there is sin, it also instructs us concerning death. Death too is a fact. The *70*

Bible mentions this fact more frequently than people would ordinarily mention it themselves. Now whether or not you believe death is real, it is nonetheless appointed for all men.

The Bible informs us of still another fact—one which is related to the future. Because it pertains to the future, it is often neglected by people. Yet this is as factual as are the three other facts already mentioned. And this fact is that of judgment. Regardless whether you believe it or not, there *will* be judgment. Be it a large or small sin, be it a refined or gross sin, be it a popular or infamous sin, it will be judged by God; for judgment is a fact of the Bible. I do not need to spend

time to prove that there will be judgment.

The Bible simply says God is, it never tries to prove the point.

Similarly, the Bible does not need to verify that you have sinned, because you *have* sinned. Neither must it substantiate the fact that you will die, for you *will* die. Likewise, then, the Bible has no need to demonstrate to you that there will be judgment, since judgment is a fact.

Let me ask you one question, Has the problem of your sins been solved? Perhaps you have heard the gospel several times but you have still not solved your sin problem; you are therefore yet unsaved.

And death being certain, judgment will most surely come. However, you do not know *when* you will die, or *when* you will be judged. For this reason, it is urgent that you solve your sin problem *today*, otherwise you are in great danger. Many people pay little attention to judgment, but let me say that if you do not solve your sin problem today and clear up this matter of judgment, you will find no mercy when judgment finally does come upon you. I beg you to lay aside eating and sleeping so that your sin problem may be solved first. This is of utmost importance lest judgment come to you without advance notice.

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What Is the Result of Judgment?

The Bible not only tells us there will be judgment, it informs us of the result of judgment as well. One day God will judge the sin of the world, “rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might” (2 Thess. 1.8,9). This punishment is eternal perdition, even hell. What the Bible tells us of “God so loving the world” is quite true. Yet what it tells us of the hell fire is equally true. We are in a most perilous state if we have not received the grace of forgiveness. For the unbelieving will depart from the face of the Lord and descend into hell which is eternal perdition

Who Has Any Excuse As to Judgment?

Perhaps some will think that as they stand before the judgment throne of God, they can argue that He cannot put them in hell because they either did not understand when listening to the gospel or had not heard aright. You may prepare to reason with God at the time of judgment, but the Lord has already decided the way to answer you which leaves you with no excuse.

Listen to these sobering words of Jesus: “The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold,

a greater than Jonah is here” (Matt. 12.41). The Lord tells us what

will happen at judgment. Will God himself condemn their sins at judgment? No. He will simply sit there and watch the men of Nineveh stand up to condemn them for their sins. How will this be?

Nineveh was a large and famous ancient city. Its inhabitants had sinned greatly. So God sent a prophet by the name of Jonah to proclaim to them that in forty days Nineveh would be overthrown.

The men of that city heard what Jonah had announced. They

proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth—from the greatest even to the least of them. They sought God with earnestness. He saw their works that they turned in repentance from their evil way, and thus He spared them the destruction. They accordingly received the grace of sins forgiven. Much later, the Lord Jesus used this fact from ancient history to prove that the men of Nineveh would condemn Jesus’

generation for the sins they had committed.

Now the men of Nineveh heard the word of *Jonah* and had repented. Yet behold, here is One far greater than even Jonah! Today people hear the Son of God speaking. Today many have read the Bible, especially the Gospel according to John. Who then can make excuse that he has never heard the Son of God? If you have heard, how can you expect to escape the future judgment? For at the time of your judgment, the men of Nineveh will stand up and accuse, saying:

“We ourselves heard Jonah and repented. How can you therefore escape, since you have heard the gospel of God’s Son but still did not repent?”

Perhaps someone will argue in this way: “The men of Nineveh had the opportunity to repent because Jonah actually went to Nineveh to preach. But I am one of the country folk. No one has preached the gospel in my district so that I might hear it. God will therefore probably not condemn a person such as I.” In reply I will tell you what the Lord said about another incident, which will take away your excuse. “The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12.42). At the time of judgment, “the queen of the south” will rise up to answer the argument of such people and condemn this generation for its sins.

This “queen of the south” was the Queen of Sheba. Sheba is the Abbysinia (or Ethiopia) of today. This land is much farther south than even Egypt. This Queen had heard of the fame of King *Judgment*

Solomon—how full of wisdom he was; so she traveled thousands of miles to see this King. Yet “behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”

Our Lord Jesus is much greater than Solomon of old! And what *He* says is far wiser than Solomon’s words. What *He* speaks has far greater consequence, since it pertains to eternal life and eternal death.

A queen of the south was willing to travel thousands of miles to hear the wisdom of King Solomon; could you who live only twenty or so miles from the city not travel to the city and hear the truth in a gospel hall? Even if you live a hundred miles from the city, you can still find some place nearby in which to hear and then to believe the gospel. If not, the queen of the south will rise up and condemn you for your sins. She could come “from the ends of the earth!” Why can you not merely go from your house to a nearby gospel hall?

Consequently, none of the unsaved today has any excuse to present at the time of judgment.

Is There Any Way of Escaping Judgment?

Some may try to conceive a way to escape judgment. It is a rather foolish thought, but some may try. Why not hide in hades, after death, to avoid judgment? “They that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment” (John 5.29). If, by hiding in hades, one is not resurrected, will he not escape judgment? But this is altogether useless. Listen to the word of God: “Though they dig into Sheol, thence shall my hand take them” (Amos 9.2a; cf. Ps. 139.8). Do you

think you can hide in hades and seal up its entrance, thus escaping judgment? The hand of God will take you out of it. No matter how deep you dig into Sheol, His hand will remove you.

There is another group of people, possibly modem scientists or aviators, who fancy they can fly into space and escape the judgment.

But this is also futile. Listen: “Though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down” (Amos 9.2b). You may climb up, but

God will bring you down. It is hard for you to climb up, but it is easy for Him to bring you down.

Perhaps some will consider fleeing to the mountains and the forests where they cannot be found. Yet the word of God says:

“Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence” (Amos 9.3a). You speculate that by hiding in the depth of the mountains or among the many trees you may escape judgment, but God will search and take you out.

Others might say that if neither hades nor heaven nor the mountains can hide them, why not try the bottom of the sea? Here, too, the word of God warns: “Though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and it shall bite them” (Amos 9.3b). As you hide in the bottom of the sea, you will be bitten by a serpent and find no escape.

The above are various pictorial representations of your futile efforts. In hades, in heaven, in the mountains, or at the bottom of the sea you may escape the hand of men, but you cannot escape the hand of God. According to the Bible, there is

absolutely no way of escape.

What Else at the Time of Judgment?

“Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for

thee” (Matt. 11.21-24). Oh, the more you hear the gospel, the less you will be able to say in the hour of judgment. I advise you to pay *Judgment*

attention to this ultimate matter if you are still occupied with sins, the world, and self pleasure. You cannot avoid death, and therefore you will not escape judgment. Judgment is appointed just as is death.

Let me address myself to the people in Shanghai but equally as much to the people of any other city: you will be like Tyre and Sidon. These magnificent cities of old have now become places where fishermen dry their nets. You will also be like two other cities.

Due to the fullness of their sins, the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by brimstone and fire. Two years ago an American archaeologist visited the old sites of Sodom and Gomorrah and found only traces of sulfur. Alas, in the day of judgment, Tyre and Sidon and Sodom and Gomorrah will be more tolerable than today’s Shanghai.

In olden days before Christ was born and before the Son of God died for the sin of the world, people might have made excuses for not knowing about sin and judgment. Today, however, you have already heard that the Son of God has died for you. If you still have not solved the problem of sin, my tears as well as the tears of all the preachers of the gospel will be shed for you. For the judgment to come is so solemn! The world will pass away, the pleasures of the world will also pass away, but judgment will never pass away until it be fulfilled.

How Can One Escape Judgment?

Now I will tell you how you can escape judgment. For us to escape we must first ask why we must be judged in the future. Since all have sinned, all will be judged. If you can escape sin, you will be able to escape judgment.

“Judgment” in Greek is the same word as “condemnation.” Hence

“after death cometh judgment” may be read with equal accuracy as:

“after death cometh condemnation.” No one can escape from sin. If

there were no sin, we could tear down this house of meeting because there would be no need for it. Then, too, I would not have to be a Christian. I could burn the Bible and dare to do anything I wish. But sin is real, it is a fact; and therefore, I need a Savior. I know there is the Son of God who has borne my sins and has shed His blood to atone for us. I also know that if the sin question is solved, the judgment problem will also be solved. Precisely here is the way of salvation.

In what way does God save us from our sins? I have sinned, and for sinning I deserve to be judged and condemned to hell. But the word of God tells me that the Son of God has died for our sins. How sweet is the name of Jesus in my mouth. It sounds more pleasant than music in my ears, and it is the most poetic of all themes in my imagination.

The Son of God came to die for me. He has borne my sins on the cross and suffered for me the penalty of sin. Thus am I saved and freed. This is the gospel! My purpose is not to bring the voice of woe to you, saying that you must die and be judged. I only show you judgment in order to make you realize your need—you need a Savior, you need a Sin-Bearer.

Let me tell you a story: During the American Civil War, there were two brothers. One lived in the North and one lived in the South.

They were both conscripted into military service. At one battle the Confederate army of the South was defeated and many soldiers were captured. Among the Northern guards was one of these two brothers.

He saw his own brother among the captives. He dared not approach his brother in the day time, but at night he took off his uniform, put it on his brother, and urged the latter to flee (for the captives were going to be shot the very next day). He put his Confederate brother's uniform on himself and substituted for his brother as a captive. The following morning, he was shot to death. Although it was discovered later that the man was mistakenly shot, the law did not permit the *Judgment*

seizure and execution of his brother because someone had already died for him. A person could not "die" twice. So the Confederate brother was allowed to go free. This is but a small demonstration of the meaning of the cross.

Do not incorrectly imagine that Jesus came to serve society by preaching fraternity and equality as well as by setting an example for mankind. I have read the New Testament at least a hundred times, and I have never found such a concept to be in the Bible. For such an idea would not be the gospel, it would rather be the voice of woe from Satan and hell. The Bible tells us that Jesus came to suffer judgment for me. I should die, but Jesus died *for* me. When He was on the cross, He cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou

forsaken me?" (Matt. 27.46b) God had to desert His Son Jesus because at that moment Jesus bore our sins. Jesus came from heaven in order to bring us to heaven. He left His Father to come to this world so as to bring us near to God. He became poor that we might be enriched. He came to earth that we might be freed from earthly bondage. He bore our sins that we may be delivered from sins. He suffered judgment for us that all who believe in Him might be spared from being judged. I am sure you have often heard the mentioning of the cross in the presentation of the gospel. The cross simply means that the Lord Jesus has borne our judgment and suffered its penalty for us.

Permit me to relate another story: Before America was fully developed, the colonists lived mainly in the Eastern part of the continent. Much later, people discovered gold in California. The news spread along the Eastern shore, and people rushed to the West for gold. A couple decided to sell their property and traveled West to gain riches. The husband went first. For over a year there was no communication. Suddenly one day the wife received a telegram from her husband which said quite simply: "Gold; come." It meant that gold had been

found, and that she was to come immediately. The wife was so happy.

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Full of Grace and Truth

She took her son and journeyed to the West by steamer. At the time, the Panama Canal was not yet built and there was no train connection to the West Coast. Hence it took a long while to journey from East to West. One day, there was a commotion on the steamer.

She thought they probably had encountered pirates, so she closed her cabin door tightly. Later she smelled smoke. She thought probably the steamer was on fire. She opened the door and quickly brought her son to the deck. The lifeboats had all been lowered, and even the last lifeboat was already filled.

Usually when there was an accident at sea, the women and children would be saved first. But because she and her son came so late, the others had already descended into the lifeboats. As she begged to be rescued, the sailors could only promise to take on one of them. What a dilemma for this mother! At that moment, they could not both live, yet neither did they both need to die. Either the mother or the son must die for the other to live. Finally, the mother wrote down the name and address of her husband. Then she told her boy, “My son, when you see your father, tell him that your mother died in fire and in water for you so that you might see his face.”

Oh, this is but a very dim shadow of the truth of how Christ Jesus has died for us. May we hear Him saying to us: “Sinner, I have died on the cross for you so that you may see the face of the heavenly Father. I die that you may live. Believe with all your heart!”

What I am trying to impress upon you is the necessity of your seeing on the one hand that it is appointed for men to die and after death comes judgment, but on the other hand that God so loved us as to prepare a way of salvation for us—even that His Son has died for us. As a result, may you accept Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior now.

Heed this Bible verse: “He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not *Judgment*

believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3.18).

Remember that the words "judge" and "condemn" are the same in the Greek original. So that this can equally read: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: he that believeth not bath been condemned already." And this is not my word but the word of the Lord Jesus.

Heed another verse from the Bible: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of

death into life" (John 5.24). This passage tells us that if a person hears the word of the Lord Jesus and believes in God who has sent Him, that person (1) has eternal life, (2) does not come into judgment or condemnation, and (3) has passed out of death into life.

I want to ask you today if you have believed in the Son of God. If you have not, I invite you to accept Him to be your Savior now. On a number of occasions I have sat beside dying people. And once when I was preaching at a certain place, someone came to ask me to share the gospel to a physician who was dying. He knew a little concerning Christianity, but now he was dying of tuberculosis. As I arrived at his place, he said to me that he had heard of Jesus but that he had always refused to believe. I asked him to rest awhile, but he said, "I am a physician. I know I am sick to death. I have been an army doctor and have committed many sins with local people wherever I have been stationed. I have repented of my sins, but I have no way to wipe out the sins I have committed. I feel unrest in my heart; I cannot face God after death." So I read the words of John 5.24 to him. As he

listened to the words—being assured by them that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus has eternal life and does not come into judgment but is passed out of death into life—he entered into peace. How different he was now from the time when I first arrived on the scene.

For when I came, he was crying; but as I left, he shook hands with me and thanked me. I know in the eternal future I shall meet him again in heaven.

Oh, do not wait until the day of dying to believe, do not linger until the very last opportunity comes. Pray to God now, saying: “O

God, I now receive Your Son.” Yes, indeed, the Son of God has already been judged for you and has died for you. Therefore, sinners, come!

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Paths to Hell

Let us turn to an important verse in the Bible, whose

words were spoken by Jesus Christ himself: “Wide is

the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to

destruction” (Matt. 7.13b). Here we seem to be told of a place called destruction. The entrance to that place is by means of a wide gate, and beyond the gate can be found a broad way. Countless people are hurrying towards this place; they even appear to be riding express trains, so fast are they heading for this destination! Because the gate is wide, everything can be brought through it. And since the way is broad, it is quite easy to travel on it.

But this gate and this way lead to destruction.

The place of destruction is the place of perdition which is hell.

Hence what the Lord Jesus is really saying here is that wide is the gate and broad is the way to hell, and many there are who enter into it. You may be among these very people who are entering in.

Do not speculate that there is no gate to hell. On the contrary, a gate to hell exists and it is wide. Do not imagine that there is no pathway to hell: a way exists that leads to hell and it is broader than any thoroughfare in this world. It is much broader than the broadest superhighway ever laid down. As a matter of fact, the ways to hell are many—there not just being one way. If anyone wishes to go to

hell, there are many alternate roads among which he may choose. But though the roads are many, the destination is one. Though the starting points may vary, the finish line is the same. Though people travel by different roads, they will all end up in hell.

So if you are determined to head for this place, the Bible can very easily show you many ways to hell. Of these many paths to perdition I will mention but five here. All who desire to go to hell may simply practice any or all of these five ways and they are guaranteed to end *82*

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in hell. Yet those who do not wish to end up there may learn from this discussion how to escape from such a destination. How I long that none of you goes to hell; but if any of you insist on traveling this path, who can change you?

The First Way to Hell: Suicide

Suicide is a shortcut to hell. There is no way which leads to hell more quickly than this. Note this brief Bible passage: “He [Judas]

might go to his own place” (Acts 1.25). Judas had never believed in Jesus Christ. Though outwardly he pretended to be one of His disciples, he was “a son of perdition” (John 17.12) who had never experienced salvation. After he died, he went “to his own place.”

What was his own place? It was destruction or perdition. After he died, he went to hell. How did he go to hell? He killed himself by hanging.

If anyone wants to go to hell, suicide is the most convenient method of doing so. A razor, a rope, or a cup of poison will quickly send the soul to the place of eternal suffering. Hell may be quite distant from you in this life; it might, in fact, take many years for you to end up there. But if you commit suicide, you shorten the days of your life on earth and speed yourself to the place of eternal perdition.

Once an unbelieving master asked his believing chauffeur what the shortest road to hell was. At that time his car was speeding along the highway. The chauffeur opened the car door and said to his master: “If you jump out of the car, you will immediately arrive at that place. Since you do not believe in the Lord, you will go to hell as soon as you fall to your death.”

The easiest and quickest way to hell is indeed suicide. If you want to arrive at hell in a few hours, swallow a large dosage of raw opium and you will be at your destination. If you wish to arrive in hell in a few minutes, take some cyanide and you will surely be there. And if *Paths*

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you consider these ways far too slow, and you want to descend to hell in less than a minute, blow your brains out with gunshot and you will certainly be there. There are many other ways to commit suicide.

For example, you may starve yourself to death or you may leap into the sea. Or you may lie on the railroad track and let the train break you in two.

By committing suicide, a person deprives himself of the hope of salvation. But if he continues to live on earth, he may hear the gospel of the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus and believe for salvation. But if he kills himself he destroys forever the opportunity to hear the gospel. Please take note of this observation: whether one is saved or perishes is a matter decided in this life. If you refuse and do not believe in the Lord Jesus *in this life*, you will have no further opportunity to hear the gospel and be saved after death. In killing yourself you end your life and forfeit any chance of salvation. Hence the suicide victim will go straight to hell. His very blood is the stamp on his ticket to hell.

Once I was conducting a meeting in Chuanchow. I spoke on the same subject. That evening there were more than fourteen hundred people assembled together. Among those in the audience was a large number of high school boys and girls. As I was speaking, I thought to myself: What is the use of saying these things to them; surely they would not harbor any idea of committing suicide. But the Spirit of the Lord was working in me so that I had to say what I was led to say. And thus, I spoke to them frankly that if they truly wanted to go to hell they would no doubt end there by committing suicide.

After I finished speaking that evening, a teacher came to see me.

He was a college graduate and was very clever and learned. He told me how life

had become so tasteless and monotonous and how he had thought of killing himself many times but had dared not because of the darkness ahead of him. Now he knew that if he killed himself he would have no more hope of being saved. Hence he had decided *84*

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not to take his life thereafter. A few days later a high school student came to see me and told how pessimistic he was about life and how he had thought of killing himself many times but had no opportunity to do so. Upon hearing the preaching of God's word a few evenings before, he had given up the thought of taking his life.

Several months ago I was preaching in Amoy and spoke again on this subject. If anyone would kill himself, I repeated, he would surely go to hell. Later, a medical doctor told me she had a nurse who had frequently tried to kill herself but had been hindered by her from doing so. That night after she heard what I had said from God's word, that nurse dared not entertain such a thought again.

Now these people whom I have mentioned have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only did they *dare not* kill themselves, they also did not *need* to kill themselves; for they now have Christ—they are saved! Christ has so comforted their hearts and transformed their lives that they no longer nurse the thought of taking their lives. I have no idea how many people meditate such a thought. But I do know this, that Christ can satisfy every heart. So why any longer contemplate suicide and head for hell?

Once I was preaching the gospel for a few days in a college in Nanking. In the after-meeting on the last night, a townsman of mine who was a college student there came to talk with me personally. He had no difficulty in paying the tuition and his family financial situation was adequate. Moreover, he was not in any danger of failing in his studies. Yet he took a very pessimistic view towards life. He wondered where men came from and where they would go afterwards.

He had been in this frame of mind since his high school days. He felt life was so uninteresting and extremely cruel, and he thus sensed a need and a longing—a lack within him which nothing in this world could satisfy or fulfill. So he began to take a passive attitude towards *Paths*

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all things. Life to him was meaningless and a heavy burden. The longer he lived, the more vexations he experienced. Except for the monotony and the pain, life for him had no other flavor. He often kept to himself and passed his lonely life in musing. However, the more he contemplated his situation, the more abstract everything became. He searched in darkness and could not find a ray of light.

For him such a burdensome life should now be quickly ended. He had no desire to continue on in vexation. So he decided to leap into the sea and end his miserable existence at the time when he would be returning home by boat during the winter vacation.

Now, though, he had been hearing the gospel during the few days of meetings just concluded. And he today knew that the Lord Jesus Christ had died for all and lives to be a Friend of many. So why, he thought, should he die? During our conversation, he accepted the Lord Jesus to be his Savior. After he had decided to accept the Lord, I told him to tell God about his thought of suicide. He did so as we prayed together. After prayer, he asked me what he should do when he got up the next morning. I told him he should find an opportunity to read the Bible prayerfully and to meditate on God’s word so as to nourish his spiritual life. We then parted.

A few days later I asked his friend about him. His friend told me he was today very different from before, he now being a happy man.

A few days after that, I met his friend once more and again I asked about him. I received the same answer. Praise God, now that he has the Lord Jesus he has no need to take his life.

Why do you seek for death? I know you are dissatisfied with life.

I know you often feel lonely and miserable. I know your life is monotonous. I know you frequently sigh. You sense the vexation of life. And you are no stranger to tears. Though you possess many things of this world, these cannot satisfy your heart. In the depth of your being you sense a need, a longing for something which you do not know but which you hope will fill that void.

It is true that besides sorrow and vexation, life has no other taste.

And hence you sometimes think of suicide. But why should you take that route? Jesus Christ has come to save suffering people. He has comforted many hearts, satisfied many souls, transformed many lives, and wiped away many tears. He is willing to help you turn your vexatious life into a joyful one. He can be the sun in your cloudy days, and He can be the song in your dark nights. With Him your soul can be comforted and made joyous. Why then must you die?

Why commit suicide and end in hell? Today you must heed the gospel. The Lord is able and He cares for you. Accept Him as your Savior and Lord, and your life's problems will be solved.

The Second Way to Hell: Unwillingness to Deal with Sin

If thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire. And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life halt, rather than having thy two feet to be cast into hell. And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not

quenched. (Mark 9.43-48)

The one speaking here in this passage is the Lord Jesus, who tells us clearly how we can go to hell. If our hand causes us to stumble—

that is to say, if our hand makes us sin—we must cut it off. This word is not meant to imply that we literally cut off our hand of flesh; it simply indicates that we must cut off the lust and sin of our hand.

Cutting off the hand is very painful and is something we are unwilling and most reluctant to do. Likewise, dealing with the lust and sin of the hand is also most painful and goes against our natural will to do. Nevertheless, if we love our hand (and the lust and sin which the hand represents), we shall meet great disaster. It

is not the hand alone that sins; our foot, our eye, and our whole body sin as

well. The hand and the foot and the eye are representative of the entire body.

How frequently our hand sins. Many things we do which we ought not to do, while there are many things we ought to do which we do not do. Lift up your right hand, put it before you, and look at it. As you look attentively at it, ask yourself quietly what your hand has done. How many sins has it committed? How many times has it resisted God? How many things has it done that are more or less harmful to men? How many acts has it performed in sinning against oneself? Let us all look at our hands and recall the things they have done. And I trust that by the time you finish you will mourn over your sins and shed tears for them. You cannot be lighthearted, you cannot afford to be careless. You should feel sorry and cry over the many evils which your hands have done so that you will desire to get rid of your sins and be saved by believing on the Lord Jesus.

Contemplate also at this moment the paths of your feet. How many times have your feet led you to where you should not have gone? How many sins have your feet committed? Are you now standing at the gate of destruction? Are you today traveling along the pathway of destruction? Are you descending so steadily that you are about to reach the point of no return? Turn back, sinner; why must you perish? Why must you travel on this way of sin? This is not a road of peace. On the contrary, it is a most miserable way for you.

Why not turn to the Lord Jesus and be rid of your sins? I beg you to return and walk in the way of life.

How about our eyes? Our eyes serve as the main contact between our inner world and the outside world. Through these, we transfer the things outside of us and make impressions within our heart. What are the things being transferred inward? No doubt our eyes have sinned, and our eyes have caused us to sin. With our eyes we read books and papers and see pictures which we should not read and see. We desire to read certain novels, but we pretend to do so out of a

literature. We lust to see pornography, yet we feign to do so in the name of art appreciation. How our eyes long to look at scenes which will stir up our lusts. Who can tell of all the sins our eyes have committed? Eve saw the forbidden tree as being delightful, with the consequence that she committed the sin of rebellion. David saw Bathsheba bathing and committed the sin of adultery. Have your eyes sinned? You know, and God knows too.

How difficult it is to get rid of the sins of the hand because you enjoy them so much. How you love your sinful feet. How natural and comfortable for them to walk in the way of sin, and how frustrated your soul feels if you do not walk according to that old way. How you delight to amuse yourself and not turn your eyes away from looking at dirty things. A look—an attentive look—will gratify your lust and give you pleasure for a moment. It really is not easy to get rid of the lusts and sins of the hands, feet and eyes. Yet the real problem is not that they cannot be gotten rid of (for in the Lord Jesus there is salvation), but is due to your unwillingness to be rid of them (for your soul will suffer if these lusts and sins are eliminated).

Nobody can force you to get rid of your sins. Nevertheless, the decision of God stands: He declares in His word that no one who is not born anew may enter the kingdom of God. You may treasure the sins of your hands, feet and eyes, you may not be willing to be rid of them, you may in fact wholeheartedly embrace your sins; but one thing is quite certain, which is, that no unsaved sinner can ever enter the kingdom of God. None who sins has eternal life.

Either you bear the pain of a moment in your willingness to have your sin cut off so that you may have eternal life and enter the kingdom of God, or else you carry your sin with you so that you may feel comfortable and pleasurable during your earthly life but enter hell to be burned by fire and consumed by worms. Either get rid of sin and be saved or carry your sin and end up in hell. To enter life, sin must be eliminated. To enter hell you need not worry about sin but may keep on sinning and enjoying its pleasure. Since sin does not

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exist in heaven, no one who wants to enter there may bring sin into it. Sin must either be left at Calvary or be carried into hell. Heaven allows only saved sinners to enter its precincts. Therefore, do not expect to enter heaven with your sin. You either leave it and enter yourself, or both you and yours will be left outside.

The gate to hell is wide. If you wish to go there, you may bring in any sin, whether it is pride, jealousy, strife, adultery, uncleanness or any other sin. Hell is not afraid of too much sin; it is afraid of too little. If you want to go to hell, you may freely sin. Hell will not cast you out because you sin too much. It is ready to receive the chief of sinners. It never refuses anybody. It welcomes all who come there. If you prefer to go there and suffer the wrath of God, let me tell you that you may freely sin and do whatever your heart desires.

Otherwise, I beg you to get rid of sins by believing in the Lord Jesus.

The sins of the hand as well as the sins of the eyes and feet must be cut off. Are you, a sinner, willing to stop sinning? Or are you thinking of committing that sin which you premeditated an hour ago on doing? Let me warn you to be careful lest you end up going to hell. The Lord will receive a sinner who is willing to forsake sin and turn to Him.

Once a house was on fire. This house was well built, and the beams were made of massive stones. One person in the house learned of the fire too late. As he descended the stairs and fled across the hall, he was struck by one of the stone beams which at that very moment fell down. One of his hands was pinned beneath the fallen beam. The beam was so heavy that he could not move it nor pull his hand out from under it. He shouted for help, but no help came. He exerted his utmost strength to move the stone beam, but he was not able to do so. He tried to pull his hand out by force, yet he could not.

The fire came closer to him. If he did not escape now, he would have no further chance. What could he do?

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He noticed some broken pieces of stone lying close by. So he used his free hand

and quickly selected a piece of very sharp stone and began to cut the sleeve of his trapped hand. Gradually he cut his flesh, and in the process he lost lots of blood and suffered great pain.

But in order to save his life, he had to do it. Life is more important than a hand. If he had not endured the pain for a while, he would have lost his entire body because of trying to hold on to just one member of the body. He finally cut through his wrist bone and was set free.

Supporting the broken arm with his good hand, the man ran out of the burning house. But as soon as he was free of the building, he collapsed. People took him to the hospital. After several months, the man was fully recovered. A trapped hand had caused him to lose his free movement. But by cutting off that hand he was able to flee for his life. He may have lost one hand but he preserved his life.

All sinners must realize that the fire of hell is approaching. You who are a sinner are in a precarious situation. Your hand is oppressed by sin. Though only one of your members sins, that is *sufficient* to deprive your entire body of its legitimate freedom. That *one* member sinning is *enough* to cause you to lose your life and to be burned in everlasting fire. The fire of hell is coming closer and closer. Now could be the last five minutes. It could be now or never. In an instant the opportunity may forever be lost. Therefore, you must flee for your life immediately, otherwise you will perish. Why let your whole body go to hell for the sin of one recalcitrant member? For the sake of your entire body you should be willing to endure momentary pain, get rid of your sin, and trust in the Lord Jesus. Thus shall you enter life. Otherwise, let me speak frankly, that if you insist on keeping both your hands or both your feet, your whole body will be burned to death. If you are unwilling to endure the pain of cutting off a hand or a foot, your entire body will end up in hell.

The Third Way to Hell: Pride

Let us read several passages from the Bible. The first one is found

in the Gospel according to Luke chapter 18 verse 14. There the Lord

Jesus tells us how the incident of the Pharisee and the publican ends.

The Pharisee is a religious fanatic as well as a most moral person, whereas the publican is not only most immoral but also very unspiritual. Nonetheless, they both go to the temple to pray. The good Pharisee will not humble himself to acknowledge that he is a sinner and to ask for God's mercy, but the bad publican humbly confesses his sins before God and also asks to have his sins atoned for because he knows he has nothing good with which to please Him.

In verse 14 the Lord Jesus is recorded as telling us their respective ends: "I say unto you, This man [the publican] went down to his house justified rather than the other [the Pharisee]: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." So that this most moral Pharisee is not justified whereas the most unlawful publican is.

To be justified means not just being forgiven, for forgiveness means only having our sins remitted. For one to be justified, it means his being declared *to be without sin*. And hence the one who considered himself to be sinless is condemned by God, while the one who reckoned himself to be sinful is declared by Him to be without any sin.

Yet how is it that such a moral person as this Pharisee is condemned and such an immoral publican is justified? For no other reason than the one given by Jesus in the parable: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." To put it more starkly, to be justified means going to heaven but to not be justified means going to hell. Hence we see how the proud man goes to hell. Proud people should beware.

Let us ponder a few more verses from the Bible: "Jehovah will root up the house of the proud" (Prov. 15.25a)—"Every one that is

proud in heart is an abomination to Jehovah: . . . he shall not be

unpunished" (Prov. 16.5)—"There shall be a day of Jehovah of hosts

upon all that is proud and haughty, and upon all that is lifted up; and

it shall be brought low" (Is. 2.12). These passages tell us plainly that the proud will be punished in the day when God shall judge all the earth. To go to hell is to suffer eternal pains. If anyone really desires to go to hell, he merely needs to be proud and he shall arrive at the desired destination.

What, then, is pride? Pride means to exalt oneself, to place oneself above what he has actually attained. Claiming a name beyond reality—that is pride. In this story of Luke 18, the Lord has made this

point quite clear. He said that the Pharisee exalts himself and is proud. Wherein is he proud? Is not his morality something to be admired? But before God, and under His light, the Pharisee is not willing to confess himself a sinner. He attempts instead to report to God of all his goodness but to omit any mention of his weakness, failure and defeat. He refuses to acknowledge that he is a sinner; on the contrary, he wants to display before God his own righteousness.

This is his pride.

The Pharisee is proud because he insists on pretending before God that he is a righteous man, whereas he is not a righteous man but a sinner and will not admit before God that he is. Yet God does not interfere with his pride. He allows him to be self-righteous, self-content, and self-complacent. God will not argue with him. But He does not justify him either; rather, He permits him to perish and go to hell.

Hence the real meaning of pride is that man is not willing to humble himself before God, acknowledge that he is a sinner, and accept the atoning work of the Lord Jesus in order to be saved. The proud will perish—yet not directly because of his pride but indirectly *Paths*

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because his pride hinders him from receiving salvation. Pride is but one of many sins. The Lord Jesus has already died for *all* the sins of the world; He has borne the penalty of *all* our sins. Even this sin of pride has already been punished on the cross. But if we allow pride to remain, we cannot believe in the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus and receive eternal life. The proud will perish because pride hinders them from getting saved.

Unless a person confesses his sins and stands in the place of a sinner, he will not accept the Lord Jesus as his Savior. I am a preacher of the gospel, and I have yet to see a person get saved who, though he is willing to believe in the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus, is nonetheless unwilling to confess his sins. To be saved requires humility. One must confess he is a sinner.

I remember once preaching in a certain place where I had a personal talk with a high school teacher in the evening. He asked many many questions about Christianity and other religions. We talked for a long while, and his questions continued to come forth like a flood. So I told him that these questions were not basic to his problem at all. Whether a person would believe in the Lord Jesus did not depend on the solution of these questions he raised. Only one question was of utmost importance, and it was the first and foremost condition for believing Christ. I told him it was *confessing oneself as a sinner*. If he would not confess himself to be a sinner, the solution of all these difficult questions would not help him to believe in Christ. But if he confessed he was a sinner because he knew he was in sin, bound by sin, and was afraid of the penalty of sin, then he would seek for a Savior.

This teacher, however, was quite confused about sin. Sometimes he confessed he had sinned, but at other times in our conversation he indicated he did not feel he had any sin. Finally I told him that unless he knew for sure he was a sinner, he had no way to understand the teaching of atonement in the Bible. We talked until about midnight, *94*

and still there was no result. At last I said this to him: “Please think more concerning your sins, and then many of your problems will be solved.” A few days later this man really knew and confessed that he was a sinner, and he had also truly believed in the one and only Savior Jesus Christ.

Why do you not at this moment consider the matter of your sins?

If you will humble yourself and confess that you are indeed a sinner, you can be saved. If you will not confess, however, but remain proud, your pride will hasten you on to hell. All who love to go to hell may freely deceive themselves, freely be arrogant, and freely disavow the fact that they are sinners. For hell has no need of humility.

The Fourth Way to Hell: Fornication

Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire. (Jude 7)

We see here that a certain kind of people will suffer the punishment of eternal fire. They are punished because they have committed fornication. Unrepentant fornicators must go to hell. For eternal fire is the punishment of hell. There the fire never goes out.

Accordingly, if anyone wishes to go to hell, he need only commit fornication. Hell does not shy away from the uncleanness of fornication. As a matter of fact, it welcomes all fornicators. If you do not wish to go to hell, you must cut off the sin of fornication.

How common this sin is. Modesty and virginity have become old fashioned and have for the most part been cast off by modern society.

Take up any newspaper and see how many cases of fornication are recorded in one day. Read the court notices and learn how many cases of adultery are to be tried. Pornographic literature is openly printed and circulated.

I do not know how many of you have committed fornication.

Neither do I know how many have kept their virginity as unmarried men and women. You may answer yourselves. You know the sin you have committed, and God knows too. Do you imagine that

fornication is most pleasurable? Well, consider this, that the fornicators have but one end awaiting them—hell.

Please do not take this lightly. Those who break up the loving relationship between husbands and wives are the most heinous individuals in the world. Why do you steal another's husband and cause his wife untold sorrows at home? Why do you entice another's wife and so make her unfaithful towards her own husband?

Fornication has destroyed the peace of so many homes. Countless numbers of mothers, husbands, wives, and children are brokenhearted and separated without any consolation—all because of fornication. Turn back, or else you are destined for hell.

Let us for a moment consider the definition of fornication as given by the Lord Jesus: "I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in

his heart" (Matt. 5.28). According to this definition, probably there are very few if any who have not yet committed fornication. How many there are who commit adultery in their thoughts! Numberless are the people who have committed this sin in their imagination!

Why do you sin against a virtuous woman with such thought? Why do you conceive unclean thoughts against her who has no relationship whatsoever with you? Yet you have truly sinned against her. And you women, do not presume to think that only the men sin in this matter. Why do they lust after you when they see you? If they need to be punished because they lust after you, then you who excite them to such lust are also punishable. If your dress, your makeup, your attitude, and your flirtatious conduct stir up men's lust, you as well as they must equally be blamed and punished.

The world is full of fornication and adultery. Yet do not think a particular place on earth is the worst. There is nowhere else that can be compared in quantity to the number of adulterous men and women found in hell, because hell is the main detention center for all the fornicators and adulterers throughout the ages. I must say with all frankness that if you are a fornicator who has not repented, your end will be hell. But there is salvation in the Lord Jesus. He has served as the substitute for all sinners. Whoever accepts Him as Savior shall not perish but has eternal life. Fornication will send you to hell, but you need not go there because of fornication, for many fornicators have been saved and are on the way to hell no more.

Fornication may indeed send you to hell, yet you will not necessarily end up there because of it specifically. How can I explain this? Let us first of all understand that the death of Christ was to atone for sin. He died for *all* sins, the sin of fornication being included. He has already borne the punishment due to our fornication. We therefore need not go to hell because of such sin. But to be saved from hell we have to believe in the Lord Jesus. Although He has died for us, we will still perish if we do not accept Him as Savior. In spite of the fact that fornication does not necessarily send us to hell, it nonetheless has the power of *hindering* us from accepting the Lord Jesus as our Savior. How many perish today—yet not because of the greatness of their sins, but because they are hindered by them from coming to the Lord for life. The Lord is able to save them but they love their sins far more than their souls. Many women cling to their adulterers, and many men hold on to their adulteresses. They will not be separated; they are unwilling to cut off their unclean affection. And consequently, they do not come to the Lord Jesus and get saved.

I must speak faithfully here, that unless you cut off your relationship with your adulterer or adulteress and come to the Lord, you will go to hell with him or her together. Today you must make a choice between the salvation of God or your adulterous partner.

Between heaven or your sinful partner. If you do not sever the tie to your illicit lover, you have decided against heaven. For the sake of obtaining heaven, you should forsake the sin of fornication.

Once I met a rich man. He was well known in his locality and was quite influential. He was good in every aspect of life except that he was most licentious. He had destroyed the virginity of dozens of women in upper society. Nonetheless, he was a deacon in the church.

But one day, upon hearing the gospel and understanding the reality of his future, he made the choice between eternal life and his many mistresses. Thank God, on that day he made the right choice. He broke off his illicit relationship with all his former mistresses and received the eternal blessing of heaven.

I may not be acquainted with your particular past history, nor can I know what you have done in darkness, but I suspect that there are many of you who have committed the sin of fornication. I entreat you most earnestly to make your choice for eternal life and cease engaging in this sinful activity.

The Fifth Way to Hell: Disobeying the Gospel

The Bible shows us another way to hell. This one may appear more clean and less ugly than the other ways. What is it? It is disobeying the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us read a Scripture passage:

The revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that ***obey not*** *the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even* ***eternal destruction*** *from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might. (2 Thess. 1.7-9)*

Eternal destruction is eternal suffering in hell. Accordingly, this Scripture verse tells us that all who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ will go to hell.

What *is* the gospel of the Lord Jesus? The Bible contains explicit teaching on

this. The Lord Jesus does not come to serve, nor does He come to teach. He does not come to preach the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, nor does He serve as the perfect and great example. Through the apostle Paul God tells us this concerning the gospel: “I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received

[the gospel]: that Christ *died for our sins* according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been *raised* on the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15.3,4). Thus the gospel of Christ

is His death and resurrection.

Why did Christ die? Not surely to be an example, nor for martyrdom, nor for service, but “for our sins.” This is substitution, since Christ has no sin. The Sinless One became sin for us. He stood in the sinner’s stead and suffered the penalty for all us sinners. We have sinned, but Christ has not. We are sinners, but Christ is not a sinner. Yet He, not we, bore *our* sins and was punished. What is this called? This is called substitution. The sinless Christ died for the sinful. And this is the gospel, this is the good news.

The gospel tells us that a Savior has come to save sinners by bearing the penalty of those sinners so that they might not be punished anymore. The gospel or good news of Christ does not persuade men to improve, reform, do penance, or change in order to be saved. It simply but gloriously announces to the people of the world that Jesus Christ *has already accomplished* salvation so that the world’s sinners have no need to do anything nor to add anything to this perfect salvation. All they must do is to accept the salvation which God has prepared for them.

Jesus Christ not only died for sinners for the remission of their sins but He has also been raised from among the dead that sinners might be justified. Jesus “was delivered up [in death] for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification” (Rom. 4.25). His

death performs the negative work of taking away the penalty of our sins so that we may not be condemned. His resurrection

accomplishes the positive work of giving us a new position before God since He has justified us and reckoned us as righteous.

Forgiveness means that there is no more sin, that we therefore now stand on a perfectly righteous and sinless ground which requires no forgiveness. This is what the resurrection of Jesus Christ has done for us. All men die but no one is resurrected because the wages of sin is death. Jesus Christ died but He has been raised from among the dead to prove that God has accepted His substitutionary work and that He is without sin.

Consequently, on the one hand, through the death of the Lord Jesus we receive forgiveness, and on the other hand, through His resurrection we are proven to be justified. Justification builds on forgiveness. First the forgiveness of sin, then justification. By the death of the Lord Jesus we obtain forgiveness; by His resurrection we have the assurance of justification. And all this has been accomplished. A sinner can instantly receive forgiveness and justification by believing in the Lord Jesus as Savior.

Such is the gospel. Have you heard it? God now commands all men to obey this gospel. This is the gospel of grace which gives every sinner the possibility of being saved. Will you obey this gospel? How easy it is to go to hell. You need not proceed to commit more sins such as fornication and pride. You can be on the way to hell right here—by simply not obeying the gospel. Rejecting the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus is enough to send anyone to hell. Do not assume that you must sin more in order to qualify yourself for hell. You are fully qualified if you merely disobey the gospel.

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Full of Grace and Truth

Do not imagine that all who go to hell are gross sinners. There are quite a few religionists, moralists, philanthropists, and social workers there as well. A person may be most moral, kind and upright, yet he can end up being an inhabitant of hell. What he waits for is death and judgment. And this is his destiny for but one reason, he disobeys the gospel. No religion or morality can save a single soul; only the gospel of God’s grace can save. Rejecting this gospel is to reject the

only way of salvation. And such will naturally send a soul to hell. He may be good, but he cannot be perfect. Who can say that throughout his life he has never for a second sinned? If he has sinned just once in one tiny second, he will need a Savior because his sin must be punished. By rejecting the Savior, he causes himself to go to hell. Do not entertain the thought that if you do good, you will not go there.

Unless from birth to grave you have never for a single second sinned in deed, word or thought, you will be destined for hell. Today you have heard the gospel. I beg you to accept the Lord Jesus as your Savior at this hour.

Through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, redemption has been accomplished. That which is delivered to you now is this gospel. Why is it called the good news, the gospel? Because every sinner on earth without exception could be saved. The Lord Jesus has died for all sinners. He has crucified all the sin of the world in himself on the cross. Hence whoever is willing to accept Him as Savior shall be freed from the oppression as well as the punishment of sin.

Man's way is always to try gradually to reform himself, accumulating more merits and hoping for salvation at the last. That is not glad tidings; that is woeful tidings. For how many, if any, in this world are able to so discipline themselves as to accumulate virtues in life? Let all who want to save themselves by good works take careful note: except your good is perfect and without blemish, your so-called good is itself sin. Unless your righteousness reaches heaven and satisfies God, it is as filthy rags. In the solitude of the night, your *Paths*

to

Hell

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conscience will accuse you of mixing self, fame, reputation, and other impure thoughts into your righteous acts; how can God ever be satisfied with such "righteousness" as that? Can you possibly do good that would satisfy God (and not just satisfy yourself or your neighbor)? Hardly. Since you cannot do good, the news that tells you to do good to be saved is in truth very bad news.

Thank God, He does not ask us for the impossible. He knows our frailty, hence He causes His Son to die for us and bear the penalty of all our sins. We do not

need to gradually do good in anticipation of salvation; we may have eternal life immediately after we believe and accept the Son of God as our personal Savior.

This does not mean, of course, that we who have believed in the Lord Jesus do not need to do good afterwards; it only means that we cannot be saved initially through good works. Our salvation is

wholly dependent on the grace of God (Eph. 2.8). After we are

saved, however, the Lord gives us a new life and that life will do good spontaneously. First be saved, then do good. Not first do good, and then be saved.

Is there anyone who is oppressed by sin? Is there any who trembles at the thought of life after death? Does not your conscience tell you you are a sinner? Are you not afraid of death and judgment?

Then here is salvation for the brokenhearted sinner. The Lord Jesus comes to save such sinners. Come to Him just as you are, and He will save you. He himself declared: “Him that cometh to me I will in

no wise cast out” (John 6.37). Be fearful lest you do not come, but do not be afraid at all that He will not receive you.

Now you have no excuse because you have heard the gospel. Will you obey? The gospel has brought the Savior to you and informed you of the way of salvation which is by accepting Him. Now it is up to you to obey. In the event you perish, it will not be due to your past sins but for your not obeying the gospel.

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Full of Grace and Truth

Suppose you are sick and almost dying, and someone brings to you a medicine that can cure you. And suppose you refuse to take the medicine. If you eventually die, it is not because of your illness but because of your rejecting the medicine which could have healed you and saved you. No doubt you have sinned, but here is a Savior whose specialty is saving sinners. If you should perish, it will be because you *will* not to obey and accept this Savior of sinners.

How many perishing souls are now in hell—yet not because of their sins but because of their rejecting the Savior. Therefore, do not let the Savior's word be fulfilled in you which says: "Ye *will not* [to] come to me, that ye may have life" (John 5.40).

8

8 Do You Know You Are Saved?

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water. (Heb. 10.19-22)

This passage of the Bible tells us first what the Lord has accomplished for us, and then what we ought to be. Since we have received so much, we should draw near to God with a true heart in fullness of faith.

Here is something special which requires our attention. We should know the difference between the New Covenant and the Old. Under the New Covenant men proceed step by step from the position which they have already obtained, whereas under the Old Covenant they must advance step by step until they attain the right position. In other words, during the time of the Old Covenant men had absolutely no position before God. It was similar to students taking an entrance examination who do not know whether they shall make it through or not. Men in olden times had no assurance before God but were constantly being tested in their attempt to please Him. They had to exert their utmost effort to draw near to God in worship and service—thereby hoping that one day they might at last reach the position of eternal life in the future.

But under the New Covenant, the reverse is true. And if anyone knows this reversal, he is indeed blessed. The New Covenant is totally different from the Old for under the New Covenant a position is first given to men, a position which never changes. Thus all believers today under the New Covenant have already been granted a position in Christ. And on the basis of this position of eternal life

already given, they draw near to God with a true heart in fullness of faith.

Today we who are believers in Christ must stand on the position which God has given us. After a person is saved, the first step for him is to recognize what the position he now stands in truly is. The word of God says that whoever is in Christ has already obtained this position. In other words, having become the children of God, we now approach Him. All the works we now do are based on the position we first have received. We do not strive to do good in order to be saved. All who still embrace such a concept neither know God nor understand His word.

Once I was preaching the gospel at a certain place for about six or seven days. Later I asked my audience if they believed in Jesus.

Many people bravely confessed that they believed. I next asked them what they had obtained after they had believed. Many of them could not answer that question. So I then asked all who knew they were saved to raise their hands. Out of about six hundred people in the meeting, only three hands went up. Ironically, these three had been saved during my preaching at another place and had been brought here with me! About six hundred had believed in the Lord but only three knew they were saved. This was indeed strange.

In 1924, I preached in Chuanchow for over ten days and asked the same question. I asked those assembled whether they believed in Jesus as Savior. Over a thousand hands were raised. But when I asked those who were believers if they knew they had eternal life and would not perish, not a single hand was raised in the audience except that of my interpreter on the platform! Hence I told them what the Lord Jesus himself had said: “He that believeth on the Son hath

eternal life” (John 3.36). How, then, could they be so ignorant of their having eternal life since once believing?

Another time well over a thousand people were at the meeting. I asked again who had believed in the Lord. Over a thousand hands were raised

simultaneously. I asked again if they were saved. Only twelve or thirteen hands went up. Why was there such a difference in the number of hands raised? Over a thousand believed, yet only little over ten were saved. Is Christ not dependable? Suppose a physician puts out a sign that he can cure all sicknesses. You ask him how many patients he has seen, and he replies that he has cared for over a thousand. You then inquire how many he has cured. He answers that out of the thousand or more patients twelve or thirteen will certainly be cured. Would you not certainly label that physician an incompetent? He treats so many patients but cures so few of them!

Yet, at the above-mentioned meeting, over a thousand believed but only twelve or thirteen were saved. Would you not conclude as well that Christ was also undependable?

Once I was holding a meeting in a city in South China. And to my surprise, many elders, pastors, deacons and teachers were numbered among those who did not understand this matter of the assurance of salvation. They preached to others, but how ignorant they were of their own position! They did not know that by believing in the Lord they had eternal life and would not perish. They themselves had not the slightest assurance of salvation.

Many such people I meet not only during the public speaking sessions but also in private conversation. Once a lady was talking with me on this subject. I asked her if she believed in the Lord. She was unlearned and slow of speech. She related how her grandparents and parents all believed in the Lord and that she too believed. She recited the ten commandments to show that she knew a lot about religion. Later I spoke to her that since we believers were not superstitious, would she know she would be saved if she were to depart from this world at that very moment? Her reply was that she dared not say so, but that she was doing her best to serve the Lord and hoping that one day He would be merciful to her and permit her

to go to heaven. But, she added, if the Lord refused to show mercy, she would not be saved. I talked with her at length until finally she understood the assurance of salvation. Otherwise, she would have continued to say that she would do her best to do good, to sacrifice, and to suffer—with the hope of being saved in the future.

On still another occasion I was talking with an intelligent seminary student. He too was unclear on this matter. He said he was trying hard to work and to do good. If in the future God reckoned him worthy for heaven, he would be saved; but for him to declare that he was saved now would be bragging and make him proud. I spent much time helping him to a proper awareness of his salvation.

Alas, how many believers I have met both in public and in private who today dare not say they are saved. In so doing, such people are actually refusing to believe that the Bible is the word of God. Do let us see that whatever God says, the thing is done. What He declares shall be accomplished and will never change. Yet numerous believers think they must do their best in this life with the hope that in the future life God may save them. But hoping is not believing.

Let us understand and never forget, though, that every time the Bible uses the word "believe" it refers to the finished work of the past and not the anticipated future. Consequently, all who *expect* to be saved have a problem with respect to their faith towards the accomplished redemption of the Lord.

You *expect* God's gift as well as His promise, but you do not believe Him. God is not pleased with such an attitude.

Let us therefore carefully examine this issue of whether or not a believer can know he has eternal life. Can a Christian know with absolute certainty that he is saved? Concerning this vital subject, however, I do not want to say anything out from myself but to allow the Sacred Book—the Bible—to speak. Let us read and discuss

together a few passages from the Scriptures to see if we can truly know we have eternal life.

"These things have I written unto you, that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son

of God" (1 John 5.13). Let us hold fast to what is said here. Does it say that you may *expect*? Not at all. It says instead that you may *know* you have eternal life. To whom does John write this letter? To those who believe on the name of the

Son of God. Who is this Son of God? He is Christ. Hence John writes to those who have believed in Jesus Christ so that they may know they have eternal life. Hence the Bible states that we may know this matter. Everything John writes is for the purpose of causing those who believe in the name of the Son of God to know definitely that they have eternal life.

"Be it *known* unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins: and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be

justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13.38,39). How does this

passage begin? Does it read, Let it be expected, or, May you believe?

No, it says neither of these. Rather, it begins as follows: "Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you the remission of sins." Can we know we are forgiven and justified? Paul in the above passage declares unequivocally that we may know and ought to know that we are the forgiven and justified. All who believe should know this and they need no one to tell them so.

"For we *know* that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with

hands, eternal, in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5.1). This passage is unlike

the one in Acts above which says as a word of command that a person ought to know. Here instead it clearly states that we already know—that is to say, we know without the need of anybody telling us how. What do we know? Paul says we know that if this earthly

tabernacle (our physical body) is dissolved, we will have a building from God, a house not made with hands that is eternal in the heavens (our resurrection body). Paul knows conclusively that after our earthly body dies, we will have an eternal, resurrected body in heaven. In other words, we shall be saved.

Paul is very careful in making the above statement lest anyone misunderstand him by thinking that he, an apostle who knows how to serve, would himself

definitely go to heaven after death, but that people such as we who are not zealous and do not love the Lord would probably not receive a resurrection body after death and thus not be saved. But Paul is most careful in the way he phrases his words. He does not say, “for *I* know that if the earthly house of *my* tabernacle be dissolved”; rather, he says, “for *we*”—not just I but also you; that is to say, *all* who believe in the Lord will have a building from God, *all* will have a house not made with hands which is eternal in the heavens after the earthly house of *our* tabernacle is dissolved. And hence, it is shown here that whoever believes may know he has eternal life and thus is saved.

This thought is continued in verses 6 and 8: “Being therefore always of good courage, and *knowing* that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord . . ., we are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.” Paul has no doubt as to where he will go once he becomes absent from the body. He knows that he and all others who believe will never go to the eternally dreadful place but will rather go to be with the Lord forever. This is why he could be of good courage and have no fear of death. It also shows that in the matter of salvation, we do not need to wait until the future to know these things but we can know now.

“For which cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for I know him whom I have believed, and I am *persuaded* that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day”

(2 Tim. 1.12). Why should Paul say this? What had he committed to the Lord at the time he believed? He had committed his future, the eternal life, and salvation to the Lord. He fully believes and is persuaded that the Lord is able to keep what he has committed unto that day. He knows for sure and clearly understands that all which he has committed into the Lord’s hands will be fully preserved.

These few Scripture passages which we have just considered testify to the fact that we may know while here on earth whether or not we have eternal life and are saved. Therefore, every believer should know today if he is saved or not. Hence do not make the excuse by saying: “I will know whether I am going to heaven or to hell after I am judged by God in the future.”

With respect to the assurance of salvation, we need to discuss a few more things. How can we know who has eternal life and is saved? We need to know how we can have eternal life. If we know the way of justification and the forgiveness of sins, we will be able to determine whether we have already made it through. If we have traveled through *this* way, we have eternal life; if we have not, we do not have eternal life. Accordingly, let us consider this way to eternal life.

In the New Testament there are at least one hundred and fifty places wherein the writers declare that he who believes has eternal life, has life, is not judged, or is saved. What does John 3.16, the

verse with which we are most familiar, have to say about this? It tells us that God loves us. How does He love us? To what extent is His love? God so loved the world that He has given His beloved and only begotten Son Jesus, who has died for sinners and has accomplished the work of redemption. So that now, "whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life."

This precious verse raises three points: a great fact, a great condition, and a great consequence. The great fact is, God sent Jesus

to atone for men's sin as the Savior of the world. The great condition is, what every man ought to do—which is to say, to believe. The great consequence is actually so good, it is beyond human thought: whoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life. There is no other fact in the world greater or more real than this we have mentioned. The great condition or demand is now put before every man for him to fulfil—to believe in the fact of what God has done and accomplished. That is the one and only condition. The great fact is done by God but the great condition is fulfilled by men. And with the great consequence of not perishing but having eternal life, a person is in possession of salvation. Now once the Lord has said this in His word, can anyone possibly think that if any person believes, he or she will nonetheless perish? This would make God unjust, which He is not. For He is the God of righteousness. Hence the word of God stands sure: whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish but have eternal life.

Once there was a physician who was a good believer in the Lord.

As he treated sick people, he would use every opportunity to share the gospel. Once he was treating a widow. He asked her if she was a believer. She

acknowledged the fact and said she had received Jesus as her Savior. Whereupon the physician inquired: “If you have really believed and accepted Jesus as Savior, do you have eternal life? If you are not healed and die, will you go to heaven or to hell?” “Sir, I dare not say,” replied the widow. “I have been a Christian for several decades. I only know this, that I try my best to be good. If God considers me worthy to be saved to heaven, that is good; otherwise, I can do nothing more to be saved.” “Well, you must know some Scripture passages by heart, since you have been a Christian so long,” said the physician. “Indeed, I can recite many passages from memory,” assured the lady. “The one I am most familiar with is John

3.16, for I learned that verse when I first entered kindergarten. I have recited that verse for about sixty years.”

Upon hearing her recite it, the doctor remarked, “You said it well.

But do you at this moment have eternal life?” “Sir,” the widow repeated, “I have just told you that I am now doing my best and perhaps in the future God will consider me good enough to have eternal life. At that time I will know whether I have eternal life. Such a good doctor as you are may dare to say that you have eternal life, but I dare not say so.” The doctor quietly replied: “Madam, you have

recited John 3.16 incorrectly.” “But how can I be wrong?” I have recited this verse for sixty years. Could I possibly make any mistake?”

The doctor asked her to recite the verse again, and again he inquired if she had eternal life. Once more she answered that she dared not say she had but would keep trying to do her best in life.

And once more the doctor softly said, “You have recited John 3.16

incorrectly.” By this time the widow was so exasperated that she

found a Bible, turned to John 3.16, put it before the doctor, and said,

“I will recite again, and this time you may check word for word to see if I am

correct.” After she recited, she asked, “Sir, am I right?

Who is wrong?” The doctor responded with: “Don’t be impatient.

Let me ask you again, Do you have eternal life?” She was really

angry now, so she retorted, “You say I have recited John 3.16

incorrectly and you continue to ask me about eternal life. I have told you three times now that I dare not say so, I can only hope that in the future God will say that I have it!”

The doctor repeated himself once more: “You do not recite John

3.16 correctly.” The widow said, “I am not going to recite the verse; instead, you say it for me.” So the doctor recited it once, and immediately the widow challenged him with the assertion that their versions were exactly the same. But he replied, “Yours is different from mine. Let me recite *your* John 3.16 for you: ‘God so loved the

world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him and tryeth his best, may not perish but have eternal life if after death God judgeth him as being pleasing to Him.’ But note that

my John 3.16 says this: ‘Whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life.’” Upon hearing this from the doctor, the woman suddenly came to her senses and finally understood.

Formerly this widow woman had always conceived John 3.16 as

being two separate sentences. The first for her ended at “whosoever believeth on him,” to which she could add any words she wanted.

And then the second sentence followed with “should not perish but have eternal life.” Now, though, she realized that John 3.16 was one

continuous sentence: He who believes in the Lord shall not perish but have eternal life. Do please remember that God never lies. Whatever He says stands.

Whenever you believe, you are saved.

Years ago there was a famous evangelist by the name of Wilbur Chapman. Many were saved through his preaching. He was well-known at that time. He has since fallen asleep in the Lord. Why do I mention him? Because the story of his salvation is closely related to what we are considering together.

Wilbur Chapman was a doctor of philosophy and was quite learned. Once he went to hear Dwight L. Moody, the world-famous evangelist. Moody had come from the laboring class and did not have much education. Afterwards Chapman talked with Moody.

Moody asked him if he were a Christian, and Chapman's answer was as follows: "Sometimes I am very good, sometimes I am very bad.

When I am zealous, I am most zealous; but when I am cold, none can be colder than I. During the period of zealousness, I dare say I am a Christian; but at the time of coldness, I dare not say I am a Christian."

Instead of reasoning with him, Moody asked him to read John

5.24 which says this: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life."

After Chapman finished reading, Moody asked him if he were a

saved Christian. Although he was a learned doctor of letters, his answer was similar to that of the elderly widow—"I have told you that when I am zealous and good I am a Christian, but when I am cold and bad I cannot be reckoned as a Christian." "But what does the Bible say?" asked Moody. "What would the person have who hears the word of the gospel and believes in the Heavenly Father who sent Jesus? Does not the Bible declare that such a person shall have eternal life and has passed out of death into life? Mr. Chapman, you have believed in the Lord, therefore you are a saved Christian."

Chapman hesitated and then replied: “I still dare not say I am a Christian. How very bad I am. I have been up in zeal and down in coldness so many times.” Moody therefore took the Bible in his hand and said, “Dr. Chapman, do you know whose word you are

doubting?” Then and there Chapman realized he was doubting the word of *God.* Later he testified from the pulpit that thereafter he knew he had eternal life.

Having believed in the Lord but then saying you do not have eternal life is not a sign of *humility* but a mark of *unbelief.* Such a position is doubting God’s word and doubting His righteousness and unchangeable character. Whoever is in Christ has eternal life, is not judged, and has passed out of death into life. On the day he believes, he is born again of new life. This is the gospel. I lay this matter before you that you may know you have eternal life.

Let us also consider John 6.47: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth *hath* eternal life.” Were all the Scriptures to vanish except this one verse, the latter would be enough to solve the problem of salvation. *Faith is not expectation*. It neither waits for the future nor requires the performance of any work. For the Bible says,

“He that believeth hath eternal life.” And God’s word never changes.

Let me relate another, yet quite simple story. Some years back there was a famous servant of the Lord. He was a physician who was deep into medical science and strong in faith. Each time he treated

people he would exhort them to believe in the Lord Jesus. Once he visited another hospital. There he saw a young woman lying in bed whose life was fading away. Upon approaching her he asked, “Are you happy?” “No,” answered the woman, “I do not have a bit of happiness.” “Why are you not happy?” pursued the doctor. “Have you believed in the Lord Jesus?” “Indeed, I have truly believed in Jesus as Savior and I have committed all my sins to Him,” she replied. So the doctor asked, “Do you have eternal life? Are you saved?” “That is a problem I cannot solve,” she responded. “My doctor told me I have high fever and that my days on earth are numbered. Even now I do not know how God will treat me when I see Him. Hence I am most miserable and unhappy. If a person spends his lifetime doing good, serving people sacrificially, and

accumulating special merits, he may have eternal life; but my days on earth are quite limited, and I have not done any life-saving work.

How then can I be saved?”

The doctor explained to her how salvation was through the blood of the Lord and His accomplished redemption, since we could not save ourselves. He then asked her to read John 6.47: “Verily, verily, I

say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life.” He continued by saying, “The word of the Lord is never false. When He says ‘verily, verily,’ it must be *doubly* true. What does He say here about the one who believes?” The young woman replied: “Hath eternal life.” “You have believed,” observed the doctor. “Do you have eternal life?” The woman hesitated a long while and answered, “The Bible says I have eternal life, but I say I do not have eternal life.” “Which is trustworthy—what you say or what the Bible says?” Finally, with tears streaming down her face, she said, “I now believe I have eternal life.” Thereafter she became a very happy person. And not long afterwards she departed from the world to see the Lord who had given her eternal life.

I today lay this matter before you all. The Lord Jesus was crucified in order to save sinners. He shed His precious blood to

wash away our sins. Accordingly, all who believe in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. All your problems may be solved right here. Today, I would simply ask you this: Do you believe in Jesus?

All who believe have eternal life.

When I was in the South Seas I met a sister whom I asked if she believed in the Lord. She answered, “I believe Jesus can save me.”

So I next asked: “Are you saved?” Her reply was, “Sometimes I am saved, but sometimes I am not saved. When I spend a good time reading the Bible, I imagine how wonderful it would be if I were to die at that time because I believe I would be saved at that moment.

But if sometime afterwards I were angry with my mother or would quarrel with my brother, I know I would be guilty of sin; and I therefore could not afford to die at that juncture; because if I were to die at that point I would no doubt perish. So that from dawn to dusk I toss between good and bad, saved and unsaved."

In response I said to her, "Sister, you are the most capable person in the world since you can go from heaven to hell and from hell to heaven many times over in a single day. Who has such power as you have?" "Do you mean to say that if I believe, I am a saved person?"

she inquired. "Let us see what God says in the Bible," I answered.

"God declares that 'whoever believes has eternal life.' No one can alter this word. Even God himself cannot change it. If you do not believe this word, you do not believe that the Bible is the word of God."

If a person does not understand how to be saved, he cannot know whether or not he is saved. In order to be saved, one has to know first the condition and ground of salvation. Without a clear knowledge of the basis of salvation, how can he know if he is saved?

One day I was talking with a very influential businessman in Amoy. We conversed for a long time in the evening but we could not resolve this problem of salvation. He insisted that he dare not say he

had eternal life. He told me: "Three months ago someone came and preached that whoever believes has eternal life. I believed, and I put my sins away. I therefore thought I was saved. But within a month my faith disappeared and I again greatly sinned. Did that not prove I was not saved? Now, sir, you too come along. I have listened to you tonight and I am revived. But I am afraid after you leave and in one or two months' time I will grow cold and fall again. I will be as unsaved as before. Hence I dare not say I am saved."

I showed this businessman many Scripture verses and assured him that God's word was true and that all he needed to do was to believe.

Yet he remained confused. Finally, I stood up to say goodbye. "Sir, I have to leave because there will be a meeting tomorrow, and I also have other

appointments. But allow me to say a final word: On whom do you depend for your salvation—on yourself or the Lord Jesus?" Upon saying this I walked towards the door. I had not taken two steps when he called me back. I asked him for the reason, and he said, "I have talked with you for two to three hours, and during that time I was not clear. Now, though, I am clear. I now see that a man is not saved through his past good nor by his future merits; he instead is saved by believing in Jesus who has died for him and has borne away his sins. No matter how many sins a person has committed, they are all laid upon Him. Therefore, whoever believes in Him shall be saved. I am saved not by depending on myself, since I cannot save myself. It is Jesus who saves me. Why, then, must I say I am not saved?" At last, he knew he was saved! How joyful both he and I were together.

Many who believe are unwilling to say they are saved because they do not understand the ground of salvation. Invariably people know that the bad things which they did before believing in the Lord are indeed laid upon Jesus, but they incorrectly imagine that whatever bad things they will do afterwards will cause them to perish. And thus do they revert to the position of the Old Covenant.

The New Covenant, though, gives us a position first. Through faith we are filled with a new life, and then we approach God with a true heart in fullness of faith. Men do not come to God through good works; rather, they are given a position before they ever draw near to God. And this position will never be lost, not for eternity.

Today people do not have the joy of salvation because they trust in their good deeds to keep the salvation they have once received.

But salvation is not earned by a lifetime of doing good. If you were to ask a truly saved person how he is saved, he would doubtless answer: "It is Jesus who saves me because I have absolutely no strength by which to save myself. It is all given by the Lord." Only those such as this can always rejoice.

We know how the robber who was crucified with the Lord was saved on that day. As he accepted Jesus, he was instantaneously saved on the cross. His salvation depended entirely on the substitutionary death of Jesus. Suppose he

had not died that day but had been able to live on for another fifty years. And suppose he had been able to do such good works as Paul did, to stand as firm as did Peter and to manifest such great love as did John. In other words, suppose all the strengths of Paul, Peter and John had been concentrated in this robber. Do you think these abilities and good works would have helped him to be saved to Paradise? Would these endeavors have made him more worthy to be saved? No, even if he could have lived and done good and saved people as did those apostles, these works would not have been reckoned to him as ground for salvation. For the only ground of salvation is the Lord Jesus, not the robber's own works. Consequently, he who believes can dare to say he is saved. And he can henceforth live a holy and good life as did his Lord because he has been saved.

Let us suppose that a man falls into the water, and some people on the shore try very much to rescue him, then successfully give him artificial respiration, provide dry clothes for him to wear, make a fire *118*

by which he may warm himself, and give him food to eat so that he may live. If subsequently someone were to ask him, "Where are you now? On the shore?", and he were to answer: "Though I am not in the water, yet I still feel as though I am in the water. But if I claim that I am now on shore, I would be guilty of arrogance; therefore, I can only hope that I may be on shore.", do you think this man were truly being humble? Let me say that that is *not* humility. Likewise, if one who has really believed in Jesus as Savior dare not confess he is saved, that is not a sign of humility but of ingratitude towards the amazing grace of the Lord. Further, it is a denial of the great work of the Lord's redemption. Such an attitude insinuates that the Lord is unable to save this believer completely.

Let me observe that Christians who subscribe to such an attitude can never praise God. There will not be the sound of thanksgiving coming out of their mouths, for if such ones do not know where they are heading, it is no wonder they cannot praise God nor give glory to Him. How sad that the praise of the lips is missing from the lives of many Christians. But those who *know* they are saved will continually praise and thank God. Who can praise God in hell? Hell is only full of the noises of cursing. There is no word of praise. If people do not praise God now, when will they ever praise Him?

I am well aware of the contention of some people that it is dangerous for anyone who believes to say he has eternal life, is saved, and shall not perish. For after he knows he is saved, contend these people, he will dare to do anything without a heart of fear and caution. Yet those who voice such sentiment have exposed themselves as being woefully ignorant of the salvation and grace of God.

Let it be clearly known and understood that salvation according to the Bible has its subjective as well as its objective side. Christ was crucified, and God declares that the sins of all who believe in Christ were borne by Him on the cross; therefore, their sins are completely

forgiven and they shall not go to hell but are justified and saved.

Such is the *objective* side. At the same time, though, the salvation of the Lord has its subjective work, which is to crucify unto death our former life which loves to sin and takes pleasure in uncleanness.

Furthermore, God gives to us His life—a new life. And such is salvation on the *subjective* side.

The Lord not only grants us salvation objectively, He also *regenerates* us. It is not merely that our sins are forgiven, we are also born again. God puts a new life, a new spirit in us. Each believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. And thus he knows what is good and right. His life is one of goodness and joy. Never will a man feel uncomfortable towards something holy and good after his sins are forgiven and He has received God’s life. Formerly he had dared not openly sin for fear of a bad name; now he will not do evil because he knows it is sinful and unclean. He today looks at sin as despicable, since the Holy Spirit now dwells in him and he dare not sin.

If a person professes to believe in the Lord Jesus but continues to practice sin without any sense of hating it, he has not been born again. And one who is not born again does not have life and is therefore not saved: His faith has not been real. Let us see that the life of God will not permit one to sin. Hence all who believe *may* not sin, though all believers are not sinless perfect. So let us take hold of this word: a believer has not only been given objective salvation by God;

he has also been granted a subjective salvation as well.

What traveler would decorate his hotel room—which he only temporarily occupies—to the perfection of beauty and balance? But he *would* decorate his *permanent* home to a high degree of beauty and comfort. Earlier in my life I had a schoolmate who never dressed decently. His hair grew long, his face was unwashed, his body was filthy, and his shoes were untied. Students criticized him as not being human. Even people on the street despised him. But two years later, when once I met him on the street, I noticed that his face was shaved,

his hair was neatly combed, and he wore a decent Western suit. I could hardly recognize him. I thought to myself, Was this the same one who had been my schoolmate for seven years? And then when I talked with him, to my surprise I was asked about the life and manners of the Western world. Why would such a careless person now desire to learn about Western etiquette? I could not contain myself, so I went to inquire of his uncle. I learned from him that the reason for such interest was because he would soon be going abroad temporarily to study. So that he began to dress well and wished to learn all about Western manners.

If a person who goes abroad to study *for only two or three years* will garb himself in Western style, will learn to speak with a foreign accent, inquire about Western life and pay attention to foreign etiquette, how much more should we believers—who in the future will dwell *permanently* in our shining, beautiful, glorious heavenly home—prepare to learn heavenly living and manners?

Every believer ought to know that he is saved and that he will soon return to his heavenly home to meet his Heavenly Father. And.

if such be the truth (and it is), then is it conceivable that any believer would think that since he will not have any opportunity to sin in heaven he may as well sin more and experience more the bitterness and bondage of sin while still on earth? No, never! Knowing we are going to our heavenly home to dwell in the beautiful city of God, we who are saved will seek instead to forsake the pleasures of sin and the things of the flesh and its lusts so that these may not hinder or disturb our progress.

May we all know that we are saved and have the eternal life of God. And let us manifest this life of God in us and out from us as evidence of our salvation. By

our life we must testify before men and be used by God to save many.

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