

GOD'S REMEDY FOR THE HEART

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The term heart is often used in Scripture to refer to the whole inner man who lives in the body. In this use of the term, the intellect and will are included with the affectional nature. In other words, the reasoning, volitional and emotional selfhood of man as a free, responsible being is designated. It is the I, of personality. Thus, I believe, I will, I love.

The term soul is the comprehensive term used in describing man's origin. "And the Lord formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Gen. 2:7. It is the presence of man in this created universe which lends interest and value to all that is. He is at the center of, and climaxes all we know of the work of God in the realm of creation. He alone is a responsible being, with such a measure of freedom that in the exercise thereof, he determines his own direction, character and destiny. Referring to the heart in this use of it, we must observe: First, the heart of man is the one thing that is wrong in the universe. Sin has its home in the heart of man. It is written of God, "As for God, his way is perfect." His way is perfect because of what he is. He is perfect, therefore his way is perfect. His ways, his activities, are determined by what he is.

Even so with man. Man does wrong because he is wrong. Conduct is the expression and revelation of character. All sinning grows out of the fact that man is a sinner. Take all sin out of the heart of man and there would be no sinning. Jesus locates sin thus—"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within and defile the man. Mark 7:21-22. This Scripture teaches very plainly that all evil homes within the heart of man.

Christianity not only corrects man's relationship with God, but in its major proposition recognizes and deals with this deeper fact of indwelling sin. Thus Jesus says, "Make the tree good." God's remedy for the ills of men provides for the correction of his evil nature. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Matthew 7:21.

Man in his natural state is not as God created him; he is a fallen and a corrupted being, nevertheless he is a being with such potentialities so highly capacitated, that God, his creator who knows the eternal worth of a human soul has not given him up. He therefore has provided for a recreation of man at the very center of his nature-restoring in him the lost image of himself. "In righteousness and true holiness." This is the great objective of God's redemptive provision. A lesser objective could never have motivated God for such a supreme undertaking as man's redemption involved. We are in the realm of supreme and superlative values, God counted "the redemption of our souls precious." He therefore redeemed by the route of supreme and unspeakable sacrifice. A sacrifice of such a quality as to express and maintain his own holiness, and reveal and judge the awful nature of sin. He further speaks to man in terms of the highest moral appeal to win him from sin and self, back to God and holiness, for eternal harmony and fellowship with himself. Praise his name.

The good news of the gospel includes all this. To preach a lesser gospel is to deprive man of his high privilege in grace, and to do so robs God of his greatest glory in the work of redemption. But to preach such a gospel is to open the way for man to be lifted to the highest level of both being and doing here and now. Not only so, it is to prepare him for the change of worlds which all men face. This full preparation assures us that when that event comes, we shall enter upon an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. I Peter 1:5. It is the basis for present victory and for rejoicing in our future hope and prospect. "Wherein we greatly rejoice." Our glorious gospel is in all of its fulness to be proclaimed to all men. It is indeed the "Good News" of which God is the author. In its provision our past failures may be covered, our present condition corrected and our future eternally secured. Glory to God. He answers the prayer—"Oh for a heart to praise my God, a heart from sin set free."

FLOWERS FROM THE TOMB OF JESUS

Our Lord was crucified in the season of early flowers. During the month Nisan (or April) the winter rains made vegetation leap forth into wondrous beauty. The gardens were brilliant with the crocus and the hyacinth, and the plains of Sharon were snowy with the white narcissus. Jesus was buried in a rich man's garden, and no one can tell how many flowers and odorous vines had been planted by the gardener around Joseph's family tomb. The spices within and the plants without may have made the spot in which our dear Master slumbered exceeding fragrant.

That hallowed tomb was itself buried up centuries ago, and the very spot cannot be identified. But there are certain flowers of grace which will bloom upon the grave of Jesus to the end of time. Faith grows there in beautiful profusion. A sad company of ignorant doubters were those disciples in regard to their Master's resurrection; even when the three women came back from the sepulchre and pronounced it empty, and that they had seen the Saviour alive, some of the Apostles treated it as an "idle tale and believed it not." Thomas stood out until an actual sight of his Lord silenced his unbelief. From that day faith in Christ's victory over death has been a cardinal feature in every Christian's creed. With it is linked that other faith that if Jesus rose again, so would every one who "sleeps in Jesus" rise also from the dust. This perennial flower of faith, which blooms like certain roses in all seasons, has been set out on innumerable graves all over our death-cursed world. It grows on the little mound that covers my dear boy; I seem to see it all over among the hillocks of Greenwood.

Hope is another fragrant flower that springs from the burial sod. On one leaf of the plant we read, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." On another leaf is inscribed, "Sorrow not as others that have no hope; for if Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." The expectation of every pastor, that he shall yet "break ground" and ascend with his flock, cheers his soul when he stands beside the grave in which his faithful ones are being laid, dust to dust. This hope is an anchor that has held many a poor heart-broken mother, who has

moistened her darling's resting place with her tears. To her Jesus draws nigh and says, "Weep not; this child shall rise again." And so she tills that little sacred soil until it is covered over with the blossoms of hope as thick as white lilies of the valley. The original seeds of this fair flower came from Christ's tomb in the garden. It grows best when it is watered by prayer. That is a desolate grave indeed over which there does not creep out a single sprig or blade of Hope!

Are these all the flowers which thrive in the hallowed mould in which Christ's successors lie? No! There is one modest lily called Resignation. Jesus Himself declared that it was better that He should have died, for He said that He "ought to have suffered and to enter into His glory." His road to glory lay through the tomb, and so must ours. Never did our Lord set this world above the better world. He only brought three persons back to life (that we read of), and then only for a high and especial purpose to be gained. There is a legend that the first thing Lazarus said after his resurrection was, "Shall I have to die again?" On being told that he must, it is said that he never smiled afterward. Truly, if some of the crowned ones in Paradise were driven back to this sin-stained earth, they might well wear mourning for their own bereavement. To die is gain! That is the sweet word which I detect in every bud and leaf on the plant of Resignation. God hath better things in store for us; His will, not ours, be done.

It may seem a strange place to set out the flower of Thankfulness; but that, too, grows and emits its sweetness from Christ's sepulchre and those of His followers. Paul, standing by that grave over which Jesus had triumphed, shouts aloud, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." His triumph over death is our triumph. Because He rose and lives again, we shall live also.

Not only on Easter Sabbaths are these flowers to be found on our Lord's emptied sepulchre, but every day, in every clime, wherever death hollows a grave, these precious plants of grace may be made to bloom, and to scatter their delicious perfumes. Perhaps some sorrowing child of God may read these lines and inquire, "Where shall I go to find faith and hope, and resignation for yonder freshly piled mound over my dead?" We answer, Go to the tomb where Jesus vanquished death—in the garden.

DO YOU SUFFER FOR HIM?

He came walking up the aisle on little fat, brown legs, with serious determination in his eyes. I stopped speaking and the congregation was quiet as death. "You asked me what I would have done if I had been in the crowd when Jesus fell under the weight of His cross." He looked earnestly up at me. "Please, sir, I would have helped carry it."

He was a Mexican lad eight years of age. His father was a miner and his mother was an outcast from decent society. I had been preaching on Simon of Cyrene; and when I asked the audience to determine in their own hearts their reaction to that scene, little Pedro moved toward me. . . . I lifted my arm and cried: "Yes, and if you had helped Him to carry His cross, the cruel Roman soldiers would have beaten down across your back with their whips until the blood ran down to

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