

OUT OF NOTHING COMES NOTHING

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A SERMON
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“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.”
Job 14:4

JOB considered himself to be unclean in the sight of God. Yet, if we speak the plain truth about him, we must say that he was as clean as any man who lived in that age or indeed in any other. We have the witness of the Holy Spirit, in this very Book, that he “was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.”

We have also the practical confirmation by the devil of the same fact, for, when the Lord said to him, “Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil?” he could not deny it, but could only insinuate that there was an evil motive at the back of the patriarch’s uprightness—“Doth Job fear God for nought?” Sometimes the unwilling acknowledgment of an enemy is a stronger proof than the hearty declaration of a friend—and it was so in Job’s case.

He was one of the best, truest, sincerest, cleanest men to be found throughout the whole world, yet he called himself unclean and he probably did so because, just in proportion as a man becomes really pure, he discovers his own impurity. The impure man has a very low standard of what true holiness is, and possibly he thinks that he comes nearly up to it, or if not, he tries to lower the standard down to his own level.

But the man who is really pure in heart has a very high ideal of what the truth is, and uprightness is, and holiness is and because his ideal is so high, he feels that he has not yet attained to it, and he thinks more of the distance between his present condition and his idea of perfection than he does of all that he has as yet attained. Such a man says, with the apostle Paul, “Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

It is always a bad sign when a man begins to think exceedingly well of himself. I had rather, a great deal, hear a man complain and cry out before God, under a deep sense of humiliation, than hear him utter a single word that reveals a spirit of satisfaction with his own condition. What we are in Christ is a thing to be perfectly satisfied with and rejoiced over, for in Christ, believers are justified and accepted.

But as for what we are in our own personal character, the very best of us must still feel that there is much over which we have to mourn. However nearly we may have approached to the example of Christ, that very nearness will make us the more regret the points in which we have fallen short of a complete imitation of Him, and we shall still cry out, “O wretched man that I am—blessed to have come so far on the way of holiness, but wretched that I have not gone further still—who shall deliver me from the present thralldom of the body of this death? Who shall perfectly emancipate me from its control, that I may live wholly unto God and be holy even as God is holy?”

Then, as Job considered himself an unclean thing, we need not wonder that he should have despaired of ever, by his own power, bringing out of himself anything that should be perfectly clean in God’s sight, and we need not be surprised at his question, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” As I have already reminded you, what he brought out of himself in his daily life was clean in the eyes of

men. He vindicated his character against false accusations with great earnestness and sincerity, and with considerable warmth of temper, for he felt that it was clean before men—yet he was conscious that it was not clean before God.

There are two kinds of perfection—there is a measure of cleanness in which a man may wash his hands in innocency, and say to his fellow men, “I am free from any transgression,” as the prophet Samuel fearlessly challenged all Israel to produce anyone whom he had defrauded or oppressed. “And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken anything of any man’s hand. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.”

That ought to be the character of every Christian man—he should be white as the driven snow, aiming ever to be honest and upright in all his dealings with his fellow creatures. But beloved, God’s judgment, and yours, and mine, concerning cleanness, differ very greatly. Our weights and scales are rough and coarse, though they suffice for the common purposes of the life we live here on earth. But God’s scales will turn if a single hair falls upon them—the small dust of the balance will move them.

Nay, the metaphor is not a perfect one all round. I use it, but I make a reservation concerning it. God does not regard any sin of ours as the small dust of the balance and His judgment is right judgment. He does not find much evil where there is but little, for the great evil is there all the while. And because God is perfectly holy, He discovers what our impure eyes cannot perceive.

In contrast with His absolutely perfect holiness, none of us are clean. Job’s friend Bildad said, “The stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, who is a worm?” And Eliphaz said, “Behold, he puts no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moths.” The purity of God is incorruptible—and when we look at ourselves, we despair of ever attaining to such perfection as His without His help.

I. Now, coming to our text, I want first to speak of SOME MATTERS OF IMPOSSIBILITY IN NATURE—the bringing of clean things out of unclean ones.

And the first matter of impossibility I will mention is, that there should be born into this world *a pure child, perfectly holy in nature, from impure parents*. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.” Whatever the new-fangled teaching may say about the old-fashioned doctrine that we are shaped in iniquity, and conceived in sin, that doctrine is true.

It matters not who may deny its truth, it still stands fast, for it is founded upon the rock of the inspired Word of God. Men will never be able to gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. An unfallen Adam and Eve would have had an unfallen progeny—but fallen men and women, such as we are, will certainly have for our children those whose tendencies are towards evil. Though there is, in every child, much that is very beautiful, which a mother’s eye is quick to detect, yet who that has carefully watched his own offspring can fail to have seen that temper which, sometimes early in life, becomes more terrible than it does in grown-up people?

I have seen little children turn black in the face through passion, yet, when reason comes to them, they will learn somewhat to control themselves. The tendency to evil is there all the while and according to the disposition of the child, it displays itself sooner or later. David said, “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.” Certainly, a child who has never heard a lie, will often lie very terribly—and various forms of deception will be practiced by those who have had the best possible example set before them.

If any of you think that you have a perfect child, you will find yourselves grievously mistaken—the time will come when you will discover that evil is lurking there as it is in you, the father, or in you, the mother—and it will only need a suitable opportunity to display itself. It will scarcely need fostering by ill companions—but even in a godly household, where the atmosphere of piety abounds—sin will grow up in the child as naturally as weeds grow in a garden that is left to itself.

If you leave a plot of ground to itself, you do not find that there will come out of it vegetables fit for your table. And you will not find that a child, left to himself, will produce virtues and excellences acceptable to God. No, evil is inherent in the heart of man, and being there, in due time it comes out of him.

From our very birth, we “were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” It was an apostle who said that, but it was Christ Himself who said to Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again.” The children of God are “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” “Except a man is born again, (from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God,” for his nature is evil. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” and only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

That, then, is one matter of impossibility—the birth of innocent children from fallen parents.

The next is *the bringing of a pure nature out of the depraved nature of any individual*. Here are we, possessed of an impure nature, but cannot we, by some means, educate impurity into purity? Our whole system is depraved, but cannot we, somehow or other, out of depravity develop excellence, love to God, consecration to His service? No, never.

You may, if you like, watch a skeleton till your eyes ache, but you will never see a trace of life springing up within those ribs of death. You may look at a foul stream as it comes rolling along and you may stir it to its depths, or you may alter its channel—but as long as the source, from which the stream flows, is impure, the water that comes from it will also be impure too and it will not be able to purify itself.

So, human nature may pass through as many processes as you please, but as long as it remains merely human nature, and God the Holy Spirit has not transformed it and made it like the nature of God, it will still be an impure thing—and no clean thing can come out of it.

“But” says someone, “can we not change human nature by reading the Bible to it?” Ah, you may read the Bible to the devil as long as you like, but it will not make an angel of him. And you cannot change a sinner into a saint simply by reading Scripture to him. “Can we not preach him into a right state of heart?” asks another. You might as well hope to preach a lion into a lamb as to change the unholy into the holy without the power of God.

“Oh, but!” say others, “we can surely do a great deal with him by example, by repression, and by encouragement.” Of course you can affect him morally, but with regard to the great spiritual matter of being clean in the sight of God—all that you can do will avail about as much as when they sought to wash the Blackamoor white. The tubs were full of hot water, soap in abundance was used, the brushes were worn out with the efforts of the scrubbers, but the black man came out as black as he went in. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, or the leopard his spots—and out of an unclean thing, cleanness cannot come. God must work the miracle by His grace, for of itself evil will produce only evil, and not good.

Another impossibility also follows on the heels of this one. That is, *pure acts cannot come out of an impure heart*. A man who is what he is by nature, unrenewed by grace, may do a great deal that is very excellent. Some of the most beautiful of the virtues towards man will grow in unrenewed hearts. It has sometimes been asserted that only true religion can produce a beautiful character towards man, but I think it must be admitted, by all who know the facts of the case, that such a statement as that is not true.

Generosity, honesty, heroism, and other virtues and excellences have been displayed by men who have been unbelievers—and even by those who have disregarded God altogether. And there has often been much that we have been bound to admire in men to whom skepticism was all the religion that they had. We must say as much as that in fairness to those from whom we greatly differ—but it is quite another matter when we begin to talk about their conduct towards God—that cleanness of heart which God has a right to demand from all His creatures.

These men may be able to pay off their pence creditors, the people who are round about them, but it is a different thing when we bring them face to face with the great Creditor, their Maker to whom their enormous debt is due. As long as a man is not right in the sight of God, as long as his nature is

unrenewed by grace, nothing that he does can be pleasing to God—there is nothing in it that God can accept.

He may even have an outward religiousness of a certain kind, but he presents his religion to God with such filthy hands that there are dirty marks all over it. He may even bring to God a sacrifice out of his flock, but you can see that the motive of doing it, the way of doing it, and the pride in having done it, spoil it all.

He comes before God with a reverent appearance, but with a wandering heart. He sings lustily with his mouth, but his soul is not really praising and magnifying the Lord. He bows his head when others pray and he seems to be praying, too—but there is no confession of sin, there is nothing that can be acceptable with God—nor can there be until God has changed the nature of the man. That which comes out of an impure heart, however pure it may seem, is impure—it is tainted with the smell of the evil place from which it arose.

There is another impossibility over which some of us have often to groan—that is, *perfect actions cannot be performed by imperfect men*. I think that you who love the Lord must know what it is to grieve over things over which you have at first rejoiced. For instance, I have preached a sermon, I have been earnest in delivering the truth, I have had liberty in proclaiming it, and I have felt hopeful that God would bless it.

But I know what it is to get home, and to lie upon my bed, and think over what I omitted to say, and how I ought to have said it in a better way—the way in which I think I should say it if I could get up then, and call you all together tell it over again—and so I cry out, “Lord, I thought I had brought forth a clean thing, but I find that I have not. And I have learned that it is not possible to bring a perfectly clean thing out of that which is unclean.”

However cleansed the human heart may be, by divine grace, yet there remains still so much of impurity about it that “we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” There is about all that comes from us imperfection, infirmity, fault, flaw, much to weep over, much to deplore—and the wonder is that God accepts it at all. Yet it is no wonder when we remember that we and our service are “accepted in the beloved,” and there is enough grace and virtue in Him to make even such poor creatures as we are, and such poor works as we present, to be fully acceptable for His dear sake.

One more phase of this difficulty and impossibility is this—“*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean,*” *in another person?* If you believe in human ability, I wish you would addict yourself to the effort to convert souls. If you think that you have the power to convert a soul, choose even a little child and set to work upon it.

I could pick you out some men whom I know, and some women, too, upon whom I should like you to try your wonderful sword. If they do not laugh you to scorn and turn the edge of your weapon, I am greatly mistaken. God knows how to thrust at them so that every stroke shall tell, for He has said, “I kill, and I make alive. I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.”

But apart from that divine power, who among us can convert a single soul? Who can dart faith into the unbelieving heart? Who can fetch a penitential tear out of that stolid impenitent soul? Who can beget love to Christ in that chill, indifferent heart? Ah! often have God’s servants had to cry with the Reformer, “Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon,” and they have had to go home and confess that no human being can bring a clean thing out of an unclean.

These are all matters of impossibility in nature which the text sets before us.

II. Now, in the second place, let us notice CERTAIN SUBJECTS FOR PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION FOR ALL OF US that arise out of a right contemplation of this subject.

First, we see here that *we are unclean by nature*. Do we all know that it is so with us? Have we made this great discovery? Has the Spirit of God taught us this humbling truth? Are we in the track of the footsteps of the flock? If so, we shall say, with Isaiah, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.”

And with David, we shall confess that we were “shapen in iniquity” and conceived in sin. It is well for us to deal with our birth sin, our original depravity, and the natural tendencies of our spirit—we do not get to the truth about ourselves till we get there. Well, now, do we all know ourselves to be naturally unclean? It is well to know that, sad as the truth is.

Then the next consideration is that *we must be clean if we are to be accepted by God*. We never can have fellowship with God while we remain unclean. We may have a measure of fellowship with God when He has cleansed us by the precious blood of Christ, but that fellowship will never be perfect till the last trace of sin has been removed from us.

Absolutely perfect fellowship with the thrice-holy JEHOVAH will only come to us above, because then we shall be absolutely clean and shall be with Him, and near Him, and like Him—and then we shall have become akin to Him in holiness. We must be cleansed if we are ever to be in His presence in glory. There is no possibility of getting to heaven foul and stained with sin. There is no possibility of sitting among the white-robed hosts above in these rags of ours. This filthiness of ours must be put away somehow, but how can it be put away?

The fact that we cannot work this great change ourselves *will not relieve us of our responsibility*. When a man becomes so much a liar that he cannot speak the truth, or so dishonest that he cannot keep his hands from picking and stealing—when the very nature is defiled—it does not excuse the acts which the guilty one commits. Although we cannot cleanse our heart, the Word of God contains the plain command. “Wash you, make you clean,” so that the responsibility still rests upon us, although we are totally unable to obey the injunction.

It is quite clear that *we cannot, in our own strength, do this needful work of cleansing*. If any man asserts that he can purify himself, I would answer, “Yes, you may cleanse yourself from many faults, from evil speaking, lying, and slandering, from dishonesty, from drunkenness, from unchastity—all of which you ought to do—but it is not possible for you to cleanse yourself so as to be perfectly pure in God’s sight.”

Only think a minute and you will agree with me that it must be so. When you have done all that you can with yourself, will you believe that you are fit to be in God’s company and to speak with Him? God is present with us at this moment, but none of you can conceive that, in your present condition, we are fit to have communion with Him.

If you are in Christ, you are able to commune with the Most High, through Jesus the Mediator, but I am supposing that you are not in Christ, and if that is the case, you must shrink from the presence of the perfectly holy God. And can you ever hope to make yourself fit to stand among the glorified spirits above, to walk yon golden streets, and to have fellowship with those who have never sinned, or with those who, having sinned, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? Methinks that every reasonable man with any sort of conscience would start back, and say, “I cannot hope to enter there as I am, nor do I think that I can ever make myself fit to go there.”

Do you not think that *our wisdom lies in being driven to despair as to ourselves*? I thought I heard somebody say, “This doctrine would drive men to despair.” That is exactly what we wish to do, for self-despair is the doorstep of confidence in God. When you know you are helpless, you will then begin to look away from yourself, to find help somewhere else—but as long as ever you can do a stitch of patching and mending, you will not put down the needle and look to God alone to cover you with the robe of righteousness which the Savior has wrought.

When you realize that you can do nothing, but that an almighty power must be exerted on your behalf, that making you look away from yourself, and bringing you to think of the great God in heaven as your only Helper, is half the battle. So I say that to drive you to despair of yourself is the very thing we are aiming at.

Therefore, would it not be wise for you now to begin to look to the Strong for strength, to the Righteous One for righteousness, to the Creating Spirit for new creation? You cannot bring a clean thing

out of an unclean, so do not attempt the impossible task, but go to Him who sits upon the throne and who says, “Behold, I make all things new.”

III. The last point I am going to deal with is THE PROVISION THAT IS MADE TO MEET THIS HUMAN IMPOSSIBILITY.

Let everyone who desires to be made pure in heart, and clean in the sight of God, recollect, first, that *we have to deal with an omnipotent God*. When you come to Him, trusting and resting in Christ, and ask Him to be pleased to create in you a new heart, and to renew a right spirit within you, you are practically expressing your conviction that what you cannot do for yourself, He can do for you. There is not any lust within you which He cannot subdue. There is not any lack or deficiency of virtue which He cannot supply.

This work is rightly called a creation—“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.” It is beautiful to think that, as the Lord made the first creation, fashioning everything out of nothing, and then bringing order out of chaos, so will He come again, and find nothing of good in you, and out of the chaos He will make a new order of things altogether. As when “darkness was upon the face of the deep,” He came and said, “Light be,” and light was, so He can come and say to you in all your darkness, “Light be,” and there shall be light immediately.

He finds nothing in you that can help Him, as He found nothing that could help Him to make the world, and when He had made it out of nothing, it was all chaotic, and could not help itself. He had to breathe life and light into it—it all came from Himself. So it is with you—you are just a lump of helpless matter, a wretched, wicked, condemned one—yet the Lord can come and put away your sin and He can form and fashion you after His own pattern. He can give you repentance and give you faith, and give you every grace—and He can go on to nurture and water all those graces till they come to perfection.

He can perfect you in likeness to Christ so that you shall be “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” If you believe in a God almighty to bless and save, you cannot doubt that He is able to do all that I have said. Look not to your own weakness, but by faith look to the divine strength. Consider not so much, poor soul, what you are as what God is, and think of the great new Creator, and commit your soul into His keeping, “as unto a faithful Creator,” as the apostle Peter says. That is a blessed word—a faithful Creator who will begin to do His creating work anew in such a soul as yours.

Notice, next, that there is a second provision to meet this human impossibility, namely, *the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ*. It is not possible for your uncleanness to be put away by anything that you can do. You must say, with Toplady,—

*“Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law’s demands:
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone:
Thou must save, and Thou alone.”*

It was God Himself that did hang on Calvary’s cross. He had taken upon Himself human nature, with all its infirmities and all its guilt, though He Himself was pure and spotless—and there did He hang in that nature to bleed and die.

No one—at least, no human tongue—can tell how great was the atonement that Christ there made for the sin of His guilty creatures. None of us can calculate the price He paid for the redemption of His people, but we know that, however great is the sin that is to be put away in order to make you clean, it can all be removed by “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

I am not able to imagine any sin that the blood of Christ could not wash away. See how red is your guilt, mark the scarlet stain. If you were to wash your soul in the Atlantic Ocean, you might incarnadine

every wave that washes all its shores and yet the crimson spots of your transgression would still remain. But plunge into the—

*“Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,”—*

and in an instant you are whiter than snow, every speck, and spot, and stain of sin has gone, and gone forever—and God is thereby glorified.

What a blessing it is that, to meet our inability to put away our sin, there is provided a redemption, an atonement amply sufficient to remove it all forever! Think, then, not only of your sin, but of your Savior. Think not so much of your guilt as of His sufferings by which that guilt is put away.

Oh, how earnestly would I press this advice upon any who are now troubled about their sin! I would almost say—Do not look at your sin except you can see the Savior, too. Do remember that the sin itself shall never condemn you if you trust in Jesus Christ, for He has taken it off all who believe in Him, and has cast it into the depths of the sea, to be remembered against them no more forever. You are saved, however guilty you may have been, as soon as you rely upon the infinite merit of Christ’s atoning sacrifice.

*“Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.*

*“But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they.”*

Then you shall be able to sing with Dr. Watts,—

*“’Twas He adorn’d my naked soul,
And made salvation mine!
Upon a poor polluted worm
He makes His graces shine.*

*“And lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Savior wrought,
And cast it all around.”*

There is a third provision made to meet this great emergency. We have spoken of the Father and the Son, but we must not omit to mention *the renewing work of the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Ghost, so often forgotten and slighted, is the great Worker in the cleansing and renewing of man’s nature. That blessed Spirit has the whole power of the Godhead and wherever He works effectually, He convinces of sin, making men see the guilt and evil of it.

But He also convinces them of righteousness, so that they see that there is a righteousness to be had and they learn how they may righteously obtain it. The Holy Spirit brings Christ near, reveals Him to the heart, and then He enables the sinner to see the suitability of Christ to him. The Spirit also enables the man to see that he may trust Christ.

Nay, He goes further and enables the poor guilty soul to actually trust Him who came to save Him. One of the first proofs of His working in the heart is the production of faith there—then, when He has wrought that grace in the soul, He helps the man to pray, to overcome temptation, and to engage in holy service.

The Spirit helps us all the way through. He creates all that is good within us. He works in us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” And wherever the Holy Spirit comes, He acts like the fire that consumes the dross and purifies the metal.

So, what think you, poor unclean soul, if God the Holy Ghost were to take you in hand, could not He make you clean? Oh, if He were to come now, in all that wondrous power of His, could He not burn up the wood, and hay, and stubble of sin that is within you? There have been men who seemed to be lost to every noble thought, who nevertheless have been lifted up to heroic effort by the power of the Spirit of God.

There have been others who were sunken in vice, in ignorance, in drunkenness, and every kind of crime, yet, they have been washed, cleansed, sanctified, made saints of God on earth, and perfect spirits above, by the power of the Holy Ghost when He has come upon them, and applied the blood of Christ to their heart and conscience. What He has done for others, He can do for you, and I do pray you not so much to look at your power to will as at the power of the Spirit of God to work in you to will. Not so much at your power to do, which is nothing, but at the power of the Spirit of God to work in you what He would have you do.

Recollect what I have often told you, that the confidence of a man in himself can never be of any good to him—it is like the anchor while it is on board the ship. What is the good of it there? It only increases the weight of the vessel as long as it is lying on the deck or hanging over the side of the ship. You may throw it where you like—throw it down the hold, but it won’t hold the vessel so.

Throw it into the captain’s cabin, hang it on the mast—what good is it? As long as it is in the ship, it is of no service. The thing to be done with the anchor is heave it overboard. Splash! Down it goes. Listen to the clatter of the chain. Now, when the anchor gets a good grip somewhere out of sight, then it holds the ship.

So, throw your hope out of yourself—get it away from yourself, do not let it rest in yourself, it will help to sink you if you do—let it go down into the unseen, let it grasp Christ, let it get a firm hold of Him and of His finished work, and of God the Omnipotent, and of the ever-blessed Spirit of God. Now your vessel will outride the storm and all will be well.

Some people, who ought to be better informed, are quite ignorant of the work of the Holy Spirit. I knew a man who attended a certain church, and on one occasion he heard a good Gospel sermon. I do not know who was the author of it, but the parson who preached it certainly was not. This Gospel sermon had so cut into the hearer’s conscience that, when he went home, he could not rest.

The next morning he went off to the clergyman and he said to him, “Sir, I am greatly troubled by what you said yesterday.” “My dear fellow,” replied the parson, “I never meant to say anything to give you a moment’s uneasiness, I am sure. And if I did so, I am truly sorry for it.” “Oh, sir!” said the man, “but your sermon gave me dreadful uneasiness. You preached about our being born again. Tell me, sir, what it is to be born again.”

“Well,” said the minister, “I was educated at Cambridge, but I do not know what it is to be born again, and I do not think there is any need for you to trouble yourself at all about the matter. I wish I had never bought that sermon, or read it, for it has proved to be a troublesome sermon to two or three others beside yourself. But I will never preach it again, I will promise you that.”

Ah! but our poor awakened friend could not be quieted in that fashion, for that sermon had dragged off every coverlet from him, and the bed was too short for him to stretch himself—and he did not rest until he had found a true minister of Christ, who was able to point out to him the way to obtain peace with God through believing in Jesus.

Then how glad he was to think that the clergyman had, even unintentionally, made him uncomfortable! How glad he was that he, though in ignorance, had taken away his first false peace, that God might come in and establish the second—the peace that does not lie in ourselves, but in Christ—the peace that is not founded upon an assumption of our own personal righteousness, but upon the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

All that I have been saying shows *the fitness of this Gospel for sinners*. This Gospel encourages the man who had given up all hope, wakes him up to a wondrous consciousness of the possibilities of his purified manhood, and sets before him the glorious prospect of making something of his immortality. When he gets to heaven, he will not throw up his cap, and cry, “Glory be to myself! Have I not done it well?” No, no. That is how Pharisees might act if they could get to heaven by their own works.

But when God is going to save a sinner, He first puts him down in the lowest class and reads him a very humbling lesson. He makes him feel that he is nothing but sin, and that he can do nothing but sin—and then He says to him, “Look unto Me. I will work the change that needs to be wrought in you.” Then Christ comes in and says, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last; rest in Me.” And the Spirit of God says, “I will work in you a new creation, and make all things anew in you.”

And all along, as the work of grace is really wrought in the man, he continues to bless and to magnify the name of the Lord. Thus, that spirit of gratitude and adoration, which is the very essence of virtue, becomes the underlying rock that supports a noble character—and all things that are of good report are created and nurtured by this glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

If there is anybody who prefers any other sort of Gospel, I am sure I do not want to rob him of it. If he can get any comfort out of it, let him keep it. But as for me, I am so weak, so sinful, so undone, that I commit my soul to the God of grace, and nothing but “free grace and dying love” will suffice for me.

Many of us stand together upon this matter, as we have done for many a year, and I believe we shall continue to do so more and more as our age increases, and our hair gets grey, for we did not know so much about grace when we were lads as we know now, and we keep on learning more and more of it every day that we live.

What we want is grace, *grace*, GRACE, and may God grant it to every one of us! May there be in us nothing of self, and all of grace, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—530, 51 (Version 2), 488

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