

# GRACE AND DEBT

by W.T.P. Wolston

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*Wolston's gospel narrative using the story of a woman seeking salvation through an encounter with a Christian physician to illustrate God's swift mercy and abundant grace toward those who seek Him. A devotional work emphasizing the freeness of divine grace.*

10 Chapters

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## 01. Auld John; or, Grace and Debt.

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Auld John; or, Grace and Debt.

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." — Rom 4:4-5. This lovely and striking scripture was forcibly impressed on my mind, as well as illustrated, a few weeks ago, when calling on an old man who had been for a few weeks under my care, for a malady which, sooner or later, I saw must close his earthly history. I had not seen him for a few days, and on inquiring how he was, he replied, "Weel, doctor, I dinna ken muckle odds. Anyway, I'm nae better, an' to tell the truth, I'm no' makin' muckle o't."

John had been a steady hard-working man all his days; had risen to be foreman in the factory where nearly all his life had been spent, and had so gained the esteem and respect of his employer, that for some years, in view of his manifest feebleness and advanced age — nearly seventy — he had given him to understand that his presence or absence at the works was a matter of his own choice, his good weekly wage continuing in either case. As he reclined in his easy-chair, it did not appear to me that his death was near at hand; but his simple confession of an unimproved condition gave me the opportunity I had long wished for of a little quiet talk with him as to his spiritual condition; so to his reply I rejoined, "Do you mean that you don't think you'll get better?"

"Weel, I've jist ta'en that thocht. Gin I could get to the country, maybe 'twad set me up a bittie; but ye ken my legs are that poorless the noo I canna gang awa."

"So I am sorry to see, John; but now tell me, suppose you don't get better, do you feel sure you'll 'gang' to the heavenly country? In other words, are you fit to die?"

"Deed I'm no sae sure aboot that; tho' I think aboot it whiles."

"What are you thinking, and how do you expect to get there? Have you been a sinner?"

"Ay, that ha'e I, an' a muckle yin tae."

"Well, how do you suppose a sinner, and a great one too, can get to heaven? There is no sin allowed in there, and yet sinners get there?"

"I fancy I'll jist ha'e to work an' dae the best I can; tho' I'm feart my time's short; and I ha'ena dune eneuch."

"Oh, there is no doubt about your not having done enough. If that's the road you're on, John, it does not lead to heaven, but to hell."

"God forbid I should gang there, doctor; but surely yin maun work to get to heaven? We canna hope to get to yon happy place without working for't?"

"But what can a sinner do but sin, John? The Word of God says, 'We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf' (Isa 64:6). Now, if our best doings are as 'filthy rags' in God's sight, how can that help us, or clear away the many sins His all-seeing eye discerns? Depend upon it, my dear fellow, you are upon the wrong tack entirely. For many a long day, I confess, I was on it myself, till I learned that, 1st, I could not do anything; 2nd, that God did not want me to do anything; and 3rd, that Christ had done everything needed, for my salvation when He suffered on the cross, bearing my sins, and God's judgment of them, and cried, 'IT IS FINISHED,' before He laid down His life in atonement. Now, if God wanted you and me to do something more for our own salvation, that would be to ignore the value and efficacy of Christ's finished work. The gospel is this, that God loves us, Christ died for us, and His blood was shed to wash away our sins, and the Holy Ghost has come down from heaven to tell us this good news, and lead our hearts to trust simply in Jesus and His finished work."

"But ye ken I've been sic a sinner, an' I aye thocht I maun dae something," said the old man with intense earnestness, as tears filled his eyes.

"Did you never hear that lovely scripture, 'Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness?'" (Rom 4:4-5.) "Yon's no in the Bible, surely?"

"Oh yes, it is, I am glad to say."

"Whaur? I, never heard tell o't a' my days."

"It is in Rom 4:1-25, the chapter that tells us how a poor guilty sinner like you or me can be justified before the God we have so sinned against. Is it not beautifully simple?"

"I dinna quite grup the meanin' o't."

"It just means this, that the man who works ought to get his pay; and in no sense regard it as a favour, because he has earned it. On the other hand, if a man ceases working for salvation, and just simply believes in God who justifies the ungodly on the principle of faith, his faith is counted to him for righteousness. Now observe, John, it is the 'ungodly' that get the blessing, those who don't deserve it, and who have not earned it, so that it may be by 'grace' or 'favour,' which is God's way of acting towards us. Now God acts in grace — the activity of His own nature of love after we have 'sinned and come short of his glory,' and on the righteous ground which the finished work of His own beloved Son affords Him. That grace blesses, and justifies the vilest, and most hell-deserving sinner, who, turning away from himself and his own doings, trusts simply in Jesus, having faith in His blood, and in God who sent Him to be the Saviour of the world."

Listening most eagerly, and drinking in the truth as the old man was, nevertheless the freeness of the gospel, I could see, was his stumbling-block; so having put a few more queries, by which I judged he had really condemned himself as an ungodly sinner before God, and that he truly desired to be saved, I ventured to apply the little bit of his own personal history I have named.

"Did you get your wages last week, John?"

"Oo ay; they aye come reg'lar."

"But did you work for them?"

"No me; it's yersel' kens weel it's mony a day sin' I wrocht a hand's turn."

"And yet the 'siller' has come regularly?"

"Reg'lar as the clock, sir. The maister's rale guid. He aye sends't whether I work or no."

"Now, long ago, when you wrought a good week's work, did you think it a great act of grace on your master's part to pay your week's wage, which you had toiled for?"

"I thocht naething o' the kind. I had earned it, an' 'twas only richt he sud pay me."

"Just so. In fact, after you had worked he was in your debt until he had paid you, and there could be no question of grace about it at all?"

"Weel, that's yae way o' lookin' at it."

"But for some months past, though you have done no work, nevertheless, you tell me, the money has come just the same. What do you call that, John?"

"Weel, that's grace, to be sure," the old man answered with emphasis, as the tears flowed faster.

"Quite right. Don't you see how your own master's kind treatment of you illustrates the verse I have been quoting? What you could not earn he sends, because he knows you need it. In the same way God sends you salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have only got just to believe in Him, and receive thankfully what in grace He sends to you."

"Oh! I begin to see licht through't noo. I never heard it explained in this simple way afore," said the old man softly and slowly.

"Thank God if you do see it, John, even though late in your life. Now tell me, do you really take your place as an ungodly, hell-deserving sinner before God; give up all thoughts of your own works, and simply cast yourself on Him, believing His word and His Son?"

"That dae I, truly. I canna dae ocht else after what ye've been tellin' me, I'll jist lippen till Him alane. I DAE believe Him!"

"Well, John, then you are a blessed man from this hour; for it says — 'But unto him that WORKETH NOT but BELIEVETH on him that JUSTIFIETH the ungodly, His FAITH [not his works] is counted for RIGHTEOUSNESS;' and you are entitled to know yourself justified before God, and fit for the heavenly country through faith in Jesus' blood, for the 4th of Romans goes on thus — 'Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin'" (Rom 4:6-8).

Satisfied that his faith was sincere, and his perception of the gospel childlike and simple, I gave my medical instructions and left him, saying I would call again in two days. The next day an urgent message came requesting me to call immediately. I went. John was gone! — gone to the heavenly country, I could not but believe, the way to which he had so recently learned. He passed away in his chair without warning or struggle, his heart having suddenly failed.

Reader! if you should pass away, just exactly twenty-four hours after reading this, where would YOU spend eternity? Do not forget that if you slight grace, you will receive what is due to you — your wages. What are they? do you ask. Listen, and never forget — "The wages of sin (and unbelief is sin) is death," and "after death" - terrible thought, fearful future — "the judgment."

What an awful eternity must that man's be who remembers, while writhing beneath the judgment he feels is the just and righteous wages of sin, that he might have been in the enjoyment of grace for ever but for his own folly. Works, "wicked" or "dead," can never save, and only lead the doer of them to the dreary dungeons of the damned. Grace conducts the vilest sinner, who trusts in Jesus' blood, right into eternal glory and blessedness. Be persuaded, my friend, to "taste that the Lord is gracious."

## 02. Just Like Him.

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Just Like Him.

Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." — Isa 6:5-7. The Lord is ever swift to bless, slow to judge. He delights in mercy; judgment is His "strange work." David said, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Psa 103:8). Isaiah's experience of this blessed fact is recorded above. Paul wrote with a full heart: "I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained [What? wrath, judgment, an everlasting hell — the due reward of my deeds? No! but] mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." (1Ti 1:12-16).

These witnesses are joined by another to the same effect, who says, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. . . . And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation" (1Pe 3:9-15).

Thus it is evident that God, though He must and will assuredly judge sin, delights in blessing, and wants all men to be blessed and saved. This surely is a fact of immense moment for you and me, dear reader, and if you are yet unsaved, shows that the fault is not on God's side. God is slow to judge; man is slow to believe. God hastens to bless and save, when the soul takes its true place of self-judgment before Him.

Now, if you are not yet saved, why should you go any longer unsaved? You cannot answer that query save by confessing that you do not simply and fully trust the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the deadly evil that afflicts you, — unbelief. But perhaps you are somewhat anxious to be saved, yet cannot see the "way of salvation" clearly. If so, may the Lord, in His mercy, use the simple little narrative which follows to help you to see clearly His grace, and urgent desire to set your anxious soul at rest in His presence.

One Friday evening, in April 1872, I received the following letter:

"15th April 1872.

Sir, — I heard Mr S. and you preaching the gospel on Sunday evening; and, if you remember, you were speaking about the sprinkling of the blood on the door posts (Exo 12:1-51). I understood it was a type of the blood of Jesus, and those that are saved sinners have, as it were, the blood sprinkled on their door posts. Well, I have not got that blood sprinkled upon my door posts. You ask, Why not? I don't know myself, for I would like very much to have it, yet I cannot find it. I suppose I am not seeking for it in earnest, or I would have a share of it with others. I have longed to be saved for six years or more, and I cannot find peace. I believe that Jesus died for all sinners, and that I am one among the worst of them, and I am in great need of a Saviour, yet there is something I don't understand. I think it is because I have not faith; but, if you can explain it any better, I will be at the Hall the Sunday after next, if the Lord will spare me, to hear you once more. I am afraid I will never get another chance. I have had the gospel set before me plain enough, both by you and by my parents, but I think I get harderhearted every time. I have tried to pray for faith, but Satan seems to laugh at me, and tell me I am too late. I feel as if he had too fast hold on me now to get away from him.

Oh, will you pray for me, that I might have light, and that I might find the true Saviour? I hope the Lord will bear with me a little longer. I have given up all hopes of being a Christian. I shudder to think of a terrible judgment day." As there was no signature appended, and I did not at all know the handwriting, I was quite at a loss to know who the writer could be. That it was a truly anxious soul I was sure, and could only pity any one remaining ten days in such a state of sheer wretchedness, and I looked up to the Lord to give a suited word when the time should come of which the writer spoke. But God's ways are not as ours, nor His thoughts like ours, "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him." The Lord's Day following the receipt of this letter, I was just about to commence a Bible class with some young men in my own house, when a violent ring of the door bell came, and an urgent message for me at once to see a patient who was thought to be dying, if not already dead. Hastily driving to the house, I found that the mother of the family had suddenly become unconscious, and her husband, and several of her children, were gathered round her, expecting each breath to be the last.

She certainly was in a most death-like swoon, but she was breathing, though quite unconscious. I proceeded to apply suitable remedial measures to her, and sought to calm the fears of those who tremblingly watched their loved one. My patient I knew was a Christian, and so also was her husband, and some of the other members of the family, but at the fireside stood some of whom I was not sure.

Turning to the father I asked, "Are all your children converted yet?" "No, no," said he, "I wish they were." Then addressing the eldest of this little company round the fire, who had come home from her place of service for two or three hours, and whose name I knew, I said, "Is it true, Mary, that you are still unsaved?" A painful "Yes" was her only reply, but as it was coupled with a deep sigh, I thought she might be anxious, so begged her to come with me into another room, that we might be alone for a few moments, while others carried out my directions with regard to the mother.

"I suppose you know where your dear mother would be if she died?" I said.

"In heaven with Jesus," was Mary's reply.

"And if you died?"

"I should go to hell, I know," she answered, bursting into a flood of tears.

"But have you no desire to be saved?"

"Oh, yes, indeed I have. I want to be saved, if I only knew how."

"How? Why, it is very simple. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' Only believe Him. Just trust Him as you are, — a poor guilty sinner. He has died for sinners; His blood avails to cleanse the most guilty; and He says, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' Come to Him, that is all you have to do. Just trust Him. Do you think you can?"

"I should like to. I wish I could. Will you pray for me, doctor?"

"Let us kneel together before Him," I said, and then, while she wept, I prayed the Lord to spare the beloved mother, if it was His holy will, and save the sin-burdened child who knelt before Him. As I rose to go back again to see the sick one, I said, "Don't get off your knees till all is settled, and you have found Jesus." The mother I found decidedly rallying, and she shortly completely recovered. On returning to Mary, after the lapse of some minutes, I found her awaiting me, standing on her feet, with a beaming though still tearful countenance. But these tears were tears of joy, as she said, "I have found Him; Jesus is mine." Yes, thank God, she had found Him, and peace, and life, and joy in Him, and she has gone on her way rejoicing ever since.

Two days afterwards I learned that Mary was the writer of the anonymous letter! Was not this just like the Lord, my reader? This anxious soul proposed to itself to wait ten days. But Jesus loves to meet the truly anxious one at once, and thus He must needs let the mother fall sick, and the physician be sent for, just at the moment when the sin-burdened one was by, that His own message of grace might be spoken to her. May He speak to you now. The seraphim flew to relieve Isaiah. The father ran to meet the prodigal. God makes haste to be gracious to you, my friend. Do you trust Him as simply as Mary did, and pardon, peace, and joy divine are yours for ever.

"I rest in Christ the Son of God, Who took the servant's form  
By faith I flee to Jesus' cross, My covert from the storm.  
At peace with God, no ills I dread, The cup of blessing mine:  
The Lord is risen, His precious blood Is new and living wine.

Jesus put all my sins away When bruised to make me whole;  
Who shall accuse, or who condemn, My blameless, ransomed soul?

O thou avenger, see the blood That makes the guilty clean  
No prey of thine the soul on which This token once is seen."

### 03. The "Golightly" Disaster.

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The "Golightly" Disaster. In July 1886 a friend kindly placed at our disposal, and pressed us for a few weeks to occupy, his airy sea-side house at D-, a summer resort, the salt breezes of which have but to be known to be enjoyed. Assuredly gathering that the Lord had some work for us there, we went, reaching our quarters one Friday afternoon. The same evening the Corn Exchange, a good-sized building, was secured for a gospel meeting on the following Lord's Day evening, and a little handbill issued announcing the subject, which ran thus: "Saved at the bottom; or, a lesson among the weeds. A true tale, and a salt word for sailors and lands-men." This arranged, I got down to the harbour, inquiring among the many fisher folk who loitered there if any one possessed a boat in which some of my party could — weather permitting — have a sail on the morrow. A weather-beaten old tar, to whom I spoke first, assured me that no craft suitable for the purpose was kept there, and then suddenly turning, shouted, "Sandy, Sandy, come here."

"Who is Sandy?" said I.

"Oh, Sandy H-. He's got a tidy little fishing yawl, perhaps he can accommodate you." Thus called, Sandy, a fair-haired lithesome young fellow of twenty-eight, with a cheery face, who had been standing amongst a group at some distance, came forward, and on hearing what was wanted, expressed his willingness to tidy up his boat and have it ready by four P.M., though fearing it would not be "o'er comfie for the leddies." He pointed out his boat, a broad-beamed undecked yawl, with the well-known lug-sail so common on the east of Scotland, and assured us she was a grand sea-boat, and like her name the "Golightly."

Sandy was true to his word, and at the appointed hour was waiting our arrival, with two other men, Andrew H-, his elder brother, and James S-, his brother-in-law, whom we found to be the "Golightly's" usual crew. Andrew was the skipper, and during our little sail we were all much attracted by his sedate, good-humoured, sunburnt face, and stalwart form, as he skilfully managed his boat, which sped gaily along over the white-crested billows which a stiffish breeze produced. Telling the three men of the meeting arranged for the next evening, they readily promised to be present, and to bring some friends, and James S- very simply confessed the Lord Jesus as his Saviour, saying he had known the Lord about a year only. When we reached land, after a couple of hours of most enjoyable fresh sea-breeze, the three partners engaged to meet us again on the following Tuesday, at the same hour, and renewing their promise to be at the Corn Exchange we bade each other good-night. The meeting in the Corn Exchange I shall never forget. God had arranged it, and He was there, and that is everything in a gospel meeting. The place was well filled, and amongst the listeners were our three friends of the "Golightly," and many others of the simple fisher folk of the place. Jonah's history (chapters 1 and 2) was before us, and the downward course of this disobedient man traced out. Sent to Nineveh, he "rose up to flee unto Tarshish" (which means destruction). Mercifully he never got there, but he "went down to Joppa" (beautiful); of course found a ship there going where he wanted to go, and so "paid the fare thereof," — as the sinner pays his own way to hell, — and "went down into it." Once on board he

takes a third downward step, and is profoundly unconscious of the general danger which the storm that God had sent out threatened, for "Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep." Thus it is with man oftentimes; God speaks, but he hears not. But God will have Jonah aroused, and "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" rings in his ears, and rang in the ears of the Corn Exchange audience again and again, as the indifferent, the unawakened, the unsaved, the unpardoned, were besought to receive the gospel. Thoroughly aroused, and probed by the pointed queries, "What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?" Jonah confesses, "I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land." This, however, cannot calm the storm; and at length, prompted by a sense of his sin, and at his own request cast into the sea, he finds himself the object of the special care of God, for "the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." But sin ever brings its own fruit, and the soul that sins must know repentance toward God. "In the belly of the fish three days and three nights," Jonah passes through deep exercises, and learns wondrous lessons. He prays, he cries, and his soul faints. He gets into "the belly of hell"; floods compass him, billows and waves pass over him, and the weeds are wrapped about his head. Three downward steps he had taken himself; God conducts him yet lower. "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains," he says; and then with a sense that all is over, — that he is, as far as human aid is concerned, helplessly, hopelessly lost, - he is brought to the point of real blessing; and having learned that "salvation is of the Lord," he owns it, and is free on the spot, — reaching dry land in a moment. So the soul that feels and owns its guilty defiled condition, and takes the place of being lost before God, is taught of God that it is an object of His love and mercy, and that "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Hence whoever trusts in that blessed Son of Man, finds a Saviour, and salvation, on the spot. Many and urgent were the appeals to the unsaved not to defer salvation to tomorrow, as it never comes, for I felt as though some of my hearers might never hear the gospel again. The interest was great, and it was quite evident that God's Spirit was mightily at work among souls; and when we sang the closing hymn, "Salvation without money;

Salvation without price;

Salvation without labour, - Believing doth suffice.

Salvation now — this moment!

Then why, oh why, delay?

You may not see tomorrow;

Now is salvation's day!"

I could not but believe that some were accepting God's offered grace. Nor in this was I disappointed, as events afterwards showed and some were heard to say as they left the hall, "The man spoke as though we were never to have another chance of being saved." Prophetic words, indeed, as regards some. The next day, Monday, was a lovely summer day. The sun shone brightly, fleecy white clouds soared high in the deep blue sky, and the sea was like a mill-pond, scarce ruffled by a gentle breeze. About three o'clock in the afternoon the "Golightly," with her wonted crew, and ten other occupants, most of them women, all cheerful, blithe, and eager for work, put out of harbour to go to some not far distant "mussel scalps," to gather bait for the usual nocturnal fishing expedition. The boat, laden beyond its capacity, for which the calm fair weather

might account, had scarcely emerged from the harbour when a sudden and quite unexpected squall struck her. The sheet - the rope attached to the lower and hinder end of the sail — had unfortunately been made fast to a thwart, and, owing to the throng of women, could not be let go. The boat heeled over, filled, and sank, within one hundred yards of shore, carrying her thirteen passengers down with her. Of these four only came to the surface, and help being quickly at hand they were rescued. Among these were James S-. Carried to the bottom and held there by two women for a time, when they let go he rose, and was picked up. The victims, however, included my friends Andrew and Sandy H-, the former's wife, their younger brother of seventeen, and a girl cousin of a similar age. Locked in each other's arms the manly skipper and his youthful wife were shortly after brought to the surface. Parted not in life, thank God, they were not divided in death, as I afterwards learned. The others who were drowned were two young men of seventeen and twenty-two years, and two young women aged seventeen. The squall passed by, the sun shone again brightly; but how different the scene it shone on, as one by one the nine lifeless bodies were brought to shore! Oh, the terrible power of death! And what folly can equal that of the sinner who goes on heedless of his soul's salvation?

There was scarcely a house among the fisher folk not, nearly or remotely, connected with the drowned, and sorrow possessed many a heart to the full, as they mourned the loss of parents, children, brothers, sisters, cousins, or friends and playmates. The gloom which this painful event cast over the town can easily be imagined, and the sympathy for the stricken and bereaved families was widespread and real. A public funeral took place on the Wednesday, and a sad sight it was, as, carried shoulder high to the old kirkyard, the coffins of the husband and wife, side by side, were followed by the seven others, borne in single file. Thousands attended, and preceded or followed. While a simple service was conducted in the old kirk, the nine wreath-covered coffins, all side by side, — a sight one could never forget, — rested in the vestibule, and then were borne each to the last resting-place near by. Over the grave which held Andrew H- and his wife, by the desire of some relations, I read John 5:24-29, and spoke of the blessedness of having eternal life. This blessedness the two who were undivided in death had lately been taught to know, and so the saddened hearts that mourned them were comforted. Of the nine who were thus suddenly cut off, five were at the Sunday evening meeting, two known to be believers in the Lord Jesus. Of the rest, one can only say, God may have spoken to them, and they believed the gospel, but no one heard them say that they were converted. It is a mistake to put off deciding for Christ till it be too late. "Boast not thyself of tomorrow for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth (Pro 27:1), is God's word to every one of us. How solemnly was it illustrated here. Two of the dear men who were to meet me on Tuesday passed into eternity on Monday! So much for man's proposals. And now, my dear reader, how is it with you? Are you saved? Are you converted? Are you ready to go? Have you peace with God? Are your sins pardoned, and all washed away in the precious blood of Christ? If not, let me beseech you not to delay one single hour. God may never give you another opportunity of hearing His gospel. Believe on Jesus now. The work of redemption is finished. The cross is past, the blood of atonement has been shed. God has accepted it; and He will accept you, if you trust the One who shed His blood for poor guilty sinners, as we both are by nature. Come then to Jesus. Come now. Come as you are; and, simply trusting Him, you will be able to say, Salvation is of the Lord."

One word more. "Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee" (Job 36:18). "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

## 04. What meanest thou, O sleeper?"

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What meanest thou, O sleeper?"

(Read Jon 1:1-17; Jon 2:1-10.)

We have in Jonah a remarkable illustration of the way in which a soul learns, through deep and terrible exercises, its own nothingness, and that "salvation is of the Lord"; and you will see he does not get deliverance until he says this. In the first chapter he illustrates, in a most striking way, what man is as a sinner in departing from God. There is glaring disobedience and sin, and then, as a consequence, he is in a most critical position; but he is profoundly careless and indifferent until he is awakened. There are souls now as careless and indifferent, who have never yet been awakened.

Jonah is told to go east, and he goes west. There is thorough disobedience; and that is why the Apostle Paul says of us all, when he speaks of "the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph 2:2-3). Observe, the "child of disobedience" ripens into a "child of wrath." And what is that? A man may go on in disobedience and refusal of the claims of God now, but he cannot escape the judgment of God at the last. May you never reach the spot, my dear reader, where the wrath of God abides on you for ever. Believe the gospel now, for the object of that gospel is to deliver you from your sins and their consequences, and to bring you to God, that you may be a child of God, and know Him as your Father.

Jonah illustrates, then, the innate disobedience of man. God had said to him, "Arise, go to Nineveh. . . . But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish [destruction] from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa [beauty]; and he found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" (Jon 1:3). Mark how Jonah's course is downward, like every child of Adam who has not been turned to God. He goes down to Joppa, and what does he find? He finds a ship going to Tarshish. Of course he finds a ship! The devil would be sure to have a ship there that day if there had never been one there before, to meet the disobedient soul as he gets there. And the devil has plenty of Joppas — earth beauties — and plenty of ships for you, my unsaved reader, to help you to get your own way and do as you like. He will pander to your lusts to ensure your destruction. Hell is the Tarshish to which you are surely wending your way. But Jonah paid his fare, we read. And what is the fare, on his downward road, which the unconverted man pays? He pays his sinful fare to hell, and the price is his own soul. The Christian is on the upward road to heaven, and he has not to pay his own fare. Thank God, it was paid for him by another, even Jesus the Saviour.

Next, Jonah goes down into the ship, — another downward step. And don't you think, my friend, that your course has been a downward one until this very hour? And you have not got to the bottom yet. But the Lord had His eye on Jonah; and, thank God, He has His eye on you too. You

have not your eye on Him, but He has His eye on you.

God now begins to take Jonah in hand, for He sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken" (Jon 1:4). The effect was great, and all, save one, were alarmed; for we read, "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, . . . but Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep" (Jon 1:5). How often it happens that when God draws near unto a man he is profoundly unconscious of it; he is "fast asleep," — lulled asleep by Satan. Some are lulled asleep by the pleasures of sin; others, by the thought that they are not so bad, that they are better than their neighbours, — are orderly, religious, careful, moral people. Oh, if this be your condition, may the Lord arouse you! May He — make this paper the shipmaster to you, to rouse you from your sleep of sin.

What roused Jonah? "The shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not" (Jon 1:6). And thou, O unsaved reader of these lines, what meanest thou? Arouse! be awakened, for what is the next thing coming? Destruction, — sudden destruction! "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say [as men do more than ever now say], Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. . . . When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (1Th 5:2-3; 2Th 1:7-9).

You may say that Jonah's insensibility in the tempest-tossed vessel is but a picture. True; but what is it a picture of? Of the state you are in. Every one in that ship, save Jonah, knew the danger; and every Christian knows your danger, my friend, — knows you are in danger of perishing; nay more, knows that perish you must, unless you too are waked up, and led to say, "Salvation is of the Lord." You are, alas, indifferent now, and indifferent in a day when everything that God can do He has done, and the whole light has come out. Again I cry, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise!" See what your state is. The shipmaster could only say, "Call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." He did not know that God does think on us. He did not know what the Christian knows, nor that God says, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me" (Jer 29:11-13). God has so thought of us, that He has sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for us, for "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1Pe 3:18).

Jonah's friends were not sure of any way of escape; but, thank God, I can tell you of a way of escape, through the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus on the cross. In their extremity, the Gentile mariners "said every, one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah" (Jon 1:7). It is a good thing when the lot falls upon a man and he feels that he is the sinner. Then (Jon 1:8) they ask Jonah four questions, which I will also ask you: (1) "What is thine occupation?" Sinning. That has been your occupation since you came into the world. Do you say, That is a terrible charge? God

says, "The thought of foolishness is sin" (Pro 24:9). (2) "Whence comest thou?" Oh! it is a terrible thing when the Lord has to say to souls, as He did when on earth, "Ye are from beneath" (John 8:23). (3) "What is thy country?" Ah, my friend, there is no mistake about your country. You belong to the world, "Ye are of this world" (John 8:23). You are in and of the world, and the world loves its own. (4) "And of what people art thou?" The enemies of the Lord. All unbelievers are such, though they may not like to own it. The Christian's occupation is pleasing the Lord. Where does he come from? "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." His country is heaven, and his people are the children of God.

Jonah, now fairly "come to himself," in reply to these four queries says, "I fear the Lord, the God of heaven." Can you say that? The mark of a converted man is, that he fears the Lord; that of the unconverted, that "there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom 3:18). At Jonah's reply "were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? (for the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.) Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may, be calm unto us? . . . And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you" (Jon 1:10-12). Jonah comes to the conviction that he is the guilty one. It is a great moment when the soul gets to this point. I am verily guilty; I am so thoroughly guilty, that I am only fit to die. Others felt that they should perish; Jonah felt that he deserved to perish. But though many learn that they are guilty, they have still deep lessons to learn ere they find out what God's salvation is; for when they have found that they are guilty, oftentimes they begin to try to mend; and here, at first, "the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not." It was all of no use. "So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from her raging" (Jon 1:15). Then he would feel indeed it was all over with him. And so, but for God, it was. The only way of escape now for him was through the life of another.

"Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jon 1:17). It is given us for a figure. Jonah was preserved from these billows swallowing him up by the direct intervention of God. And what can prevent you and me from being swallowed up by the waves and billows of Divine wrath? Nothing but the direct intervention of God. But He has intervened, blessed be His name! The Lord Jesus Christ has come down in grace, given His own blood, taken sins upon Himself, been made sin, died, and has been raised again, and is at the right hand of God, and the Christian's life is "bid with Christ in God."

Jonah gets wonderful experiences in the belly of the great fish. He has been convicted, not only of sin and guilt, but of powerlessness too, and that he has a heart opposed to God. The first thing a soul does that is awakened is to pray, and "Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly" (Jon 2:1). But I want you to see that it is not his prayer that brings him deliverance. He says, "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice." There is positive agony of soul. Do you say, I know nothing about that? You will know it, then, my friend, one day, when your cry will never be heard. In the history of his soul, Jonah had gone down into the depths of hell, therefore he never went there actually. He now adds, "Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me" (Jon 2:3).

I love to think of this verse, too, as a shadow of the experience of my blessed Saviour, who went through all the waves and billows of Divine wrath that never one of them might fall on me. But the man whom God takes in hand goes through deep exercises of soul, though I want you to see that your exercises, however deep, do not save you.

Every man must, sooner or later, learn what a fearful thing sin is, and how great the holiness of God. He learns there are depths of unbelief and impurity in his heart that he never knew before, and that the more he struggles and strives to restrain these evils, the more they bubble up, for their name is legion. Sin ever distances from God. Hence Jonah says, "I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple" (Jon 2:4). But what now are his experiences? "The waters compassed me about even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the waters were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains" (Jon 2:5-6). Three steps, says Jonah, I took myself, — down to Joppa, down to the ship, and down into its sides to sleep. But when God took hold of me, I went deeper down still, — "down to the bottoms of the mountains." Here his exercises get deeper still. "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord" (Jon 2:7). But, my friend, it will not do to merely remember the Lord. You must believe in Him too. But the soul that is real before God, is ever led to judge itself and its ways, — 1:e., it repents. That Jonah did this is evident from his next words, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy" (Jon 2:9). This is the judgment he passes on his former life and the world which had allured him. Repentance, be it never so real and deep, is not deliverance however, and this he sighs for, but seeks to get it in a wrong way, when he adds, "I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed" (2:9). Still he is not delivered. Sacrifices and vows cannot deliver. Have you learned this? Jonah did, for he pulls up short, and exclaims, "Salvation is of the Lord" (2:9); and immediately deliverance comes in. Many a soul is in the state of Jonah ere he said, "Salvation is of the Lord." Such are saying, "I will sacrifice, I will vow, I will pay." Ah! you are in the belly of hell still, and the soul never gets out that way; the gates are all barred. But the moment self is let go, with its sacrifices, its vows, its prayers, and its paying, and the soul sees that "salvation is of the Lord," then deliverance comes.

"And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" (Jon 2:10), — not into the mud, but on to dry land. He was saved by a miracle. And that is what the Christian says, "I am saved by a miracle. I was on my road to hell, I had paid my fare and gone down into the ship; but the Lord came in, and took hold of me, and saved me by a miracle." Yes, it is a greater miracle that saves a soul now than the one that saved Jonah. It was a great miracle certainly that saved Jonah, a wonderful thing that God should prepare a great fish, but not half so wonderful a thing as that He should design and plan such a wondrous scheme as that by which my salvation is secured. I am saved by the life of another, like Jonah, but not till that other has gone down into death for me. My sin was put away by the death of the One who had life in Himself — the One on whom death had no claim. He could offer a sacrifice that could clear the soul from every penalty that could fall upon it. He sweeps away the penalty by bearing it, and He sweeps away the sin by dying; and then He comes up on the resurrection side of the grave, and the Christian's life is hid in Him.

I look up and see a living Man in glory, and God says, I am "in him." There is dry land for you, my friend. Truly "SALVATION IS OF THE LORD!" and those who simply believe in Him can sing with joy, "The Lord is risen: with Him we also rose, And in His grave see vanquished all our foes. The

Lord is risen: beyond the judgment land, In Him, in resurrection-life we stand!"

## 05. A Basket of Grapes.

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A Basket of Grapes. The reason why many souls have not the assurance of salvation, is that they are looking within for something to rest on; instead of simply resting on Christ, and believing what God says about Him, and them, when they believe in Him. This state of matters was forcibly illustrated by a bedridden old lady, whom I saw some time since. God had converted her nephew, a worldly doctor, in a remarkable way; and no sooner was he in the enjoyment of the Lord's grace, than he sought to get all his relatives to share his new-found joy. Recognising the state his old aunt was in, he asked me to pay her a visit, apprising her of my coming. The old lady received me very pleasantly, and we had a long conversation. She knew she was a sinner, — a lost sinner, — and owned it. She desired most fervently to be saved. She knew that no works of her own could avail before God. She believed the Lord Jesus to be the only Saviour of sinners. She had often cried to Him to save her, but no answer had come to her cries as yet. After finding out that she was a truly seeking soul, — ripe for salvation, I might say, — I asked:

"Now what is the hindrance? Why do you not know that you are saved? You tell me that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is able and willing to save you, and that you are most willing to let Him save you, and yet you are not sure of salvation. Do you think He has got anything more to do for your salvation?"

"Oh, no! I'm sure His work is all finished. He said so on the cross."

"Quite true; only I suppose you think there must be something wrought in you, before you can be sure you are saved?"

"Yes, that's just it," she replied.

"And what, pray, is lacking in you?"

"Well, sir, I'm not thankful enough for all He has done for me. I think if I felt more thankful, I should know I was saved."

"Oh, I see where you are," I replied. "Now tell me, supposing I were to send you a basket of grapes by my servant tomorrow morning, what is the first thing you would do?"

"Oh, of course I should thank you," replied the old lady, most energetically.

"Well, suppose on the other hand you sent me a basket of grapes, what do you think is the first thing I would do?" I replied.

"You would thank me, wouldn't you?"

"Not first."

"Why, what would you do?" she asked most eagerly.

"I should take them. Then, secondly, I should send you a hearty message of thanks."

"I see it! I see it!" exclaimed my old friend, as the joy-tears welled down over her wrinkled features. "I've just got to take salvation first, and then thank the Lord for what He has given me."

"Exactly so. 'The gift of God is eternal life.' What He gives we have only simply to accept, and then thank Him for time and eternity."

"Dear me, how simple it is!" she exclaimed, falling back on her pillows. "I always thought I must feel something within that I never could feel; but, thank God, I see it all clearly now. It is so simple I wonder I didn't see it before." Thus she entered into sweet peace and rest in the Lord, and, not long after, departed happily to be for ever with Him.

Reader, can you say with her, "I see it"? If not, why not? Nothing can be simpler than the gospel. God gives, man receives; God speaks, man hears; Christ acts, man believes. To look within for anything is sheer folly. It is the work for and not the work in us that saves us.

Christ's work on the cross is perfect. Nothing can be added to it. God has accepted it for us, and has set Jesus at His own right hand in glory, in token of His appreciation of Him. His atoning work on the cross has glorified God, and put away our sins for ever from His sight. By it too Satan's power is broken, and the grave opened, death being annulled.

Every claim of God on us has been met by Jesus. He took our place in death and judgment, that we might get His place in life and glory. And He says, "Because I live ye shall live also." Faith believes this. Faith reckons with God, and sees things as He sees them. Feelings or experiences have no place at all. "Abraham believed God" — 1:e., he took Him at His word. I believe Him, dear reader. Do you? If so, you will say, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift."

BEHOLD the empty tomb, The place where Jesus lay Upon the cross He bore our doom, And rolled our curse away. The ransom fully paid, The work completely done, God, who on Him our judgment laid, To glory raised His Son.

There where the sprinkled blood Doth in the light abide, We now rejoice before our God, Together satisfied.

We glory in His grace, We sing what He hath done And sound abroad in this dark place The Gospel of His Son.

## 06. "When He died on the cross."

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"When He died on the cross." The sudden illness of a beloved servant of Christ called me some years ago into the western highlands of Scotland. As it was to be a comfort to the patient, and those around her, I remained a few days, staying with them in the comfortable farmhouse where they had secured lodgings for some weeks for change of air. The evening following my arrival, we gathered a few of the country-folk into the farm-kitchen for a little gospel meeting. It was an out-of-the-way, picturesque, but lonely spot, so that gospel services were of rare occurrence, and gladly hailed; though, as it was then the height of the wheat-harvest season, only those who were in thorough earnest came, after a hard day's work.

Among my auditors I noticed two interesting looking children, about twelve or thirteen years of age. They turned out to be part of the farmer's family, being twin-sisters. At the close of the meeting I intimated that I would preach on the morrow evening at a schoolhouse some three miles distant. The word of God was with power, and these two dear children were arrested by it, which was evinced by their close attention, and an urgent request to their father to be allowed to attend the meeting the following evening. To this request the cautious farmer gave a negative response, not that he disliked the meeting, but that he would need their services to carry food to the reapers, go messages, and help generally in the harvest field, and he thought they could not thus toil all day and walk six miles at night. Much disappointed, the young truth-seekers pressed their suit again, and promised to rise as early as he liked, and work as hard as he pleased, if only they might go. Their earnestness carried the day, and having obtained consent, they retired cheerfully to rest, rose early next morning, toiled all day in the burning sun, and at sundown set off together for the meeting. Little wonder, thought I, if God should bless such earnest souls. That night many gathered together; the 3rd of John was my theme, and I noticed the intense eagerness with which the young couple heard the word of life. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again;" and, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life," — showed the two musts in their full force. Man — every man - must be born again, and to this end Jesus must die. But who is this Son of Man giving Himself for others? That query, verse 6 answered: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Son of Man is no less than the Son of God. A human being, but a divine person. In Him the heart of God is made known, and God is seen loving and giving, while man's part is believing and having. How simple! And "whosoever" was shown to be any one, every one, — each poor sinner that believes God's word.

I felt sure God was blessing His word, and when the meeting broke up, and we were on our way home, I quite expected to find among the blessed, the earnest young souls who cared to travel six miles for the gospel after a hard day's work. Nor was I disappointed. Overtaking Violet, I asked her if she had understood the gospel. "Oh yes, sir, I see it all clearly now, and I believe in Jesus, and know I have eternal life." A little more conversation assured me of the dear child's real faith in the Lord; so leaving her, I quickened my steps, and was soon along side of Marion.

"Well, Marion, are you saved also, as well as Violet?" was my query. "Yes, sir, I believe I am; I see tonight that Jesus died for me, and I believe in Him," was her response, while the youthful face was as bright and joyous as the one I had just left. I could only praise the Lord as I saw the girls were twin-sisters in grace as well as in nature.

Slackening our pace a little, Violet overtook us, whereupon I introduced them to each other in their new relationship as sisters in the Lord, each welcoming the other with great gladness on hearing of her conversion. Then, as we walked on, I sought to instruct them a little, and confirm their newborn faith. Just before we reached home, I said, "I want to ask you each one question more: When was it that Jesus put your sins away?" In a moment Violet replied, "Oh, tonight, sir." Turning to her sister for her reply, I had a moment to wait, and then the little maiden firmly said, "When He died on the cross."

"Right, my child, right," said I it was when He was on the cross He bore them, and there He atoned for them, and then He put them away from God's sight for ever. You and your sister have got the knowledge of that blessed fact this night for the first time in your history, but the work was done when Jesus died."

I have often heard of my young friends since then, as following the Lord, and trust to meet them in glory with Him. I narrate this simple story, because so many earnest souls are not clear on the last point alluded to. Many a true and honest soul is troubled about sins, and afraid of being finally lost on account of those committed after conversion. They put it thus: "I believe Jesus bore my sins up to the time when I was converted, but what about those I am guilty of since?" Let me ask you a question: When Christ died on the cross, how many sins had you or I committed? None; we were not either of us born; but still, blessed be His name, I know He bore mine, — all of them too. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," says Peter, and this is enough for me. He bore them when He died; He forgives them when I believe. That is a great difference. He blotted them out on the cross. I know they are pardoned, and blotted out, when I believe Him; and I know it, not because I feel it, but because God says it.

"In the Lord we have redemption, Full remission in His blood; From the curse entire exemption, From the curse pronounced by God;

What a Saviour Jesus is!

Oh, what grace, what love is His!

Sweet His name, that name transcending Every name on earth, in heaven;

Praise, through ages never ending, To the Son of God be given!

He alone the Saviour is, Everlasting praise is His!"

## 07. "God says I am Saved."

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"God says I am Saved." Not long since I was asked to visit a young girl, about seventeen years of age, who had injured herself, and was thought to be dying. I had known her for some time, and was aware she was very delicate, but, on calling, learned she had fallen out of bed, and received an injury to the back of her head, which would eventually prove fatal it was judged. Being under the care of another surgeon, I had nothing to do with her treatment; so, after making a few inquiries as to her bodily suffering, which was great (specially when moved by others, for she was almost completely paralysed), I began to speak to her about the state of her soul.

"Are you quite happy?" I said.

"No, sir."

"Why? Are you not saved?"

"I am not sure."

"But why are you not sure? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

"Yes, but I don't feel saved."

"Do you feel lost?"

"Yes, I do;" and she now began to weep.

"Why do you know you are lost."

"Because I am a sinner, and God's Word says so."

"Then you believe His Word, do you?"

"Oh yes, sir; indeed I do."

"Well, then, His Word says, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved.' Do you believe that?"

"Yes."

"But are you looking to Jesus?"

"Yes, sir but I don't feel as I should like to."

"Granted but does it say, 'Look unto me, and feel saved?"

"No."

"What then?"

"Be ye saved."

"What?"

"Be ye saved."

"When is that, today or tomorrow?"

"When I look."

"But are you looking?"

"Yes, I am really looking to Jesus."

"Then, are you saved?"

She paused a moment, and then firmly replied, "I don't feel it, but God says I am saved. I see it now." The next moment her eye lit up, and her pallid face told the tale of a new spring of joy having been opened to her.

"Well," I said, "if any one were to come in, and ask you now if you were saved, what would you say?"

"I would say 'Yes.'"

"And if they asked you how you knew it and were sure of it, what would you say?"

"I would say that I do believe in Jesus, and God says in His Word that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life; and though I don't feel it, I do believe what God says."

"Then you rest your soul on Jesus and on God's Word?"

"Yes, sir, I do; and I could die happy now. I'd like to go at once to Jesus."

"You have no fears?"

"No, none."

"No doubts?"

"No; why should I? I see it all clearly. I'm only a poor sinner — and Jesus died for me — and I believe in Him — and God says I'm saved — and so I know I am."

I had a little more conversation, and called two days after to find her truly filled with joy and peace in believing. Her face shone with the joy the knowledge of God alone can impart. Leaving town for a few weeks, I found, on my return, that she had lingered about a month, giving a constant bright testimony of Christ to all about her, and, full of quiet calm rest and joy in Christ until the end, had at length passed to be for ever with Him. And now, dear reader, a word with you about the state of your soul. Are you saved — or lost? Which? Don't shirk the question. It must be answered soon. The longest life has its end. Who has given you a lease of long life? A long eternity you shall have. Where will you spend it? Another day may find you in it — gone for ever from earth, where Christ died, "suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Gone where? With Christ? Or without Him? Would it be without Him? You tremble to say "Yes." Stop, — listen. Your future is awful. Forgotten by man, — forsaken by God, — for ever in hell! Oh, pause a moment in your downward course! List the voice of love speaking to you — speaking from heaven — "Come unto me." — "Look unto me." — "I am Jesus." — "By me, if any man enter in, he shall be

saved."

You have nought to do but take your true place as a lost sinner now before God. Acknowledge your sin. Justify Him, — He'll justify you. It is all summed up in the sweet confession of the dying girl. May you this day be able to say, like her, "I'm only a poor sinner — Jesus died for me — I believe in Him — God says I am saved, and so I know I am."

RISE, my soul! behold 'tis Jesus!

Jesus fills thy wondering eyes See Him now, in glory seated, Where thy sins no more can rise.

There, in righteousness transcendent, Lo! He doth in heaven appear, Shows the blood of His atonement As thy title to be there.

All thy sins were laid upon Him, Jesus bore them on the tree;

God who knew them laid them on Him, And, believing, thou art free.

God now brings thee to His dwelling, Spreads for thee His feast divine, Bids thee welcome, ever telling What a portion there is thine. In that circle of God's favour, Circle of the Father's love, All is rest, and rest for ever, All is Perfectness above.

Blessed, glorious word, "for ever!"

Yea, "for ever" is the word;

Nothing can the ransomed sever, Nought divide them from the Lord.

## 08. The Ambassador's Tale.

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### The Ambassador's Tale.

"For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God. . . . For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again. . . . Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." — 2Co 5:10-21. A distinguished theologian is reported to have once asked a noted stage actor, "How is it, when you act, you can move your audience, almost at your will, either to laughter or tears, whereas when I preach they are unmoved?" To this, quoth he, "My lord, the answer is easily given. I PLAY FICTION as though it were FACT, whereas you PREACH FACT as though it were FICTION," Pointed, though doubtless unpalatable words which all who preach or write to souls may well give heed to. Paul needed them not. FACTS pressed heavily on his spirit, and made him most urgent in dealing with precious souls. If you doubt it, my reader, afresh peruse the solemn, most solemn, yet blessed verses at the head of this paper, and then ask yourself, Do I believe this fervent ambassador?

I shall briefly draw your attention to two facts in this passage which were the mighty springs in the apostle's soul of earnest and affectionate appeal to men. They were —

1, "The terror of the Lord" (2Co 5:11);

2, "The love of Christ" (2Co 5:14). The verses I have quoted give a wonderful picture of the whole family of man. Christ is the central object. His wondrous love to ruined man evinced in His death is the theme. His love, and His atoning work for sinners, blessed, and reconciled to God by His death, are in bright relief in the forefront of the picture, if I may so say, while the background (for every picture has its background) is the judgment-seat of Christ, with "the terror of the Lord" for all those who know not His love.

Let us look at the picture a little more closely, and, first, we will examine the background.

1. — "THE TERROR OF THE LORD."

Remember this is a fact, not a myth. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." What will produce this "terror"? "We must ALL appear [be manifested] before the judgment-seat of Christ." Does Paul fear it for himself? Certainly not. He says, "We ARE made manifest unto God," 1:e., even now. He has had all out now with God, sins, sin, guilt, ruin, everything he has had fully exposed to God's eye, and he knows how all has been fully met, by that death of which he speaks in a moment. He does not wait for the judgment-seat to detect anything; grace has led him into

God's presence in the full acknowledgement and confession of all even now, and that all has been fully met by Christ's death. He is very clear on this. "We ARE made manifest unto God." Reader, are you? But what a terrible moment will that be for the sin-screening, guilt-hiding, iniquity-covering, transgression-veiling, gospel-neglecting sinner, when, compelled to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, ALL will be exposed, manifested, and brought to light. "The things done in the body" are in view. Of things "good" there are none; of "bad," abundance. The Christless soul, having "done evil" only, comes forth "unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29). What can be the only issue? The lake of fire. "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:15).

Unsaved reader, do you believe this? God says it. Paul knew it. I believe it. The devil believes it. And you doubt it. You — who are most concerned in the matter! Can it be? What madness! what utter folly! Be persuaded. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Yes, beloved reader, I would persuade you to flee from the wrath to come. It is a fact. It is no use your denying it. God has said, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2Th 1:9). Paul was so impressed with the terror which that moment must bring to unsaved souls that his whole heart longed for their salvation, hence the words "we persuade men." The last account the Holy Ghost gives of his preaching is in Acts 28:1-31, and then he spent "from morning till evening" "persuading them concerning Jesus." It is a mighty, solemn fact, there is judgment coming most surely. Sinner! I warn you, flee! Do I hear you saying, — I am persuaded, I see my danger, my sin, its certain judgment, my inevitable destruction, if I go on as I am going; how am I to escape? Oh! you have seen the background of my picture, and like it not. It is well. Fix now, therefore, your undivided attention on the lovely One who is found in the front, and all your terror shall vanish, and your fears flee away, as you ponder.

## 2. — "THE LOVE OF CHRIST."

"For the love of Christ constraineth us." Charming words! Earnest as this blessed ambassador might be, urged by the sense of the "terror" of the day when the majesty of God will be maintained by the final and eternal judgment of sin, personally, in those who are there found in their sins, he was only the more urgent because he had discovered that, in order to save men from that day of judgment, He who will then be the judge had Himself died to deliver the guilty.

Love was the spring of this marvellous act. Sin had come in. This, God must judge, in maintenance of His own character. But sin brought death, and, viewed in this light, "ALL were dead." Further, "ALL must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." To appear there with a single sin is certain and everlasting condemnation. What is to be done? He who knows the extent of man's offence alone can meet or atone for it. After the offence, but before the day when He will judge it, Christ (who will be the judge) enters the scene, and becomes a man that, as a man, He might die and bear the judgment resting on man. This indeed is love! What was man's condition in God's sight because of sin? "Then were all dead." But oh! what news! "One died for ALL." Magnificent grace! Unparalleled love! Uncalled, unasked by one, He "DIED FOR ALL." This is a new kind of love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Mark the words "no man." Here, however, dear reader, is love which exceeds that. The love of Jesus, the God-man, far exceeds this limit, for He died for all — for His enemies certainly, not the less for His friends, if He had any. Blessed Jesus! It is this love manifested in

death — love stronger than death, and which many waters could not quench — which wins the heart to Him. Does He love me? Yes. Does He love you? Yes, without a doubt. Are you sure? Positive. Why? Because He died. For whom? "FOR ALL." Now get out of that number if you can. But how can I be sure that Christ loves me? Because He died for me. Why did He die? Because He loved me. Well, if this be so, I ought to live unto Him who died for me. Quite so; and that is just what Paul judged. So wonderful is His love in dying for such guilty sinners as we have all been, that, the moment the heart discovers it, the judgment is formed, — I ought to be for Him who is so thoroughly for me. The soul that gets hold of this is a "new creature" truly, and has the sweet sense of being "reconciled" to God. Enmity is cast out and annihilated by such overwhelming love as the cross displays. All is of God. The desire to have us near Himself, and the love that effects this blessed result by the cross, are both divine. Further, He sends out the message of reconciliation first by Christ, next by ambassadors, who, standing in the very stead of Christ, proclaim the heavenly tidings in the ears of all who will listen. It is suited to ALL, it is designed for ALL, it is proclaimed to ALL, that "One died for ALL," and if "ALL" do not believe, it is their own fault, and to their own eternal loss. Reader, beware lest you slight heaven's message. Hear it!

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though GOD DID BESEECH you by us; WE PRAY YOU in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. FOR he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." What a message! God now beseeching you to be reconciled to Himself, because He once on the cross took up with Christ the question of sin. There and then His judgment of it fell upon Christ, so that now whoever believes in Him stands before God in all the value of that work by which God has been glorified and sin put away. God's righteousness, and His estimate of that work, are seen not only in His taking Christ out of the grave into glory, but by His putting the believer in Christ in the very same place before Him that Christ now has. In death on the cross He took our place, in life now before God He gives us His place. What righteousness and what love! My reader, can you find it in your heart once more to refuse God's appeal to you? Say not, like Agrippa, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian but, receiving the word simply, may your response be in the words of this fervent ambassador recorded elsewhere, "I AM PERSUADED, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39), "for I know whom I have believed, and AM PERSUADED that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2Ti 1:12).

## 09. "This is not Death; this is Victory!"

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"This is not Death; this is Victory!"

Marvellous words these, indeed, to come from the lips of a dying mortal, now on the verge of eternity! But I heard, and can never forget them.

Soon after sunrise on a glorious Lord's Day morning in July 1874, I was hastily summoned to the bedside of a middle-aged lady I had been attending for a short while. Floods of golden light illumined the chamber where she lay, and a glance at her face told me she was rapidly sinking, and that the swoon, on account of which I had been urgently sent for, was the harbinger of her departure now near at hand. Scanning my face earnestly as I lightly touched her wrist, where no pulse could be felt, she eagerly said, "Doctor, am I dying? Don't be afraid to tell me. You know I am quite ready, so you may tell me the truth fearlessly."

I knew how tenderly and truly she loved her husband and her five children, all standing round her bed, and how she, the devoted and ever-thoughtful wife and mother, was beloved by them, and so felt what a wrench it would be to part from each other, but at such a moment it was better that all should know the truth, so I quietly rejoined, "Yes, my dear friend, I think you have come nearly to the end of life's journey here. Your pilgrimage is over, and you will soon be at home with the Lord."

"Do you really mean that?" was her quick reply, as a smile of deep joy, and a flush of glad surprise, lit up her handsome face.

"I do indeed, I think before the sun has gone to his rest today, you will have gone to yours for ever."

"Oh, that's glorious! Do you mean that today I shall be absent from the body, and present with the Lord?"

"Yes, that is just what I mean."

"Then I shall see Jesus today, my precious Lord and Saviour. Oh, what good news!" and she clasped her hands with emphasis, while in her heart she turned to the Lord in accents of praise. Then fixing her eyes on her husband, she exclaimed, "J-, did you hear what the doctor has been saying? He says I am going to see Jesus today, that before the sun sets I shall be for ever with Him, in all the rest and glory His precious blood has secured for me. Is not that glad tidings? I feel much at leaving you, and all the dear children, but you will all meet me again in heaven I know. You will be there I know, my love, and" — now turning to the children respectively, and calling each endearingly by name, she added — "you will be there, won't you — and you — and you — and you — and you, my youngest? Yes, you must all meet me there."

Weeping profusely, as they all were, she bade them weep not for her, as she added: "Think of this, the doctor says I am to see Jesus today. Yes, today I am to see Him, and be with Him for ever."

She paused a moment or two, and then turning to me abruptly exclaimed, "Doctor, you told me I was dying. That is a mistake. THIS IS NOT DEATH; THIS IS VICTORY!" And so indeed it was, — a complete fulfilment of the blessed Lord's words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (John 8:51). She said much more in the same strain, and continued rejoicing in the Lord, and in the thought of that day seeing Him, till soon after noon, when she joyously passed into His blessed presence.

Such a scene could never be forgotten by an eye-witness. And what was this, my unconverted reader? Do you tell me it was the ebullition of an excitable nature? Well, that may be your way of reading it, but let me ask you, Do you fancy you are likely to have a similar ebullition on your deathbed? Do you think that to be told you would die this day, shortly after you have dropped this paper, would fill you with joy? Nothing of the kind. You know better. The one thing you are afraid of is death. Why? Because "after this the judgment." Yes, you know that death and judgment are before you, and they are too distasteful, direful, awful things for an unsaved sinner to meet. I don't wonder you dislike funerals, and would not care to be alone in a room, or a house, with a corpse. I don't blame you for fearing death, but it just shows, my friend, where you really are, as to your soul's state. You know not the fruit and effect of Christ's death. The difference between the end of a believer and an unbeliever is immeasurable. To the one of whom I have written, death was not death, it was "victory" most truly. Now to you, my unsaved reader, death would be an awful calamity. To you it would mean defeat and eternal damnation, for the meaning of God's word, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," may be expressed in two words — two terrible words — death, and damnation. No man that gets into judgment can escape damnation. When God judges, He will do so in righteousness without one whit of grace. Now He is speaking in grace, which reigns through righteousness, and the believing sinner is gifted with eternal life as the fruit of Christ's death.

It is wonderful to think that the death of Jesus, when He is confided in, really delivers the believer from the necessity — I say not the possibility — of death. Let me quote in full the verses in Heb 9:1-28 already alluded to: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation" (Heb 9:27-28). Ponder, my dear reader, the "as" and the "so" in these scriptures. "As" what? As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," — 1:e., that to die and bear God's judgment of sin is the lot of man by nature. "So" what? "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," — 1:e., that Christ has taken on the cross these two consequences of sin, death and judgment. What is the result? The believer is delivered from the common lot of man. The believer in Christ is connected and identified with Christ, who is on the resurrection — the heavenly — side of death and judgment; and inasmuch as Scripture says, "As he is, so are we, in this world," the believer knows now that he has death and judgment behind him at the cross, instead of before him.

It was the knowledge of this that made my sick friend so joyous in the hour of her departure. She thought not of death and judgment, but of Christ and glory, and could truly and happily say, "This is not death, this is victory." She knew the emancipating effect of "the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath

abolished [annulled] death, and hath brought life and immortality [incorruptibility] to light through the gospel" (2Ti 1:9-10). She knew why Jesus became a man — viz., that He might die and deliver others, as it is written, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb 2:14-15).

What a Saviour! what a salvation! what a victory! The devil destroyed, and death annulled; the believer delivered, and brought to know that Christ is his life before God. What could fill the heart that knows this but peace and joy? Well may we triumphantly inquire, "O death, where is thy sting?" It is buried in the bosom of Christ, and we, who believe, shall never taste it or feel it. "O grave, where is thy victory?" It has no reply. Christ has lain in its cold depths, broken its bonds burst its barriers, and now shares His victory with all His own, so we may well shout, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Happy am I to be able to sing, —

"Death and judgment are behind me, Grace and glory are before;

All the billows rolled o'er Jesus, There exhausted all their power."

Reader, which is before you, death or victory?

## 10. "Any Man;" or, "It Means Me."

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"Any Man;" or, "It Means Me."

God's ways of reaching the soul are wondrous and manifold; but as it is by His Word that it is quickened into life, so also by that same Word ever is it that liberty and peace are known. When He begins a work, He always finishes it; though many a year may roll by between the moment when He awakens, and the hour of full deliverance.

I do not mean that this must always necessarily be the case, though, as a fact, it often is so; but it is a sweet thought, that His gracious eye is never for one moment taken off the soul that is the object of His love, and about to be the subject of His saving grace. As to Moses of old He said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows, and I am come to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey;" so now, blessed be His name, does He "see," "know," and "hear" all the groans, sorrows, and tears of an awakened, exercised sinner, and in His own time and way does He love to "deliver." Oftentimes the way of His deliverance is very striking, as perhaps my reader knows.

Some years ago I received one evening a letter from a lady, begging me to call next day to see her servant, who, she stated, was very deaf. The next morning I was wending my way to the house, when I met, in the street, a dear Christian man, a greengrocer. We stopped and had a little talk about the Lord, and then he said, "Oh, doctor, I should so like you to see a young woman I have just parted from. I had gone to her mistress's house with some vegetables, and finding she came from my part of the country, I was led to speak to her about her soul. She is in an awful state of distress, and has been so for over two years. At that time she lived in Berwickshire. God's Spirit was working mightily in her neighbourhood, and many were being converted. One night she attended the preaching of one of the Lord's servants you well know — Mr J. W. S. That evening she was deeply convicted of her sin, and of her lost condition as a sinner before God. Though invited to remain and be spoken with, she left the meeting, and went towards her own house. As she neared it the thought presented itself that just then was the moment when she might be saved, but that if she missed it she might never be. Acting on this she retraced her steps to the preaching-room, but hung about outside the door, fearing to go in and be spoken to. Eventually she went back to her house, without pardon or peace. No sooner had she reached it, than Satan whispered in her ear, that as she had thus acted, all hope of salvation was, for her, for ever gone, — she had missed the day of grace, and the Lord would henceforth have nothing to do with her. This foul lie she believed, and from that moment settled gloom filled her soul, and anguish has been her constant portion, as she regards herself hopelessly and irretrievably lost."

Much interested in this sad case, I said, "Where does she live?"

"With Mrs -, in No. 23 - Street."

"Is she deaf?"

"Yes, very. Why do you ask that?"

"Well," I said, "it is very remarkable; she must be the very person I am just going to visit professionally, as I got a note from her mistress last night."

"The Lord go with you, and give you a word for her anxious troubled heart?" and so saying, my friend passed on his way, and I made for the person in question. The bodily ailment having received due attention, Jane (for such was her name) was leaving the room to follow my instructions, when I recalled her and said, "You are certainly very deaf, Jane, but I fancy not so deaf but that you can hear the voice of Jesus. Have you heard His voice yet?"

She instantly dropped her head on her bosom, and the sad pained look — which almost all the deaf have - deepened into utter gloom as she remained quite speechless.

"You surely do not mean to say that you have come to this time of life, and that the Lord has never yet spoken to you of His love, or called you to come to Him?"

"My doom is fixed," was now her sad reply.

"Your doom is fixed! What do you mean by that? Do you mean that your case is too bad for Christ? that He will not save you?"

"I fear so, sir."

"But why will He not save you? If what you say be true, you are the first sinner I ever met that Jesus would not save. Tell me, did He never call you to come to Him?" To these queries Jane gave no answer; so after waiting a little I said, "I expect the truth is just this: in days gone by He did call you, and you were almost converted, but the devil got you to defer your soul's salvation; and as you did this, he has told you since that your day of grace is over, and that Christ would have nothing more to say to such a wretched good-for-nothing sinner. Now, is not that your case?"

Quite amazed at this unfolding of her history, she exclaimed, "Yes, that's just it; but how could you know that, sir?"

Without telling her the way in which I had thus got to know her history, I merely said, "The blessed Lord often lets His servants know the state of people's souls, that through them He may meet their need. John 2:9 is not recorded without a divine purpose: 'When the governor of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, he knew not whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew).' The Lord tells His servants wondrous secrets for His own glory oftentimes."

Thus saying, I went on: — "How I got to know your state is not the point, Jane, but this — Do you really want to be saved?"

"Indeed, I do, sir; I would give everything to be saved, and know it."

"Well, can you save yourself?"

"No."

"Do you believe that Jesus is able to save you?"

"Yes, I believe He is."

"But is He willing? that's the question." As to this, all was darkness; so, assuring her of His willingness, yea, His fervent desire, to save all who come to Him simply, and trust Him only, I at length said, "Now, if He said in His Word He would receive and bless you, would you believe Him?"

"If I saw it in His Word, I would believe Him?" was her answer.

Looking to the Lord for guidance in His Word to help this poor trembling soul, I took out my little pocket Testament and read to her, 'In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified' (John 7:37-39). Now, Jane, that is plain enough. The only question is, are you really thirsting? Are you really desirous of having Christ as your Saviour and Lord, and of having the thirst of your needy heart met by Him?"

"Indeed, sir, I am thirsting. Oh! if only I could be sure that it meant me."

"Well, look at it yourself;" and I turned the page round that she might see it. "He says, 'If any man thirst.' Who does 'any man' mean?"

There was a moment's pause, and then faith won the day, as she exclaimed, "It means me!" From that moment she knew she was saved. The troubled look departed from her face, and instead thereof it was lit up with the joy of God's salvation.

Some years after this I was preaching the gospel in a town in Berwickshire. After the meeting a young person came and spoke with me, whom at first I did not recognise as my friend Jane. Recalling the foregoing incident, I said playfully, "Well, Jane, is your doom fixed?" "Oh yes, sir 'my doom is fixed;' but fixed with Christ," was her happy answer. And now, my dear reader, what about your soul? Is your doom fixed? How do you stand in relation to Christ? If you are still a careless, unconcerned sinner, what an awful doom is yours! "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psa 9:17).

I pray you let not this doom be yours. If the Spirit of God has awakened you to a sense of your sin, be thankful for it, but do not rest there. Salvation is not in anxiety, but in Christ. Let nothing keep you back from Him. You may have Satan laying to your charge every conceivable sin, but this need not keep you from Christ. Recollect He came "to seek, and to save, that which was lost." As such, you may claim Him as your Saviour this very moment.

How sweetly fall His blessed words on the ear of a wearied, miserable, self-condemned sinner, — "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Thirsty, all you have to do is simply come to Him, trust Him, believe Him, give Him credit for His love, and then drink and live for ever. He gives you eternal life; but more, He gives you also the Holy Spirit, to dwell in you, and lead you unto all truth. When you have received from Him what His love supplies, then "rivers of living water" will flow out. Coming to Him and drinking, they flow in, as you believe. Afterwards they flow out in testimony and service for Him. How simple, and how sweet! In John 3:5, the Lord speaks of a man being "born of water, and of the Spirit." This is the new birth, and the water comes down. In John

4:14, He says, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This is worship; the new life, in the power of the Holy Ghost, rising to its source — God. The water springs up. Here in John 7:1-53 the water flows out in every variety of service to Christ.

Dear reader, who does "any man" mean?

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