

THE WORD OF GOD

What strikes one as the great witness of the Scriptures being the Word of the living God, is the one great voice that is speaking all through them in powerful moral accents. It is clearly from beginning to end the same voice, speaking different things, but never things that are really inconsistent with one another. It is a mighty voice with no uncertain sound, always addressing itself to men. Had sin not come into the world, there might not have been the necessity for this voice to speak, but since the time that man departed from God, this voice has never been silent. This voice will at times address the most solemn questions to man, questions to which man must at some point or other furnish an answer. It may be well to consider the earliest of such questions, which indicated an estrangement of man from God.

The first is that addressed by God to Adam, when the latter had in the sense of shame hidden himself from the voice of the Lord God in the trees of the garden in which God had placed him. It was a very pertinent question "Where art thou?" Nothing could be more strange than that the man that God had just created should be hiding himself from God. It indicated an immense moral revolution in the man. And it was a very poor answer that he could return; he could but give an answer that exposed him. He was afraid, what a change! He had no reason to be, for he had had good proof of the goodness and consideration of God. But when once estrangement from God had come in, sin made rapid progress, and we soon come to another question that God had to address to man, not indeed to the same man, but to his immediate descendant. Here the question is of a different character, "What hast thou done?" Cain was not in the garden, nor could he hide himself amid the trees of the garden; perhaps he had no mind to do so, for he was a man of violence. The only true answer that he could have returned was, 'I have hated my brother, and murdered him.'

How sad that there should have been the necessity for these questions to come in. But they have come in and everyone is concerned to find an answer to them. My object is to point out the only satisfactory answer that can be found.

If we might suppose for a moment these questions being addressed to the younger son in the parable of Luke 15, they would have been sufficiently pertinent, and what answers could he have given? To the first he must have said, 'I have come into the far country that I may be out of reach of my father so that I may do my own will.' And to the second, 'I have wasted the goods that my father gave me in riotous living.' No other answers were possible for him, and these would have been self-condemnatory. And the truth is that every man will have to find an answer to these questions, and his answer cannot ever be other than such as will condemn himself. Nothing can be more certain than that man is well content to be in darkness and ignorance of God, and to use the means and opportunities that God has given him, not for the praise of God, but for his own pleasure and according to his own will.

Now what I would point out, is the answer that God in grace has found for man to these questions, in Christ. In the warning to the serpent, there was an intimation on the part of God that He had in His mind purpose of mercy to the man and woman that He had created. All was bound up with the seed of the woman. And in due time, the seed of the woman appeared, who was found to be the Son of God, and He was manifested to undo the works of the devil. Man was to find in Him the answer to the two solemn questions in which he was concerned. The truth is that in Christ, God came out of His place to seek man in his distance from God, so that He might find him, and not only so, but that an answer might be found in redemption to all that lay on man. The two issues that God had raised with man were thus to find a perfect solution in Christ, the Son of God. Christ entered in spirit into the sense of man's distance from God, and suffered all that that distance entailed, becoming thus the propitiation for our sins. This was the way in which God intervened in grace on man's behalf. And now, as the answer to it, Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, the witness that the work of offering is done, and He is there as the Head of every man, so as to be available to every man.

He has accomplished redemption, so that every right of God has been discharged and, through redemption, man may receive remission of sins. Such is the position of Christ at the

present moment, and the testimony is going out to all the world to show men that God has furnished answers to the questions that at the outset He had put. But if God has furnished the answers, it remains for each one to find the answers in their application to himself. The questions are there whether one has found the answers or not, but there are no answers apart from Christ, and it is a great point when we have come to God, having found them in Christ. Of necessity we must have the answer to the second question first, for there can be no change of place for us till we have remission of sins, the blessed answer to the question, 'What hast thou done?' This is received through the gospel, it is made known in the gospel as the mind of God in regard to all; and if a man believes the testimony of Christ, he turns by it to God and finds that he is without his sins in the sight of God, he has remission of sins. And now, being with God, he has a perfect answer to the question 'Where art thou?'

In all this we see the blessed way in which God has come out in grace to meet the questions which, if man had had to answer, he could only have answered to his own condemnation. It is in the apprehension of this that we confess Christ as Lord, and so come into the reality of salvation; we desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby unto salvation, having tasted that the Lord is gracious. We find that God has not only provided righteousness, but that He is our Saviour, to deliver our souls from all the entanglements in which sin has bound us.

May God lead us into the great reality of that grace that brings salvation to all men.

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1837–1903