

# ***THE PRESENT TRUTH***

*Bishop Stephen D. Lewis*

## **Christ the Way of Life**

"Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

Repentance is associated with faith, and is urged in the gospel as essential to salvation. Paul preached repentance. He said, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." There is no salvation without repentance. No impenitent sinner can believe with his heart unto righteousness. Repentance is described by Paul as a godly sorrow for sin, that "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." This repentance has in it nothing of the nature of merit, but it prepares the heart for the acceptance of Christ as the only Saviour, the only hope of the lost sinner.

As the sinner looks to the law, his guilt is made plain to him, and pressed home to his conscience, and he is condemned. His only comfort and hope is found in looking to the cross of Calvary. As he ventures upon the promises, taking God at his word, relief and peace come to his soul. He cries, "Lord, thou hast promised to save all who come unto thee in the name of thy Son. I am a lost, helpless, hopeless soul. Lord, save, or I perish." His faith lays hold on Christ, and he is justified before God.

But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.

James writes of Abraham and says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." In order for man to be justified by faith, faith must reach a point where it will control the affections and impulses of the heart; and it is by obedience that faith itself is made perfect.

Without the grace of Christ, the sinner is in a hopeless condition; nothing can be done for him; but through divine grace, supernatural power is imparted to the man, and works in mind and heart and character. It is through the impartation of the grace of Christ that sin is discerned in its hateful nature, and finally driven from the soul temple. It is through grace that we are brought into fellowship with Christ, to be associated with him in the work of salvation. Faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners; not that there is any virtue in faith whereby salvation is merited, but because faith can lay hold of the merits of Christ, the remedy provided for sin. Faith can present Christ's perfect obedience instead of the sinner's transgression and defection. When the sinner believes that Christ is his personal Saviour, then, according to his unfailing promises, God pardons his sin, and justifies him freely. The repentant soul realizes that his justification comes because Christ, as his substitute and surety, has died for him, in his atonement and righteousness.

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. 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." Righteousness is obedience to the law. The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of his Son to the sinner's account. Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as he loves his Son. This is how faith is accounted righteousness; and the pardoned soul goes on from grace to grace, from light to a greater light. He can say with rejoicing, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Again: it is written, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Jesus declared, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom

of God." It is not a low standard that is placed before us; for we are to become the children of God. We are to be saved as individuals; and in the day of test and trial we shall be able to discern between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. We are saved as individual believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many are losing the right way, in consequence of thinking that they must climb to heaven, that they must do something to merit the favor of God. They seek to make themselves better by their own unaided efforts. This they can never accomplish. Christ has made the way by dying our sacrifice, by living our example, by becoming our great high-priest. He declares, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." If by any effort of our own we could advance one step toward the ladder, the words of Christ would not be true. But when we accept Christ, good works will appear as fruitful evidence that we are in the way of life, that Christ is our way, and that we are treading the true path that leads to heaven. {Review and Herald, November 4, 1890}

### **The Trial of Our Faith**

In this time of trial we need to be encouraged and comforted by one another. The temptations of Satan are greater now than ever before, for he knows that his time is short, and that very soon every case will be decided, either for life or for death. It is no time now to sink down beneath discouragement and trial; we must bear up under all our afflictions, and trust wholly in the Almighty God of Jacob. The Lord has shown me that His grace is sufficient for all our trials; and although they are greater than ever before, yet if we trust wholly in God, we can overcome every temptation, and through His grace come off victorious. If we overcome our trials, and get victory over the temptations of Satan, then we endure the trial of our faith, which is more precious than gold, and are stronger and better prepared to meet the next. But if we sink down and give way to the temptations of Satan, we shall grow weaker and get no reward for the trial, and shall not be so well prepared for the next. In this way we shall grow weaker and weaker, until we are led captive by Satan at his will.

We must have on the whole armor of God, and be ready at any moment for a conflict with the powers of darkness. When temptations and trials rush in upon us, let us go to God, and agonize with Him in prayer. He will not turn us away empty, but will give us grace and strength to overcome, and to break the power of the enemy. Oh, that all could see these things in their true light, and endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus! Then would Israel move forward, strong in God, and in the power of His might. God has shown me that He gave His people a bitter cup to drink, to purify and cleanse them. It is a bitter draft, and they can make it still more bitter by murmuring, complaining, and repining. But those who receive it thus must have another draft, for the first does not have its designed effect upon the heart. And if the second does not effect the work, then they must have another, and another, until it does have its designed effect, or they will be left filthy, impure in heart. I saw that this bitter cup can be sweetened by patience, endurance, and prayer, and that it will have its designed effect upon the hearts of those who thus receive it, and God will be honored and glorified.

It is no small thing to be a Christian, and to be owned and approved of God. The Lord has shown me some who profess the present truth, whose lives do not correspond with their profession. They have the standard of piety altogether too low, and they come far short of Bible holiness. Some engage in vain and unbecoming conversation, and others give way to the risings of self. We must not expect to please ourselves, live and act like the world, have its pleasures, and enjoy the company of those who are of the world, and reign with Christ in glory. We must be partakers of Christ's sufferings here, if we would share in His glory hereafter. If we seek our own interest, how we can best please ourselves, instead of seeking to please God and advance His precious, suffering cause, we shall dishonor God and the holy cause we profess to love. We have but a little space of time left in which to work for God. Nothing should be too dear to sacrifice for the salvation of the scattered and torn flock of Jesus. Those who make a covenant with God by sacrifice now, will soon be gathered home to share a rich reward, and possess the new kingdom forever and ever.

Oh, let us live wholly for the Lord, and show by a well-ordered life and godly conversation that we have been with Jesus, and are His meek and lowly followers. We must work while the day lasts, for when the dark night of trouble and anguish comes, it will be too late to work for God. Jesus is in His holy temple, and will now accept our sacrifices, our prayers, and our confessions of faults and sins, and will pardon all the transgressions of Israel, that they may be blotted out before He leaves the sanctuary. When Jesus leaves the sanctuary, then they who are holy and righteous, will be holy and righteous still; for all their sins will then be blotted out, and they will be sealed with the seal of the living God. But those that are unjust and filthy, will be unjust and filthy still; for then there will be no priest in the sanctuary to offer their sacrifices, their confessions, and their prayers before the Father's throne. Therefore what is done to rescue souls from the coming storm of wrath, must be done before Jesus leaves the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary.

{Christian Experience and Teachings Pg. 103- 105}

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