

23 – The Fruits of Grace

The Present Truth : December 23, 1897

Our last lesson, Hebrews 6.1-6, showed that the unpardonable sin is the sin that is not repented of, or, rather, the sin of willfully rejecting the grace that brings salvation.

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men.” Matthew 12.31

Sin against the Holy Spirit

It was through the eternal Spirit “that Christ offered Himself.” Hebrews 9.14. The rejection of the Holy Spirit is the rejection of the means of salvation, which the Holy Spirit provides. Now “whosoever will” may be saved. “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.” John 3.16. There is no sin that man can possibly commit for which there is not forgiveness, for “with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.” Psalm 130.7. But if a man will not be forgiven, if he does despite to the Spirit of grace, how can there be salvation for him? Will you say, “Is not God able to provide other means?” If you do, you impeach His goodness, by implying that His present salvation is deficient—that He has not done all that He could. But He has given *Himself*, and that is all that there is to give; it is enough, and none need reproach God because there is no salvation for those who will not be saved; no life for those who reject the Author of life.

Bear in mind that the text speaks of those whom it is impossible to renew again unto repentance, and not of those who repent but cannot find salvation. The fault, therefore, is not with God, but with the ones who resist all His gracious efforts to renew them. For note further that the very text implies the utmost effort on the part of God, for it says, “it is impossible, . . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.” But if the utmost effort were not put forth, it could not be said that it is impossible. So the text before us teaches us, contrary to what many think, that God never remits His efforts to save men. Here then is hope for the sinner. Do you wish to be saved?—“Yes.” Well, God is most anxious for you to be saved; now if you are willing and anxious, and He is also willing and anxious, what can hinder it, He has all power?

An Illustration

So we continue our reading in the same line:—

“For the earth which drinks in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God; but that

which bears thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.” Hebrews 6.7, 8

The bringing forth of fruit by the earth is used by the Lord as an illustration of the bearing of the fruits of righteousness by men. “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth.” Isaiah 55.10, 11. “For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.” Isaiah 61.11

Again we read: “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how.” Mark 4.26, 27. But it is the rain from heaven, that causes the earth to bring forth and bud; therefore the rain that falls on the earth is a visible representation of the grace and righteousness that God rains upon men. Thus we read: “Drop down ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together.” Isaiah 45.8

On the Just and on the Unjust

Let us now see how it is with the rain upon the earth. God said to Job: “Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; to cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, where there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?” Job 38.25-27. God’s rain is like His grace; indeed, it is His grace, for Christ refers to it to show His kindness and forgiveness: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and unjust.” Matthew 5.44, 45. God sends rain upon the wicked man’s farm, as well as the garden of the saint; yea, He sends rain on the desert, on the barren rocks, and on the sea. He is not sparing of His gifts. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Romans 5.20

Just as the rain comes for the purpose of causing the earth to bring forth fruit, and it falls not only on the soft, rich soil, but on the hard, barren, desolate places, so with God’s grace that brings salvation. The barren soil, or the soil that brings forth only thorns and thistles cannot plead as an excuse that it does not receive any encouragement in the shape of moisture. So in the text before us, Hebrews 6.7, 8, the rain is represented as falling oft upon both the earth that is fruitful and upon that which brings forth thorns and thistles. The earth, which drinks in the rain that cometh oft upon it “receives blessing of God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected.” It receives the grace of God in vain. So we see that even those texts, which men so

naturally use to prove that God has laid some hindrance in the way of their salvation, are full of encouragement.

It is all mercy that comes from God. Yes, but the Bible says, that He hath “mercy on whomever He will have mercy, and whomever He will He hardens.” Very true; but we need to read the connection. Go back a few verses: “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion. So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.” Romans 9.14-18

Pharaoh’s Hard Heart

Can you not see that it is all mercy and compassion? He does not say that He will have mercy on whomever He will have mercy, and that He will withhold it from whomever He will withhold it. No; but it is mercy and compassion. But then, how about the hardening? Why, that comes simply from mercy rejected. When the plagues were on Pharaoh he said, “I have sinned,” and promised to obey the Lord, and let Israel go; but as soon as God took away the plague, his heart was hardened. There are some folks who look upon kindness and favor as an indication of weakness. When God took away the plagues, Pharaoh looked upon it as an evidence that God was giving way, and that he was prevailing, and so he presumed upon God's mercy. The same sunshine has both a softening and a hardening, effect. The rain that falls upon some soil makes it soft for the plough, while the same rain makes other soil hard and stiff.

“But the earth is not to blame for that.” No, of course not, for the earth is inanimate, and so is not an absolutely perfect illustration of man, who is endowed with the power to reason and to will. Man is to blame if he receives the gifts of God in vain. The rain of grace falls constantly. “Showers of blessing” the Lord gives. If the soul drinks it in, the fruits of righteousness will be brought forth, for they are the fruits meet for Him by whom it is dressed. If, in spite of God’s ever-flowing mercy, the soul remains obdurate, despising the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing nor caring that this goodness is to bring it to repentance, it heaps up to itself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. See Romans 2.4, 5. But God will be clear when He judges.

“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” Hebrews 6.9, 10

“It is God which works in you, both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2.13), yet He gives the soul credit for the work which it allows God to accomplish in it just as though it was spontaneous. There is nothing without God, yet He says, “For the earth brings forth fruit of itself.” Mark 4.28. He counts it to the credit of the earth just as though it had done it all. So when we yield to the influence of His Spirit, and the fruits of the Spirit appear, God counts it to us just as though we ourselves had originated it; for He endows us with His own Divine nature, and calls it our own. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” “Praise the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endures for ever.”

**“There’s a wideness in God’s mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There’s a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.**

**“If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord.”**