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BEHOLD THE MAN

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.”—1 Peter 2:24

1. MY SOUL, there is sin upon thee. Nay, it is not only upon thee, but in thee and about thee. It is a part of thyself. It does not merely grow upon thee, as the moss grows upon the rock, nor rest upon thee as the dust rests upon the summer flower, nor float above thee as the smoke floats above yon city. It is in thee. It is in thy inmost part. It fills thee as the water fills yon well. It soaks into thee as the rain into the soil. It oozes out of thee as the water from the fountain. It has gone through and through thee as the salt pervades the ocean in all its depth, or as the mud and filth of earth go through and stain yon river, making it, as it rolls along, a mass of discolored deformity. There is no part of thee clean or holy. What good thing canst thou do, or speak, or think, or feel? The things which are right and good in their own nature, such as alms-deeds and self-denying labors, become evil when done by thee. Thy hand defileth all that it toucheth. thy very prayers are so full of sin that they would be sufficient to condemn thee.

2. MY SOUL, keep in mind that sin is a real thing. Few in this sad world think so, even when they write or speak the word. It is but an idea to them—a dim image—the shadow of a cloud passing lightly over a sunny earth; no more. Yet it is real—terribly real—having about it nothing of the shadow save its darkness. If sin be not real, why is sorrow so real? Why are disease and pain so real? If sin be not real, why so many weeping eyes, so many heavy spirits, so many broken hearts? If sin be not real, why is death so real, why is the churchyard so full, and why do so many mourners go about the streets? If sin is not real, what becomes of the Law, what is the meaning of the Cross, and what is the use of a Judgment Day? If sin be not real, then why does God hate it; and why is heaven only for the holy and hell only for the unholy? Or why is there such an endless heaven and such an eternal hell?

3. MY SOUL, sin is no jest, no trifle, no mere slight disease, which a little time, or a little prayer, or a little repentance can cure, making it as though it had never been. It is a sore evil. The God who knows what it is has said, “The soul that sinneth it shall DIE.” Sin and death are linked together, like night and darkness; like root and stem; like fountain head and stream. They cannot be torn asunder. The misery of this world, during these six thousand years of its heavy history, tells how sore an evil sin is, and how little disposed God is to trifle with it. The Cross of Christ, to which sin was nailed, tells the same. Hereafter, the everlasting burnings will make the same report. Sin is a sore evil, and the lost sinner’s eternity will show how sore it is.

4. MY SOUL, thou darest not trifle with sin; nor call anything slight that has the faintest hue of sin upon it. The smallest sin brings wrath upon its doer. What could seem more venial¹ than plucking and eating fruit from a tree in one’s own garden? It is the more venial sin of all the sins which Scripture relates. Yet what anger from God did that venial sin draw down? How God hated it! For that one sin, which we should have said was not deadly, but very slight, God cast our first parents out of Paradise. And, my soul, must not thy smallest sin, whether of thought or word or deed, deserve that same wrath that thrust Adam out of the happy garden? That one sin of Eve, brought pain and disease and sorrow and death into the world, filling all earth to this day with evils, too many, and too sore, and too terrible, to be told. And, my soul, wilt thou make excuses for thyself, and palliate² thy vain thoughts or words by speaking of any sin as small? If the smallest sin drove Adam out of Paradise and poured such curses over the earth, why wilt thou deceive thy conscience and blind thine eyes by trying to make sin appear less than it really is, or less than God has shown it to be? Have any of thy sins been less than Eve’s? If not, then the smallest of thy sins will cast thee out of God’s presence as truly as the greatest. Of what use then can it be to speak of small and great sins, when God has showed thee that the smallest deserves His curse?

5. MY SOUL, the great God that made thee has said to thee, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength.” If then thou dost not love Him perfectly every moment of thy life, thou sinnest. Not to love Him with thy whole heart is sin. However amiable and kind and gentle thou mayest be to others, yet all this will not lessen, nay it will increase, the sin of not loving God with thy whole strength. What then can thy good works profit thee, if at the time when thou art doing them, thou art not loving the Lord with thy whole heart? What goodness can there be in thy prayers, thy repentances, thy tears, thy fasts, when all the time that

¹ **venial** – easily excused or forgiven; pardonable.

² **palliate** – to make less severe or intense, to mitigate.

thou art praying and repenting and weeping and fasting, thou art not loving the Lord with all thy strength? What shouldest thou think of one of thy servants, who, when charged with disobedience to thee, should answer that he was kind to his fellow servants, or should try to make thee forgive him and think well of him by speaking good words to thee, and doing thee fair outward service, when he was, all the time, not loving thee nor reverencing thee as a servant ought? O my soul, think of the sin of not loving thy God perfectly, and do not think of palliating it, nor of trying to make up for it by doings and penances, which are themselves so poor and imperfect, that they need pardon as truly as any of thy worst sins. Reason thus with thyself, my soul, "Can one sin get pardon for another sin? Can one evil make up for another? Can our poor prayers, in which so much is unholy, compensate for our want of love? Or can our feeble love to our fellow men, in which so much is selfish, atone for our want of love to God? Can one debt pay for another? Can today's obedience blot out yesterday's rebellion? Can the gay flowers upon the tomb empty the grave beneath of its corruption? Can the calm of today's ocean undo the havoc of last night's storm?" Reason thus with thyself, O my soul, and learn the folly of thinking by any doings or feelings of thine own to make up for past want of love to the infinitely lovable, and blessed God.

6. MY SOUL, remember that God cannot alter His law; and least of all will He alter it, because thou hast broken it. Do not soothe thyself asleep by thinking that God will make His law less strict for Adam's fallen children than for Adam himself. That would be to say that the law was too strict, and therefore not right and just. Now we know that the law is holy, and just and good (Rom 7:12). It does not need to be changed; nay it cannot be changed in a single jot; for a change would make it not holy, and not just, and not good. The law must always be what it is, just as God must be always what He is. It cannot change in itself, and it cannot change in the punishments which it threatens. It is unalterable and inexorable.³ Its ear is deaf to the cry of the sinner.

7. MY SOUL, if thou thinkest to save thyself by keeping the law, then remember that the whole law must be kept in every part and at all times, without ceasing or failing. Thou must so keep the whole law as to cease from sin, in deed, and thought, and word. Thou must cease to be a sinner before thou canst be saved. Thy love must be perfect love, and thy life must be a perfect life, else the law can do nothing for thee. Thy thoughts must be perfectly holy, thy doings must be perfectly holy, thy feelings must be perfectly holy, thy words must be perfectly holy; for if not, the law can be of no use to thee; it must condemn thee. For the Maker of the law has said, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal 3:10). If thou art guilty in one point, thou art guilty of all (Jam 2:10). If thou sinnest one sin, thou must be lost. If thou thinkest one bad thought, or speakest one idle word, or takest one wrong step, thou art undone. The law cannot help thee. It can only pronounce an eternal curse upon thee. Be wise then, O my soul, and do not think to be saved by the law. It will prove an enemy, not a friend. It will desert thee in the great day of reckoning, and hand thee over to the Judge.

8. MY SOUL, perhaps thou thinkest that thy good deeds are very good, and that thy bad deeds are not so very bad, but that thy good deeds may make up for them. Thou thinkest that thy bad deeds are like the rough brown soil, and that thy good deeds are like the grass and flowers which spring up and cover its uncomeliness. But if thy bad deeds are still there, of what use is it to cover them? God can see through all the flowers and verdure of thy good deeds, and mark the evil that is beneath. No, my soul, thy bad deeds are like the ocean, and thy good deeds, if thou hast any, are like the little fresh stream that flows into it. Can that little stream make these salt waters sweet, or turn the ocean into a fresh, calm, clear lake? No! All the rivers of earth have been flowing into it for thousands of years and it is as salt as ever. So all thy good deeds though carried on for a thousand years, would be of no use to get a pardon for thee, or to turn away God's anger against sin, or to make thee an heir of His holy kingdom, a citizen of His holy city.

9. MY SOUL, dost thou think it would not be fair in God to pay no respect to thy good deeds? Dost thou say, it would not be right in God to lay such stress upon my evil deeds, and to lay no stress upon my good ones? Is it thus that thou arguest with thy Maker, and disputest with the great Lawgiver of heaven and earth? Art thou a better judge of what is good and what is evil than He? Is it not right in Him to hate all sin, even the smallest? Is it not right in Him to tell thee that a good deed cannot get pardon for a bad one? Is it not right in Him to tell thee that there is so much of evil in thy best doings that He cannot accept them, or call them really good—far less make them to stand as payment for what is bad?

10. MY SOUL, dost thou think that God sells heaven? Does He sell pardon? Does He sell Paradise? Does He sell eternal life? If so, what are the terms and conditions of sale? What is the price? Above all, what is the lowest price at which He will sell it? thou must make sure to ascertain that; for depend upon it, according to the usual rate of purchases, such a thing as pardon, and such a place as heaven, are far beyond thy means. Thou hast not money enough, nor merit enough to buy such things as these. Were God to offer to sell thee the faintest star that sparkles in yon blue heaven, couldst thou buy it? If not, how canst thou think to buy heaven itself, with its ten thousand times ten thousand stars? What thinkest thou, would be the lowest price at which thou couldst buy a star? Would a little gold and silver do it? Would a few tears and sighs do it? would a few prayers and groans do it? If not, wilt thou presume to offer these to thy God as the purchase-money of His glorious heaven? Go to thy fellow men with thy tears and prayers, and ask them to sell thee an acre of solid land for them: Will they take thy money? Will they be satisfied with such a price? And wilt thou offer to thy God what thou knowest would be rejected by thy fellow men as the price of a poor piece of earth's dark soil? O pride, beyond all prides, to think that God would sell heaven? O presumption, beyond all presumptions, to suppose that thou canst buy such a heaven as His, for a few sighs, and tears, and prayers!

³ **inexorable** – not capable of being persuaded by entreaty; unyielding.

11. MY SOUL, has God any where offered to sell thee heaven at a price? Has He set it up for sale? Where has He told that He will take a price for it? For if He has not offered it for sale, is it not strange that a sinner should think of offering to buy it? Is it like God to set up His blessings for sale? Does He sell the rain and sunshine? Hast thou to buy from Him the water of the brook or the air of heaven, or the dew of morning? No, my soul, man sells, but God gives. He takes no money for His blessings, even from sinners. He gives freely and largely. He does not wait for a price. He makes His sun to shine and His rain to fall upon the unthankful and the unworthy. And if He will not sell His sunshine, will He sell His love? If He will not sell the water of earth's streams, will He sell the living water that springs up into everlasting life? If one drop of dew be too costly for us to buy from Him, is His heaven so cheap and His paradise so poor, that we can buy them at His hands?

12. MY SOUL, did the Son of God take flesh and become a man, in order to destroy the law or to fulfill it? Did He come to lower its demands? Did He come to make it less strict, so that the sinner might keep it and be saved by keeping it? No; He came not to destroy but to fulfill it (Mat 5:17). Yea, He has told thee that sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than one jot or tittle of that holy law shall fail. He came not to lower it or weaken it or alter it; but to fulfill it in every part. He came to keep that law, and by keeping it Himself, to show how holy and just and good it is. He came to keep it, and by keeping it to honor it, and by honoring it Himself to show it ought to be honored, and to tell us that it cannot be changed. If the law had asked more of man than was right, then Christ, who was a man, would not have kept it. But Christ by His keeping it, showed what a good and true, and blessed, and perfect law it was, for a man, for a son of Adam.

13. MY SOUL, think with thyself why did the Son of God come down to keep the law? Why was He who was above the law made under the law (Gal 4:4)? Why did the maker of the law so strictly keep the law? To show that it must be kept. If it could have been relaxed it would have been so in His case. If its requirements could have been abated at all, they would have been abated in Him. But even to Him they remained the same. The law was inexorable, even when He who had to do with it was the only begotten of the Father. The King's Son must keep the law to the full, if He once come under it! For the law makes no difference. The law is both blind and deaf. It is blind, for it does not see who it is that it speaks to; but treats all alike. It is deaf, for it hears no excuses, but delivers the same awful demands of perfect obedience to every one with whom it has to do. Christ's keeping the law, in every jot and tittle, shows that it is altogether unchangeable. It did not relax in the case of God's holy Son; be sure then that it will not relax to thee a sinner.

14. MY SOUL, that report which is brought to thee in the gospel is not about the law being changed and lowered to meet thy case as a feeble sinner, but about the law being obeyed and fulfilled. It would not be good news for thee that law had been lowered so as to suit thee; for then thy salvation would not be sure, inasmuch as it would not be righteous (Rom 2:5ff). The sure salvation must be a righteous salvation; and a righteous salvation cannot come from a dishonored law. To patch up a salvation out of a lowered, that is to say, a half-kept law, would satisfy neither man nor God. The only salvation that will last or stand firm is a salvation built upon a fulfilled, a fully kept, an unchanged and honored law. My soul, turn away from the false prophet that would tell thee that the law's claims have been modified. Say at once, that cannot be; and if it were, it would be no good news, for it would seem to say that the law had been broken, and justice set aside in order to save thee; nay, it would seem to say that God Himself had become unholy; and if a holy God be terrible to a sinner, how much more an unholy God! Infinite righteousness is dreadful; but infinite unrighteousness is terrific beyond conception.

15. MY SOUL, the true report which God has caused to be spread abroad throughout the world, is that His own Son, in our flesh, has fulfilled the law! He was made under the law, not that He might modify it, but that He might fulfill it. This is the good news that God has sent to thee, "Jesus, My Son has kept the law." This fulfilling of the law by the only begotten of the Father, lies at the very root of our everlasting life (Joh 3:16). Meditate then, my soul, on Jesus as the fulfiller of the law. He has magnified it and made it honorable by His divine obedience to it; for never before had it got divine obedience; never before had it been so perfectly, so gloriously obeyed. And so Christ is the end of the law, for *righteousness* to the sinner (Rom 10:4).

16. Nor, MY SOUL, has thy Savior only obeyed the law. He has suffered it too. The chastisement which it inflicts upon the transgressor was laid on Him. It smote Him with the smiting with which it smites the guilty. He became answerable to that law for all its claims against the sinner. He took its curse upon Him, for it is written "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He took the wrath of the lawgiver upon Him, for He says, "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me." He took its pains upon him, for we read, that Christ "has suffered the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." He took our sin upon him, for it is written, that He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Yes, my soul, He hath borne our griefs, He hath carried our sorrows. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He, His own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree. (See Gal 3:13; Psa 88:7; 1Pe 3:18; 2Co 5:21; 1Pe 3:24.)

17. Look, MY SOUL, at yon Cross. What seest thou? A dying man. But who is that dying man! It is the Prince of life. It is He who has life in Himself. Why then does He die? He dies because thou shouldest have died. He dies to prevent thee from dying; nay, to give thee life. His death is the sinner's life; and without that death there could have been no life to the dead in sin. For the law needed to be satisfied with a true life. That life must be either ours or another's in our stead. If the life of that other satisfies the law, then thou dost not need to die. And, my soul, that true life which has been given to the law, and with which the law has dealt, as with the life of the guilty, has sufficed instead of thine. For it is to the very fountain of life that law has gone to get its satisfaction. The life of the Prince of life has been given and accepted instead of thine (Act 3:15).

18. Look again, MY SOUL, at yonder Cross. Who is that dying sufferer? Is He not guilty? No, He is the only one on earth that is not guilty. He is the *Just One* (Act 3:14). That bleeding head is the head of the Just One. That much-marred face is the face of the Just One. These torn hands are the hands of the Just One. These pierced feet are the feet of the Just One. It is from the lips of the Just One that there comes forth the bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (Mar 15:34) Yes, my soul, it is the Just One that hangs on that Cross, because He has taken the place of the unjust. He has been made sin for us, though He knew no sin. Jehovah has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He took all our sins and carried them up to that Cross, that there He might bear the whole wrath which was due to them. He had become answerable for the sinner; and for that reason was He led to the place of shame, where the sinner should have been, that He might suffer all that the sinner should have suffered. Behold then the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (Joh 1:29)!

19. But look again, MY SOUL, at that Cross; and, as thou lookest, hear the loud cry, "It is finished." The great work is done! The sacrifice has been offered up. The blood has been shed, the ransom has been paid. He has finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. There is no more needed to be done for the putting away of sin. All the doing and the suffering that was needed, or that ever can be needed, was done and suffered, then and there, upon yon Cross. Henceforth, it is not doing or suffering that is required of the sinner for pardon, but taking the benefit of what another has done and suffered. Christ has done enough, and He who knows this has peace with God. If then, my soul, thou hast not this peace, it must be because thou thinkest that Christ has not done enough, but has left something for thee to do, in order to complete the peace which He began. Meditate then, again and again, upon that sufficiency of the divine Sin-bearer's work upon the Cross; bring before thee all the Father's testimonies to that sufficiency, and see if thou canst hinder peace from springing up within thy soul. Is it possible, my soul, that thou canst read aright the inscription on that Cross, and understand the meaning of the last cry uttered on it, and yet not have peace with God?

20. MY SOUL, dost thou not know that Christ has made peace through the blood of His Cross? The blood is the pacifying thing, for it tells us of the ransom found, of the debt paid, of God propitiated. Nothing save blood can expiate,⁴ or reconcile, or bring nigh. It has secured all these, so that they are no longer doubtful. It has done that which, when once understood, makes the conscience feel that there is no longer any necessity either for God keeping aloof from us or for us keeping aloof from God. That which the blood has done, enables God and the sinner to meet in peace. Everything needful for the sinner's obtaining peace was done when the blood was shed upon the Cross. And thy peace, O my soul, is the simple result of thy recognizing the efficacy of the shed blood. To receive God's testimony to its meaning and its value, is to find peace with Him. The bloodshedding was the peace-making; and Jesus is the Peacemaker, not simply because He took our flesh, but because He shed His blood. My soul, learn how it is that He is the Peacemaker; learn the infinite pacification which the bloodshedding implies, and thou canst not say, There is not peace for me.

21. MY SOUL, why did the Son of God cry out upon the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was not the sharpness of the pain, but the weight of the dreadful curse. The martyrs died in joy, singing praises. Jesus dies in sorrow, crying out in His agony. Ah, surely then, it was not as our example that He died. It was not to show us how to endure death's pangs, or to pass through the dark valley. Had it been so, He would have died praising, as did the joyful martyrs. But He dies in anguish because the wrath of God that should have come on us, was coming down on Him. That sad cry of woe from the lips of one who never complained before, shows that He was then atoning for sin. That cry proclaimed *atonement*. It showed that the fire was coming down upon the altar to consume the Lamb, on whom our sins were laid.

22. Yes, MY SOUL, it is as the *Substitute* that the Son of God dies upon that Cross. He is giving HIMSELF for the sinner. Jehovah is making His soul an offering for sin. The Father is not sparing Him, that He might spare thee. He is delivering him up that He might not deliver thee. In life He did what we ought to have done, but did not. In death He suffers what we should have suffered, but could not, except by being lost forever! In life and in death He is the substitute. From the manger to the tomb He stood in our stead; meeting every claim against us that law could present, and so shutting the mouth of law forever, leaving it not one tittle to bring against us, nor one word to utter in our condemnation. On the Cross He finished the sin-bearing work, leaving no part of it for us to do, making it so complete that nothing is needed for the worst transgressor upon earth, but just to enter into the enjoyment of what the great substitute has done. See, my soul, how completely He has done His work, and in seeing this, let every doubt vanish. For to see the perfection of His sin-bearing work, is to see that every thing which has caused, or which can cause, a fear or a doubt to thee, has been taken out of the way.

23. MY SOUL, this great sacrifice of the Son of God stands alone. It is not one star in a sky where there sparkle a thousand others. It is a star which shines alone. It is not one flower amid a thousand. It is the rose of Sharon which grows alone in the Paradise of God. Yes, my soul, the Son of God stands infinitely supreme and alone in His perfection of excellence. His sacrifice too, stands equally alone in its perfection. It cannot be imitated. To do so is to mock it. It cannot be repeated. To attempt this is to deny that the sacrifice upon the Cross was complete. It is one offering, and it can be but once offered. It has been once offered; and it has done its work. Wouldst thou think of offering it again? The debt has been paid in heaven's own gold, and who shall think of repeating the payment in earth's poor coin? The great High Priest has offered the wondrous sacrifice, and who will step into His place and attempt to offer it again? To this agree the words of the Spirit of Truth, Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many (Heb

⁴ *expiate* – to atone for; to extinguish the guilt of a crime.

9:28);⁵ and again by one offering He hath perfected forever His consecrated ones. *One offering*, O my soul—think of that. One offering—no more! No second sacrifice, no new oblation; the first is enough. If it is not enough, then the Cross is of no value, and Christ hath died in vain.

24. MY SOUL, that one offering purged our sins; as the Spirit of Truth testifies, saying “Christ by himself purged our sins” (Heb 1:3). It is by this one offering that our consciences are purged from dead works to serve the living God. Our works, before this offering touches the conscience, are dead works. They have no life in them. They are like dead carcasses hanging round us, weighing us down, and hindering all liberty of serving. But the moment that this offering comes into contact with the conscience, then our works like ourselves become alive from the dead. We can give to God nothing but dead works till our consciences are touched with the blood; and, my soul, thou knowest that the living God can accept nothing but living works. A conscience not at ease—not certain as to how it stands with God—but doubtful of His favor and burdened with a sense of unpardoned sin, can do nothing for God. It dreads, distrusts, suspects, stands aloof, but cannot come into His presence—cannot serve or love. An evil conscience is like an evil spirit dwelling in the soul, and till it be perfectly cast out, there can be no religion, no filial confidence, no happy doing of the will of God. The one offering is God’s remedy for all this. The sight of it expels the unclean spirit and gives us a good conscience instead of a troubled one. In looking to that one offering, we find our burden of guilt quietly unloosing itself, and leaving us unburdened. For in that perfect offering—that one oblation upon the Cross—we find all the questionings of conscience fully answered, and that which made us so afraid to draw near and hold intercourse with God completely and forever removed.

25. MY SOUL, does it not seem to thee that Christ has done enough? Art thou entirely satisfied with what He has done? Dost thou see that no more blood needs to be shed, no other sacrifice offered up, but that every thing has been done by God to remove hindrances, to make thy way safe, and to give thee boldness in returning to thy god? Then, draw near! Yes; draw near. Do so with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. Is not the way prepared and consecrated with blood? Then walk along it boldly. Is not the veil rent in twain? Then go in without a fear or doubt. Is not the mercy-seat open to thee so that thou mayest make use of it as a seat of mercy or throne of grace? Then go up to it at once, not with hesitation or uncertainty, but with decision, and alacrity,⁶ and assured confidence; yes, come boldly to the throne of grace, that thou mayest obtain mercy, and find grace to help in thy time of need. Is not Jesus Himself, thy kinsman High Priest, thy compassionate, sympathizing Redeemer, seated on that seat of mercy? Then make thy case known to Him who is bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh, not supposing it possible that He can refuse thee. Is He not truly loving, and has He not said that He will in no wise cast out any coming one? Then do not grieve Him by thy want of confidence; do not treat Him unkindly or ungenerously by approaching Him with less than the full assurance of faith—guilty and unworthy as thou mayest be, and utterly devoid of any good feeling to recommend thee to His love.

26. MY SOUL, is not this great High Priest just such an one as suits thee? Is He not in all respects the very Priest that thou canst go to in order that He may communicate between thee and God? Canst thou find a better? Canst thou get one more suitable or more tenderhearted? Could any earthly priest be half so loving? Were the Apostles more loving than their Master? Was the mother of the Lord more loving than the Lord Himself? When our High Priest was on earth, did not men go straight to Him with their diseases or wants or sins? They spoke to Him face to face, without any priest coming between; and He in like manner spoke to them with His own voice, and looked upon them with His own eyes, without any priest to introduce them to Him. He spake to the poor sinful woman of Sychar and she to Him face to face, when sitting side by side with each other. Even so, my soul, thou needest no mediator but Jesus Himself, no priest but Jesus Himself. Go straight to Him. He only has the ear of the Father. Pass by all others. Speak to Him. Lay thy case before Him; for thou knowest that if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1Jo 2:1), and that, as there is but one God, so there is but one Father between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Let this one Mediator suffice. He is God as well as man, and therefore can hear thy cries and prayers, which no mere man or woman, however holy, can, if they are in heaven and thou on earth. Take this blessed one, this loving one, as thy advocate, thy intercessor thy priestly counselor. Thou wilt need no other. He will suffice.

27. MY SOUL, God’s thoughts center upon His own Son. It was not only once that He declared how well-pleased He is in Him; He is always saying to us the same thing, this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. These thoughts of God about His Son are the real fountain of a sinner’s hope and joy. For, in thinking of His Son, He thinks of the ways in which He may glorify Him and show to all that He is the man whom He delights to honor. The great honor, which he is now putting upon His Son, is the honor that comes from saving such as thou! So that thou canst plead thus in happy confidence with the God to whom thou goest, “honor Thy Son by blessing me—glorify His name by doing for me exceeding abundantly above all I ask or think.” Is not a plea like this, quite in harmony with His thoughts about His Son? Nay, is it not thus that these thoughts get vent to themselves? He finds an outlet to His love for His Son in showering blessings upon us. My soul, let thy thoughts rest where the thoughts of God are resting, and that will satisfy thee and cast out all fear. Think how real and true is the Father’s love to the Son; look up to His well-pleased countenance, and then ask if it be possible that that countenance can frown on those who are at one with Him in their thoughts concerning the Son of His love.

28. MY SOUL, is not the Cross the interpretation of God’s character as the God of all grace? Has God not there unfolded Himself in a way which makes the sinner feel that this is just the very God for him to go to? What interpretation can be put upon God’s

⁵ The Latin Vulgate gives the translation of these words very forcibly, *Christus semel oblatus est ad multorum exhaurienda peccata*, that is to exhaust the sins of many. His offering was the exhaustion of the penalty.

⁶ **alacrity** – cheerful willingness and speediness.

great transaction on the Cross, save that of love and grace? If it does not mean that, what does it mean? Yes, my soul, there is but one construction which can be put upon the wonders of the Cross. GOD IS LOVE. The Cross has no meaning if this be not its inscription. Read that inscription with fully open eye. Take the interpretation which God has thus given of His character. Do not let any interpretation of your own mar this. Look again and again at the Cross, and let this visible interpretation there given of His own character and doings be that which thou respondest to. Accept God's interpretation of His own character; for in doing so, thy fears are laid to rest, and thou enterest into peace with Him through the great propitiation, which, while it proclaims the grace of God, provides a righteous channel through which it may flow to thee.

29. MY SOUL, is not the ground of thy acceptance with God complete? Has Christ left any thing for thee to do in order to be justified? Much has He given thee to do, after thou art justified, for thy whole life is to be a life of labor for Him. But has He not done every thing Himself, upon the Cross, which was needful to justify thee and bring thee into favor with God? He does not say to thee "do this and thou shalt be justified." He says "believe what I have done and thou art from that moment justified." For is it not written, "He that believeth is justified from all things?" And did the Apostle say to the brethren of the Roman Church, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" Rom 4:5)? It is the belief of God's testimony to the completed work of His Son that brings thee salvation at once. It is the knowledge of what Christ did upon the Cross for the putting away of sin, that brings peace to the guilty conscience. To know what He has done as the sin-bearer, is to have peace with God. Nor can there be any other way of getting peace, or obtaining pardon, or of being reconciled to God, but this one way! Thou hast nothing to bring in thy hand, but thy sins; and God takes thee as thou art, and forgives thee on the spot without money and without price.

30. MY SOUL, in justifying thee, God has no respect to thy goodness. All that He has respect to is the goodness of His own Son. All men, whether laden with few or with many sins, stand precisely on the same level in this respect. All sins, great or small, open or secret, before or after baptism, are treated exactly in the same way. There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. My soul, in coming to God thou dost not ask God to have respect to thy goodness or to the goodness of any saint or angel, but only to the goodness of Him in whom He is well pleased. Thou sayest, "Look not on me, but on thy beloved Son; think of what He has done and deserved, and for the sake of His doings and deservings, receive and bless me." For thou seest that Christ Jesus on the Cross has done enough to secure the divine good pleasure for the guiltiest sinner upon earth; and thou restest on the wondrous truth as all thou needest to make thee safe and blessed. If that does not satisfy thee, what will do it? If that which has satisfied God does not relieve thy conscience, and lift off thy burdens, and bring about sure and perfect reconciliation between God and thee, to what quarter canst thou look for help, or to which of the saints canst thou turn?

31. MY SOUL, the Son of God died, not only to justify thee but to make thee sure of being justified. If the knowledge of His atoning work can do any thing for thee, it can do this. It can give thee present assurance of God's favor and present assurance of the pardon of thy sins. To know Christ Jesus as the peacemaker is to have peace with God. To know the sufficiency of His work, and blood, and righteousness, is to have all thy guilty fears laid to rest and thy conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God. Being thus freely forgiven, and knowing that thou art so, how canst thou hold back from serving Him with thy whole strength? They, who are uncertain about His favor may linger and hesitate, but how canst thou? They over whom condemnation still hangs, like a cloud of threatening thunder, may be paralyzed for duty and unfitted for holy work, but surely thou from whom condemnation has been taken away forever, must be nerved with new strength, and invigorated with fresh fervor, and lift up with a boundless gladness, to run in the way of His commandments. They who are not sure whether their chains are broken, may fold their hands in idleness, or perhaps go recklessly on in sin; but thou who hast been so freely forgiven and so infinitely loved, canst not but be in eager haste to serve thy forgiving God and to seek to be holy as He is holy. Terror compels the slave to work, but love constrains the son; and whether is the work of the slave or of the son, the truer or more acceptable to God? Nay, is the slave's forced labor any service at all? It is only the service of love that can be accepted, and when there is no assured pardon, love cannot be found. If thou wouldst be a holy, obedient, laborious, self-denying servant of thy God, thou must learn to realize more and more the sureness of thy acceptance, and the largeness of the love wherewith thy God hath loved thee, in providing for thee such a portion and making thee the heir of such a heaven!

To know that thy God loveth thee, and that He hath freely forgiven all thy sins, is surely the strongest of all motives for serving Him with faithful constancy and zeal. To have the scourge hung over thee, to be kept in doubt as to whether thou wert or couldest be pardoned, to be told that thou canst not be assured of God's favor here—these things may frighten thee into something like service or duty; but then thy religion will be merely outward, not inward and loving; for fear or suspense cannot win the heart. Nay, thy religion will be the mere routine of terrified obedience—the obedience of the lips and limbs, not the loving filial, devoted happy outgoing of the liberated and forgiven soul! To be assured, from His own simple testimony, that whosoever believeth is justified from all things, is the root of all glad service, the beginning of a holy life. Before forgiveness and peace with God, there may be much of what man calls holiness and zeal; but there cannot be any thing of that which God will call by that name or accept as pleasing in His sight; for His desire is to be served not by slaves but by freemen, not by aliens but by sons, not by the unpardoned and the gloomy (can such as these stand in the presence of the King?) but by the forgiven, and the glad, and the blest.

32. MY SOUL, the Son of God not only died, but rose again from the dead. And this is the good news which, like a sweet song of joy and love, should sound hour after hour in thy ears. He is not here, He is risen! His tomb is empty. Death has not been able to hold Him; He has broken the bonds of the grave. It is with a risen Christ that thou hast to do. It is to a risen Christ that the angel points thee. It is to a risen Christ that the Father points thee. It is on a risen Christ that thou art to rest thy faith and love. Does not

His rising show thee how much the Father delights in Him, how truly He is the Beloved Son in whom He is well pleased? Does not His rising show thee that the Father has owned His work and accepted His sacrifice as complete, not needing to be offered up again, nor added to by another sacrifice? Does not His rising show thee that He has paid the debt, that He has purchased pardon, that He has conquered Satan, that He has got dominion over death? Does not His rising show thee that He needs to shed no more blood, to make no second atonement, to enter upon no second work as our suffering Surety? Does not His rising show thee that He is the one Mediator, the one Propitiator, the one Substitute, the one High Priest? For who else can thus die and rise again as Jesus died and rose? Dost thou then, my soul, know Him as the *Risen One*? Hast thou looked into His empty grave and learned from it the way of life and pardon through Him who is the Resurrection and the Life? For to know Him as “the risen One,” is to know Him as the resurrection and the life; and to know Him as the resurrection and the life, is to be assured of life to thyself—life present and life to come.

33. MY SOUL, the Son of God ascendeth on high not less truly than He rose from the dead. Look upwards and see this ascended One! He ascends for thee! The Father has placed Him on His throne because He is the One whom He delights to honor. And how does He honor Him? By making Him the Savior of such as thou. The special honor which the ascended Son of God is now getting is the honor of saving the lost. Fear not then to draw near, as if it would dishonor Christ to lose such a sinner. It is the very thing that honors Him. Do not think it presumption to come in full assurance of faith, as if it were too much for thee to be sure of a kind reception. It is by receiving sinners that He is getting glory; it is by giving them a kind reception that He is carrying on that work which He finished on earth.

Is it possible, then, that from such a gracious Savior thou canst come away unblest? He ever liveth to intercede! Put, then, thy case into His hands, and see how successfully He will carry it through, as the Advocate with the Father. He is a loving intercessor; nor can any be half so loving as He. He needs no one to stir up His love. He is a skillful and mighty advocate, needing no help. He is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them (Heb 7:25).

With such a Savior to deal with, art thou not ashamed of thy doubting? Dost not thou see that thy lack of assurance is thy sin? And dost not see that the way in which thou most truly honorest this risen and ascended Lord, is by giving Him thy entire confidence—the childlike confidence of one who has so learned the fullness of His grace, that thou canst not allow a suspicious thought to pass through thy breast? And is not this blessed confidence the true root of a holy as well as of a joyful life? Having this confidence towards God through Jesus Christ His Son, thou art set free from all His enemies and thine; thy chains are broken, and thy bondage exchanged for liberty; thou canst not but give to Him, in return for His love, the glad love of thy heart and the willing service of thy life.

He makes thee sure of His love—let thy daily walk show how thou returnest love for love, and that there is no labor so great but that thou wilt gladly endure it for Him, and no sacrifice so costly but that thou wilt, with a full heart, render it to him, who loved thee with such a love, as for thy sake to bear the sharpness of the Cross, that thou mightest be made a partaker of the glory to revealed.

