

Christ is Victor

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“True Repentance”

Acts 3:19: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” Such repentance is caused by the Spirit. It is a godly sorrow that leads to new life. 2 Corinthians 7:10: “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” What does this repentance do? It makes us feel we are sinners and that no enduring goodness can come out of us. Most Christians feel they are sinners but not such bad sinners after all. That is not repentance. Peter was telling the people that it was by faith that this man was healed. If you have faith and grow in faith, that is enough for you. At repentance and conversion life begins by faith. But that life is like the life of a little child. It has to be nourished by the mother. 1 Peter 2:2: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.” John 6:63: “The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life.” When a child is born it has life. But as it is fed, it gets more life. By prayer and feeding of the Word more life will come into you. When

you are just converted, your faith is not very strong. Faith is the fitness required to be in the presence of God. How does this robust faith come? You must be sanctified. 1 John 1:7: “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Jesus paid for our sins by the sacrifice on the cross. Our emotions also have to be purified. Our emotions must be balanced. As you study the Word, negative emotions die and positive emotions begin in you. These positive emotions get established in you and begin to play a greater and greater part in your being. You are converted, but do not stop there. You can read good books, but the best book to cleanse you is the Bible. We have such subtle sins detected only when we meditate on the Word of God. 1 John 2:14: “I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.”

John gives us the secret of Christian life. He seems to have enjoyed that perfection

that God gives. John Wesley was one such. The Word of God abides in us when we obey it. All our efforts must be to this end—to obey the Word of God. When you study the Word, you must remember it and obey it. Thus you will be cleansed from all unrighteousness. Finally the Word of God begins to abide in you and you overcome the evil one.

The devil has no power on us when we do the will of God. To be in the will of God is very hard. We may be religious but perfection comes only when we do the full will of God. The devil can attack you only when you miss God’s will. I missed God’s will in certain things and have suffered for that. God sometimes becomes cheap to us when our prayers are being continually answered and people begin to honour us as children of God. This process of cleansing goes on in us until we get a holy heart. Then many a soul will be touched by you. “He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” We must go forward perfecting ourselves in holiness and in the love of God.

—N. Daniel

“Flee delusions to eternal values”

“I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found” (Psalm 37:35-36).

There is an inbuilt mechanism in every man that makes him look at the men around him either to despise them or envy

them; to imitate them or to look askance at them; to flatter them or slander them.

The Spirit of God teaches those who have repented of their sins never to look at the possessions or talents of others, nor to envy them. They neither try to imitate their betters nor look down on people who are not so well placed as themselves.

But there is a question which comes to many people: “If godliness is the key to one’s moral, mental, physical and economic well-being, how does one explain the apparent prosperity of the wicked? Sometimes it even happens, in rare cases, that atheists appear to live long lives.”

Often on the basis of very incomplete

data, men build a glowing mental picture of some man. They may, for instance, see a big house and an expensive car in front of it and immediately conclude that he is a man who is riding on the crest of a gigantic wave of prosperity. You have not drawn the blinds and looked within. When you do get to meet the man, probably you will only see a ghost of a man, a man worn down by worry, harried by financial debts and you may even see fear written clearly in the haunted look in his eyes. So your blown-up image of a very successful man comes down to earth with a crash!

From a superficial observation you may even think, “They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like

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“Flee delusions to eternal values”

other men” (Psalm 73:5).

Yes, you can see such men all around you, they bribe their way out of bureaucratic hold-ups and delays. They spend money freely to obtain official favours. It looks like everybody’s eyes are on them. But God has a totally different view of the matter. God says, “How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors” (Psalm 73:19).

God’s children and the way of faith appears to be terribly slow. Abraham had to wait so long for the promise of God to be fulfilled in him. But even today, the reliability of God’s promise can be seen on the map, in spite of all those who have vowed to push Israel into the sea. Nearly four thousand years after God called Abraham, we still see the unfolding of God’s promise to him.

The world judges a man in terms of transitory gains, but God looks upon a man against the backdrop of eternity. Surely all other estimates of our real worth are totally worthless.

“What am I really like in the sight of God?” should be the question that chiefly occupies our thoughts. “What have I achieved for eternity?” is another vital question. Gathering a little money and strutting over the stage of life, gloating over fields and property, as though you are going to carry them all with you, seems absolutely ludicrous and clownish. Further, I can’t but notice that the richer they get, men have less peace and contentment. Families are rent asunder by riches. I have seen so much misery and sorrow amongst the rich, that I have never desired riches for me or my children.

When the psalmist made the mistake of looking at the superficial joy and apparent prosperity of the wicked and wondered why they had it so good while he seemed to receive chastening every morning, God opened his understanding. Suddenly he saw that their prosperity was not long-lasting, nor their well-favoured looks enduring. Then this new understanding crystallized into these poignant words of the Bible, “Surely thou didst set them in

slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction” (Psalm 73:18).

“How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment” (Psalm 73:19). My father had made it clear to us children that all that he had was the Lord’s. He had earlier given away all his property to the Lord. So when he died, or rather went Home to Heaven, there was hardly any need for a will; neither did he leave one. There was no family get-together over property division, no acrimonious debate over choice, real estate, or investments. Just nothing of the sort at all. What a joy to have had such a father, and what a thrill to walk in his footsteps even as he walked with the Saviour.

The plight of the rich is pathetic. What life-long scars are left behind by their children. Years after their death, their children have little love for each other.

The page of History is replete with the lives of men who rose to towering heights propelled by greed and ambition. When they fell, few tears were shed. But their path to power was strewn with the carcasses of the flower of their nations. At best, they were mass-grave diggers and butchers of those who dared to think differently.

At the designated crossing points into communist Eastern Europe, you never see a guard placed singly—they are always in pairs. [This sermon was produced during the era of Communism in Eastern Europe]. If left alone, they are ever afraid that their guards will jump into some exiting car or van and flee to freedom across their heavily guarded border. So one guard keeps a close check on the other. This chain of suspicion gets stronger as one climbs to the top-most rungs of power. What a miserable and fearful utopia is this!

The pursuit of power and money—I think this tragic trait is deeply embedded in human nature. Men at all levels today seem to act on the feverish compulsion, “Let me make my pile of money quickly.” If future generations will exist on this planet and read of our doings, if they are men of good sense and understanding, they will gasp at the surpassing greed and

short-sightedness of the leaders of our day.

The Bible says, “Envy not the wicked.” Several men say, “Why should we be honest when our bosses are not?” But God will bring you to book one day. When the heavens will roll up as a scroll and the earth and the works that are therein are burned, where will your lovely piece of real estate be?

Dear reader, quit chasing money right now and live with eternity in view. The Lord Jesus will just remove that grumbling, grasping, greasing, envying state of mind from you. In terms of real joy and blessing, He will give you more than heart can wish. What a joy it is to belong to Jesus! Oh, what peace to know that He forgives your sins. Oh, what a thrill to serve Him and to do His will. Dear reader, let Jesus do all this for you. Ask Him now.

—Joshua Daniel

“Different ideas about prayer”

D. L. Moody was a famous nineteenth-century American preacher. Below are examples of answers to prayer he recounted that show the truth of Christ’s words: “Ask and ye shall receive.”

There is a new kind of philosophy nowadays which teaches that it is a very healthy exercise to pray, because it teaches us submission. God doesn’t change in His plans for us; we won’t get anything more by asking, but then just ask—it is healthy exercise!

A mother in New York has lost track of her boy. She is wandering around the streets seeking for him. You know that the boy is dead, but still you tell her to keep on seeking—it is healthy exercise. What downright mockery it is for anyone to talk such stuff as that!

Suppose that in the dead of winter, when the thermometer is down at zero, a man who has been stuck for twenty-four hours in a drift manages to get to my house at midnight, and rings the bell. I go to the window, and say—

“Who is there?”

“Mr. -----, I have been in a snow-bank twenty-four hours, and I am dying. Won’t you help me?”

“Well,” I say, “I have a fixed rule never
“Different...” Continued on page 3

REALITY CHECK!

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins” (1 John 4:10)

“Different ideas about prayer”

to open my door until morning, but you just keep on knocking; it will do you good; it is a healthy exercise.”

That is a fair illustration of the way some people would have us look at prayer. Christ said, “Ask and ye shall receive.”

During the Civil War a man came to me at Nashville, a great big six-footer, and he was shaking all over and crying like a baby. I thought he must have delirium tremens. He pulled out an old, soiled letter and said—

“Chaplain, read that, will you?”

It was a letter from his sister, saying that every night as the sun went down she fell on her knees and prayed God to save her brother. The soldier said—

“Chaplain, I have been in a number of battles, and have been before the cannon’s mouth without trembling a bit;

but the moment I read that letter I began to shake. I suppose that I am the meanest wretch in the whole Cumberland Army.” That sister’s prayers were answered.

I took a copy of the letter and went to another division of the army, thirty miles away. The next day I got up before the men and read it, and told how that man had been saved in answer to the prayers of his sister six hundred miles away. When I closed, a fine-looking man got up and said—

“That letter reminds me of the last letter I got from my mother. She said, ‘My boy, when you get this letter, won’t you go off behind a tree and pray to your mother’s God that you may be converted? Now, my son, won’t you become a Christian?’”

He said he put the letter in his pocket, and expected to pay no more attention

to it, as he thought he would get a good many more letters from her; but a few days later a despatch came saying that his mother was dead. Then he took her advice, and went off behind a tree and cried to his mother’s God; the prayer was answered, and he said—

“This is the first time I have ever confessed Jesus Christ.”

There were two men—one who had a sister pleading six hundred miles away, and the other whose mother had brought him to his knees and into the kingdom of God. My dear friends, never stop praying; do not be discouraged. God wants you to “pray without ceasing.”

Anecdotes, Incidents and Illustrations
—D.L. Moody (1898)

“A very present help”

of bases under its control, few defensive resources, civilians vulnerable to attack, dependence on supply by sea. Such was the situation when General William Dobbie arrived in April 1940 to take up the post of Acting Governor. General Dobbie had given his life to Christ as a teenager and he was to experience God as a very present help in trouble while leading Malta over the course of two years.

One of General Dobbie’s first actions was to issue a Special Order of the Day, defining the policy of governing the defence of the fortress. It read:

The decision of His Majesty’s Government to fight on until our enemies are defeated will have been heard with the greatest satisfaction by all ranks of the garrison of Malta. It may be that hard times lie ahead of us, but however hard

they may be, I know the courage and determination of all ranks will not falter, and that with God’s help we will maintain the security of this fortress.

I therefore call upon all officers and other ranks humbly to seek God’s help, and then, in reliance upon Him, to do their duty unflinchingly.

Every broadcast referenced his reliance on God, and he prayed both privately and in the presence of guests in his home for Malta and the situation.

At about the same time, the chief of the Imperial General Staff sent a telegram that encouraged General Dobbie. It contained the reference “Deuteronomy, chapter 3, verse 22.” Upon looking it up, he read: “Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God He shall fight for you.”

After Italy joined the war in June

“A Very...” *Continued on page 4*

The summer of 1940 was a time of crisis in World War Two. Britain’s Army had, for the time being, ceased to be effective against Nazi Germany, its French ally had surrendered, and it was vulnerable to attack with inadequate defensive forces. To make matters worse, Italy also joined the war on the side of Germany.

Italy’s declaration of war shifted the strategic situation in the Mediterranean as it could now target British ships en route to Egypt and the Middle East; should it gain complete control of the Sea, it could so severely hamper British plans as to render victory a distant dream. Yet one small island in the centre of the Mediterranean—Malta—was governed by the British. This was vital to hold at all costs.

The island faced formidable problems such as enemy strength and the proximity

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“A very present help”

1940, Malta was the first part of the British Empire to be heavily attacked from the air. They had had no aircraft allocated for their defence but found four fighters in the Dockyard stores that were slow and out-of-date. They were all the island had to stand up to the Italian Air Force before more modern fighters arrived; three of these older aircraft were nicknamed, ‘Faith’, ‘Hope’, and ‘Charity’. They could not do much damage to the superior Italian Air Force but they did boost morale.

Malta’s situation worsened later than month when France signed an armistice with Germany, meaning that most of the Mediterranean coastline came under enemy control and many ports closed to the British. Malta was now extremely isolated and at the forefront of the battle. Italy’s airfields were only 60 miles away but the nearest friendly territory was now nearly 1000 miles away.

One of the first remarkable deliverances was that Italy did not attempt to invade Malta, especially when aware that the island was so weak in the early days of the siege. The only explanation that General Dobbie had was that God’s restraining hand had kept the Italians from attacking when Malta was ill-prepared to meet it. No reinforcements were received for more than four months and the danger hung over the island, but, as General Dobbie later wrote, “[God] can go on delivering us for as long as He sees we need deliverance. That is one of the lessons He graciously taught us in the siege of Malta.”

Yet although no invasion occurred, the Italians inflicted damage on the island through aerial bombardment. God’s Word encouraged General Dobbie at this time, for example the story of Elisha, who told his servant (who saw an enemy host surrounding a city), “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings 6:16). King Hezekiah had also encouraged his people when faced with great dangers: “Be not afraid ... for there be more with us than with him [the enemy]: with him is [the] arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles.” He found it to be true in the case of Malta, God telling them not to fear. His

protecting hand was evident in so many ways. “We saw it,” wrote General Dobbie later, “when He restrained the enemy from invading us at a time when we were ill-prepared to resist. We saw it in the results achieved by our pitifully weak air defences. We saw it in the steadfastness and courage of the people. We saw it in the achievements of the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy in bringing supplies to Malta, sometimes in seemingly impossible situations.” To this was added the fact that Malta remained in British hands, and, by offensive action based there, contributed to British success in the Mediterranean during the war.

One example of God’s miraculous help occurred in January 1941 when a new British aircraft carrier, HMS *Illustrious*, was heavily bombed by the German air force some distance to the south of Malta. After sustaining severe damage, it arrived in the dockyard after dark. The next morning, German aircraft recommenced their attacks and it was further damaged. Although the likelihood of saving the ship seemed small, General Dobbie was informed that if there were no further damage, the ship could go to sea in four days’ time. Prayer was offered to God in the situation. On the following day, the Germans began to bomb from a much greater height, missed the ship, and caused no further damage; they also failed to damage it over the course of the following days so that on the fourth day, the ship was able to depart from Malta. “To us it was a miracle,” General Dobbie later wrote. “We had been watching the hand of God at work.”

Another example of God’s protecting hand occurred in a village named Mosta, where there was a church that had the third largest dome in the world. One day in spring 1942, a bomb struck the dome of the church, which General Dobbie saw while watching an air raid. Upon arriving at the scene, he saw an enormous bomb (apparently four thousand pounds) lying on the marble floor of the church. While it had bored a hole through the dome and fallen perhaps two hundred feet onto the hard floor, it had not gone off! Had it done so, not only would the church have sustained devastating damage, but the many people sheltering in the crypt

underneath would also have been killed. As the people said, “It is a miracle.”

The island was awarded the highest British civilian award for gallantry by the King of England in 1942, and General Dobbie was to receive a knighthood. He later recorded his experiences in *A very present help*. “I desire to emphasise,” he wrote, “... that it is a practical and intensely real thing to let Christ come into one’s life, and that today, as ever before, it is no vain thing to trust in the living God.”

—See *Lt.-General Sir William Dobbie, A very present help, and John Scriven with Tim Dieppe, Beyond the odds: Providence in Britain’s wars of the 20th century*

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