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THE SINNER AFTER DEATH

BY: C. D. Cole

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried: And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father; that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham said unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the

dead," Luke 16:19-31.

One of the best evidences that the Bible is the Word of God is that it makes no effort to minister to the depraved taste of fallen humanity. The Bible reveals divine pity without petting and pampering. It shows much mercy, grace and love for sinners, but it also warns against abusing these needed and lovely attributes. The grace of God calls for gratitude and consecration on our part. It is not enough to enjoy grace; we must use grace to God's glory and human good. He who loves to hear grace and never uses grace is apt to be graceless. Paul said he was saved by grace and worked by grace so that he labored more abundantly than others. Grace is not only a comfortable truth; it is also an impelling truth. And where there is grace, there will be labor as well as rest--labor of love.

The doctrines of the Bible are illustrated in actual examples. Salvation by grace is illustrated in the salvation of the dying thief. The doctrine of chastisement is illustrated in David. Justification by faith is illustrated in the case of the publican. The doctrine of eternal punishment is illustrated in this story of the rich man, hopeless in hell. We also have here the exemplification of the truth about being our brother's keeper.

In the story before us we hear the groans of a soul that would not learn save in the school of experience. It opens the door to the lower regions and shows us the frightful condition of one who in this life had no fear of God before his eyes. We see one repenting when it was too late; we hear one crying when there was no hope; we look upon the poverty-stricken state of one who in this life fared sumptuously everyday.

Here is a striking example of the modern adage: too little too late.

What is the condition of the sinner after death? What are his experiences immediately after the spirit takes its flight? We can't tell by looking at his body. It may be clothed with a silken shroud; it may repose in a metallic casket; it may lie in an actual flower garden; it may look peaceful and restful. But where is the real person? That body is only a tent of clay; the spirit that animated the body has left it; the soul that moved the hands, feet and eyes is not there. Where is that soul, and what are its experiences? This story gives the solemn and true answer. That soul is in torments. As a physical being the man is at rest, but as a moral being the same person is restless in the flame. He is not in hell, the lake of fire, but is only tormented in a flame of fire. It is not final and eternal punishment, but temporary punishment for the soul until the body is raised and with the soul is cast into the lake of fire. *"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell,"* Matthew 10:28.

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A WAITING GOD

BY: C. D. COLE

"And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you," Isaiah 30:18.

Introduction

Man was created in the image and likeness of God, but sin entered the race and made man unlike God. God's thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways. Men may be contrasted with God in a thousand points.

The Divine dealings with mankind are full of inexplicable mysteries. The Psalmist says that His judgments are a great deep. Paul says that His judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out. This is particularly true of His dealings with those whom He intends to bless. The only way God's people can have any understanding of God's ways is to know their Bible. The Bible explains many things that cannot be reasoned out.

Our text is a rainbow of hope in a dark and threatening sky. The context describes the rebellion of Israel and God's reproof of them. It tells of their vain confidence in other saviours in the time of crisis, and their rejection of the word of God. Their destruction is represented by the falling of a wall, and by the breaking of a potter's vessel. They had rejected the way of salvation proposed and urged by the Lord and had taken their own way.

Our text tells of God's intention to bless them. It speaks of the purpose to exercise grace towards them. But he will not do this immediately. He adopts a waiting policy. *"And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you."*

The Lord Waiting

To Be Gracious

I shall speak briefly of this principle in God's method of dealing with His people, and then give some illustrations of the principle from the word and from human experience.

God waits. He is never in a hurry. We have to work while it is day for the night cometh when no man can work. But night and day are alike to God.

There is no night of rest and idleness with Him. There is nothing of the restlessness and nervousness about God that characterizes men. The world has a bad case of nerves--the world is jittery but God is calm and self-confident.

God waits to be gracious. He waits to bless. Something else must precede God's gracious presence. Grace is predicated upon the fact of sin; sin must abound before grace can much more abound.

God's Waiting Explained

1. God's waiting is not a waiting of indifference. It is not because He has no concern for the objects of His love. God is not indifferent. He is not cold-hearted towards His chosen people. He means to do something for them. His waiting is not from a cold heart, but from a wise head. Men often wait and hesitate because of indifference to the matter in hand.

2. God's waiting is not a waiting of perplexity. Men often wait because they do not know what to do; they are perplexed and do not know which way to turn. But God waits because He does know what to do. He knows the need and when to send it. He never sends help too soon; He never withholds help until it is too late.

3. God's waiting is not a waiting of impatience. How hard it is for men to wait; how impatient we are naturally! Like horses that chomp the bits, and cannot stand still, the flesh is restless and impatient. The hardest thing for the soldier in battle is to wait for the command to fire. But God is perfect in patience; His longsuffering is one of the most marvelous of His perfections.

4. God's waiting is not a waiting of deliberation. Men must deliberate if they act wisely. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Men must take time and seek advice if they act wisely, but God needs neither time nor counsellors in order to know what to do.

5. God's waiting is not a waiting of idleness. While waiting to be gracious, God is busy bringing the schemes of men to naught, dashing their false hopes to the ground. In waiting to be

gracious, God is busy in the work of convicting us of our own sin and folly.

6. God waits with a desire and purpose to help the objects of His love. And He knows when to help. There is a wrong time to try to help a drowning man, and there is a wrong time to help in any other trouble. To rescue a drowning man you must wait until he gives up--wait until he ceases from all efforts to save himself.

Illustrations

1. **Israel in Egypt.** God did not mean for His chosen to remain in Egypt forever; redemption was His purpose. But He left them there many years before He delivered them from their oppressors. He waited until they felt the smart from their taskmasters. While waiting to be gracious, God put the fires of persecution behind them and the hope of Canaan before them.

2. **Mary and Martha.** Sickness came to their home, and they sent for the Master. But He waited. He did not come until Lazarus was dead and buried. He let sickness do its worst. He let the sisters see the futility of all their efforts. He waited for the tears of sorrow to flow freely. Then He came in grace and gave their brother back to them.

3. **All the elect under conviction for sin.** Under conviction, the sinner begins to feel there is no hope for him. He begins to think there is no cure for his sin-sick soul. The gospel, the one and only thing that can give him any real hope, is hid from him. He tries this and that to his utter disappointment until he is about ready to despair and lose all interest. Then the light breaks upon him. The gospel which has been hid all the days past is as clear as the sun. Grace opens his eyes to see Christ as His surety and substitute--as the One mighty to save.

4. **Saints in sorrow.** We have our seasons of sorrow, but all our days are not filled with sorrow. The night cometh and also the morning. We put our loved ones in the grave, and turn away to face a future as black as night--debts to pay, a struggle with strange

circumstances and new experiences, new adjustments to make, and a lonely life. But God means to be gracious to His sorrowing people and there will be the morning of hope and joy.

5. **God waits to take us to heaven.** Heaven is a happier and sweeter place because of the tears, heartaches, and pain we have here on earth. Think of the terrible scenes we pass through on our way to the celestial city! It is through much tribulation we enter the kingdom. In making the pilgrimage from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, Bunyan's Christian had to pass through the Slough of Despond, climb the Hill Difficulty, fight with Apollyon, pass through the Valley of Humiliation and the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and spend several days in Doubting Castle and be ill-treated by Giant Despair. When Christian had reached the top of Hill Difficulty he immediately saw two lions that made him afraid. The immortal thinker memorializes this part of Christian's experience in the following lines:

*"Difficulty is behind, Fear is before,
Though he's got on the hill, the lions
roar;
A Christian man is never long at ease,
When one fright's gone,
another doth him seize."*

A sight of the cross caused the burden of guilt to roll from Christian's back but it did not make the way easy to the Celestial City.

*"Though rough and thorny be the road,
It leads thee home apace to God;
Then count thy present trials small,
For heaven will make amends for all."*

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The Sinner After Death

I. He is in a place of conscious suffering. He is in hades, the unseen realm, where the lost begin their suffering. He is not in hell yet--nobody is there yet. Hell proper will be populated when the lost have their bodies raised. Hades and hell might be distinguished by comparing the two places to the penal farm and to the electric chair. The criminal does not get full justice while working at forced labor. Justice is meted out when he is electrocuted.

II. He is in a place of hopeless isolation. Hades is a place of quarantine, an island of despair. The rich man looked up for once and saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. He hoped that Lazarus would not return evil for evil. Father Abraham, send Lazarus to help me out. Send him here with some water, I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham's reply froze him into hopelessness.

A. You have had your good things in the other world. Remember that purple and fine linen; remember how you fared sumptuously every day? But no more of that. Those days are forever gone.

B. And besides, there is a gulf fixed that cannot be bridged; no passing from one place to the other. No way for a lost soul in hades to escape; no way for help to reach it from the outside. No second chance for those there. At the resurrection, hades will be emptied into the lake of fire.

What Was The Sin of this Rich Man?

Somebody says there was no charge against him. But let us look closely and see. What is the charge? Drunkenness? No! Adultery? No! Murder? No!

I. He had broken the law of God which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves. He had done nothing when he had the opportunity to do much.

II. He had not believed Moses and the prophets. He was an unbeliever.

III. He had not repented.

IV. Verse 31 shows us he would have rejected the fuller revelation of God even in the resurrection of Christ. Even in torment he makes no confession of sin. Even in torment he is still an

idolater--he prays to Abraham, but does not call upon the name of Jesus Christ. He manifests no broken heart over sin; he only wishes to escape punishment, first for himself...then for his brothers.

V. He suggests that something else be used for conversion besides the Word of God. Get a preacher out of the graveyard and they will listen to him.

In a word, this man's sin was selfishness. He had no place for anybody but himself while he dwelt here. Selfishness is the very essence of sin. It is sin boiled down to its very essence. Self before God; self before others.

Now selfishness belongs to all of us by nature; and the remnants of it adheres to us who are children of God. Regeneration broke the back of selfishness, but it is not yet dead.

By nature the skin of the soul is hard and calloused. No scriptural appeal can get under the skin. In converting grace, this is softened so that there is response to scriptural appeals for God's glory and human need.

I know we see men by nature who seem to have the milk of human kindness; they seem to show pity toward the needy and respond to appeals for help. But boil that milk down and it will be seen to be only self-love. The motive is wrong. The help is done for human reward or as a payment on salvation. It is done in self-righteousness.