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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 saith 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.

INTRODUCTION: One of the best evidences that the Bible is the word of God is that it makes no effort to minister to human pride, it does not suit the taste of fallen man, it does not say what the natural man would like for it to say. But it says what a ruined soul needs to hear.

The Bible reveals divine pity without petting and pampering. It reveals much mercy and 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 also worked by grace so that he labored more abundantly than others. Grace is not only a comforting 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 exemplified in actual examples. Salvation by grace is exemplified in the salvation of the dying thief. The doctrine of chastisement finds an example in God's dealing with David. Justification by faith is seen in the case of the publican. The doctrine of eternal punishment finds exemplification in this story of the rich man as he lies hopeless in hell. We also have here the exemplification of the truth that we are our brother's

keeper.

In the story before us we hear the groans of a damned soul, the piteous cry of a man who would not learn, save in the school of experience. This story 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 every day. Here is a man who denied help from heaven, who refused to give help here on earth. Here is a striking example of the modern adage: too little, too late.

Where are the dead? What is the condition of the lost man after death? What are the experiences immediately after the spirit takes its flight? We can't tell by looking at the body. The body may be clothed in a silken shroud, and lie in a metallic casket, and placed in a bronze vault. The body may lie in a veritable flower garden. The body may appear to be peaceful and restful. But where is the real person? The body is only a tent of clay; the spirit that animated it has left it; the soul that moved the hands and 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

(Continued on page 3)

CHRIST MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING

BY: C.D. COLE

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Hebrews 2:10.

INTRODUCTION: We should not be hasty or confident in saying what is becoming to God. We would need to know the divine nature more perfectly to determine what is agreeable to His nature. We have not quite got to the bottom of the bottomless, and our conception of what God might or might not do is not the standard by which He is bound. We can know one thing: He can do whatever He wants to do. Nothing He wants to do is incongruous with His nature. It is rather unsafe to pronounce that a given thing is unworthy of Him. That is what people say who deny the doctrine of eternal punishment, and also those who deny the doctrine of election. It is much safer to pronounce that a given thing is worthy of Him.

And that is what Paul does in our text as he vindicates the doctrine of a suffering Christ. "For it became him, etc." The Hebrews to whom he wrote were opposed to the thought of a suffering Messiah. The doctrine of a suffering Messiah was the thing that stood in the way of the Jewish reception of the Gospel, more than anything else. *"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness,"* I Corinthians 1:23. The Jews wanted a powerful Messiah, not a weak Messiah, which to them was involved in a suffering Messiah. They wanted a Messiah to sit on a throne; not one to hang on a cross. They wanted a King, not a servant. Their emblem was a crown, not a cross.

Paul opposes their whole conception of the Messiah, *"For it became him, for whom are all things, and*

by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Hebrews 2:10.

I. We have here the grand sweep of the divine purpose; the bringing of many sons unto glory. This gives us the metaphor of a great procession, being led on through all the changes of this earthly life, steadily upwards into the possession of what is here called glory. What a sight to the eyes of Him who can see all things, whether visible or invisible to us. There is a grand procession of saints in their upward march to glory. And this is not a thin line extending from earth to glory, for the word for "many" really denotes an innumerable multitude.

The other metaphor in the text colors and harmonizes with the idea of a procession: the captain of their salvation. The word for captain occurs only four times in Greek New Testament. Only one time is it translated captain. It literally means one who leads, and hence comes to mean commander or prince as it is twice translated. By a slight transition it comes to mean the cause or author of anything, and is once translated author. This great procession of sons up into glory is all under the leadership of God's only Son, who in a profound sense is the cause of our salvation. God brings many sons into glory through the leadership of Christ Jesus.

NOTE:

1. The relationship of those in this grand procession. They are sons. The divine purpose is to make the many like the One, the only begotten Son. If we are sons of God then we are brothers—brother in the highest and best sense.

2. The end of the march. Glory is our destiny. Jesus Christ has already been crowned with glory

and honor, and we are to share in His glory. He is the realization of the divine ideal for humanity, and we are on our way to that realization. These two big words: realization and participation set forth our destiny. We shall realize and participate in His glory. From the humblest private to the greatest preacher in that great army, all shall partake in their measure and degree in the glory of the Lord.

When we see the purpose of Christ's mission to this earth we can more readily understand the divine action and see the need of the cross. If He came to be only a teacher, or if He came to set us an example merely, then there would be no need of a cross. But if He has come to redeem; if he has come to make sons out of sin's slaves; if He has come to lift men out of the mud of sin and plant their feet on streets of gold; if He has come to bring men into fellowship with God; then there is need of Divine satisfaction and the cross is the only thing that meets this need.

II. We have here the apparently paradoxical method of carrying out this divine purpose: it is done through suffering of Christ. He is made perfect through suffering. What does it mean to make Christ perfect? It does not mean the addition of anything to Him, or the purging away of anything from Him as to His moral nature. He never was anything but the Holy One of God. You and I are refined by suffering, if we take it rightly. Every man is made better or bitter by suffering. The way we react to trouble and pain is a good index to whether we are saved or lost. *"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word,"* Psalms 119:67. *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes,"* Psalms 119:71.

But the sense in which Christ was made perfect through suffering

was as Saviour. He suffered down here that we might rejoice up there. He was made perfect officially as Saviour, not personally and morally. He was morally perfect before he ever suffered. But He could not take us to glory without suffering for us. He could not bring us to God without being forsaken of God. He could not take us into the sunlight of heaven without suffering the darkness to pass over Him here.

The One who leads us to glory must tread along all the weary path we have to tread. The Captain must have no exemption from the hardships of the company, who are privates. He cannot lift us into a share of his glory unless He stoops to the companionships of our grief. He could not lift us higher without coming lower. We could not go up unless He had come down. We could not share His glory unless He bears our sins. We could not be made the righteousness of God unless He is made sin.

III. The assertion of harmony between the loftiest conception of the Divine character and the nature of these sufferings of Jesus Christ.

"It became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Hebrews 2:10.

That is saying that it was worthy of God for His Son to suffer. The suffering of His Son was a revelation of His love. The cross is the highest manifestation of the Divine nature.

The suffering of Christ was a revelation of Divine power. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek,"* Romans 1:16.

The suffering of Christ was a revelation of Divine wisdom. Christ crucified is both the power of God and the wisdom of God. It was Divine wisdom that concluded that Divine honor and unsullied holiness and inflexible righteousness could only be satisfied by the suffering of the Divine Son.

THE SINNER AFTER DEATH (Continued from page 1)

is not in hell yet, the place of eternal punishment, the lake of fire, he is only in a flame.

1. He is in a place of conscious suffering. He is in hades, the unseen realm, where the lost begin their punishment. He is not in hell yet. Hell in proper will be populated when the lost have their bodies raised. Hades and hell might be distinguished by comparing these 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. *"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. *"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death,"* Revelation 20:14.

2. 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. Send him here with some water for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham's reply froze him into hopeless despair.

3. Son, remember that you had your good things in the other world. Remember the purple and the fine linen; remember how you fared sumptuously every day. But those days are forever in the past, no more such days as those. The lost have all their good things in the present which is soon in the past. At death everything bad for the saved is in the past.

4. And besides, there is a fixed chasm between the place you are and the place where we are. And there is no bridge over this chasm. There is no passing from one place to the other. Here is a refutation of purgatory, according to which a man suffering in purgatory may get release. Here is refutation of the doctrine of the second chance. 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. Why was he in torment? Because he was rich? No, for many rich men are saved. What was the charge? Drunkenness? No. Adultery? No. Murder? No.

1. He had broken both precepts of the law of God. He had not loved his neighbor as himself and he had not loved God as he ought. John says there is no use talking about loving God whom we have not seen if we do not love our brother whom we have seen. This man had done nothing when he had opportunity to do much.

2. He was an unbeliever. He had not believed Moses and the prophets, for had he believed them he would have believed Christ, for they spoke of him.

3. He had not repented. He does not like the place where sin had brought him, but he still likes the sin that brought him there. He was sorry he was in the flame, but he shows no sorrow for having ignored Lazarus who suffered at his gate. He manifests no broken heart over sin; he only wishes to escape punishment.

4. He suggests that something else be used for the salvation of sinners. He argues that if a preacher goes to his brothers from the graveyard they will repent. But Abraham says they have Moses and the prophets, they have the Bible, if they will not believe it they would not be convinced if someone should rise from the dead and preach to them.

The gospel is the only means of salvation and faith is the only way. The gospel is the good news of what Christ did at Calvary and in the resurrection. Faith is depending upon that for salvation.