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THE SECRET OF TRUE GREATNESS

BY: C. D. COLE

"Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism, that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many," Matthew 20:20-28.

This passage shows that human nature, in the days of our Lord's earthly pilgrimage, was very much like it is today. The mother of James and John came with them to Jesus and requested a place of prominence in the coming kingdom. And from that time until now it has been common for men to seek the preeminence. This whole question of earthly ambition needs to be studied anew in the light of divine revelation. In this passage we have the mind of the master upon the question. May our hearts be willing to receive His teaching.

It is perfectly legitimate to desire to be great. There is such a thing as a scriptural ambition. It is right for us to desire the best. *"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;*

And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity," II Peter 1:5-7. We are to grow in grace and in knowledge of the truth. We are to grow up into Him in all things, which is the head even Christ.

But we need to see the difference in a desire to be great and a desire to be the greatest. May we all desire to be great and may none of us desire to be the greatest. A desire to be the greatest is a desire to have others below us.

WHAT MAKES A MAN GREAT? WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF TRUE GREATNESS?

1. It is not a position. There are many who imagine if they could get a position of prominence they would immediately become great. Not so. True greatness has nothing to do with position at all. A man may occupy a very exalted position and may be a very little man; and he may occupy a very humble position and be the world's greatest.

2. It is not worldly honor. Some of the most popular men are some of the smallest. As a matter of fact, few of the great characters of history were great in the eyes of their contemporaries. It was not until they had passed from the scene of action that their worth and greatness dawned upon men. The greatest philanthropist was killed by the world. The man who accomplished the most for the world was the Man whom the world judged to be unfit to live. Our Lord said, *"Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist,"* and yet this man was killed by those who the world would pronounce as great. May we be delivered from the world's judgment of who are the great, for the world's judgment is a perverted judgment.

3. It is not in the exercise of authority. What fools a little authority can make of men. Lot of men think they are big men because they have a little authority.

4. It is not wealth. Some of the weakest characters I have ever known were men of wealth. The world has always sought to honor men of wealth. I have seen men of wealth honored by the world only to lose their honor, praise, when they lost their wealth.

5. Nor poverty.

WHAT IS THE SECRET OF TRUE GREATNESS?

1. It is imparted quality. It is not something you can put on a man, but something God puts in a man. It is grace that makes men great. *"I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me,"* I Corinthians 5:10. I say we need to get away from the world's idea of a great man. Men like Napoleon, Caesar, etc., were not great men in any true sense of the term.

Are you able? was the question which Jesus put to James and John. You want position, but can you go with me all the way? And that is the question he is asking each one of us. Can you drink of my cup and be baptized with my baptism?

2. True greatness is a willingness to share Christ's cup of shame and suffering. True greatness consists of cross bearing. Cross bearing is a willingness to be treated by this world as Christ was treated. *"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the*

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SALVATION AND SERVICE

BY C. D. COLE

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,” Ephesians 2:10.

There are a lot of respectable people in this world and some may be in this church, who would get highly offended if you should intimate that you are doubtful of their salvation. And yet what are they doing that gives evidence that they love God, saved people love God, saved people are workers for God.

This text gives us the true order of salvation and service. Both salvation and service are matters of extreme importance and both salvation and service are matters of much false teaching. And to have false ideas of one is to have false ideas of the other. You cannot be wrong on salvation and be right on service. MacLaren says: "The belief that a man may work toward salvation is a universal heresy." To work towards salvation is, in the strictest sense of the word, preposterous, it is inverting the order of things. It is beginning at the wrong end. It is saying XYZ before you say ABC. We are to work downwards from salvation because we have it, not that we may get it.

Ragland: "Many an unsaved soul has been cursed by the heresy of salvation by works and many a saved soul has been hurt by a false conception of service."

Our text throws inspired light on both salvation and service. We have:

I. The divine worker and his product: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Ephesians 2:10.

Who can say this? Look at these personal pronouns: We and His. Who are the We? Yonder is a group of men, living in sin and with hardly a thought of God. Can they say, We are God's workmanship? No, God is not the author of such lives! Yonder is a church member, his name is on some church book, but he shows by the life he lives that Christ and His church are not in his heart. He goes to church for business or social reasons; he likes to be on the winning side; he likes to go where the people are the nicest to him; he listens to the preacher but he does not regard the commandments of Christ or do them; he can turn a religious somersault when it looks as if it will pay. Does such a man dare say he is God's workmanship? No, for God is not the author of hypocrisy!

You have heard the story of the drunkard who stepped up to Moody and said, "I am one of your converts."

Who can say this? In heaven they are perfect in their obedience, they are called the spirits of just men made perfect. But on earth, they are still in the flesh, but they have earmarks of God's grace in their lives.

They are good but not as good as they want to be. They are not self-satisfied. They grieve over their sins and imperfections. They are not braggarts. They have some pride but the grace of God has given it the death blow and when they leave the flesh they leave pride. They have a sinful nature but, it will be left behind at death. Regeneration put within them a new man that overcomes the world, "because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world," I John 4:4.

"We are HIS workmanship." Let us look at the worker. Who made us Christians? Who made us to differ from the world about us? Surely no man who thinks, can say that he made himself a Christian! God made Christians and he did it by grace, which means

that he was under no obligation to do it. "But by the grace of God I am what I am," I Corinthians 15:10.

II. The Divine method. "Created in Christ Jesus." Every Christian is "a new creature," Galatians 6:15. In salvation God does not try to patch up this old nature. The nature we have is expressed by our carnal mind and heart. They are both ruined. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Romans 8:7. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9. In salvation God gives a new heart and a sound mind. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Ephesians 4:24.

III. The Divine purpose. "Unto good works." It is as strange to talk about salvation without resulting good works as it is to talk about salvation through good works. We are saved for good works but not by good works.

MacLaren: "I remember hearing once of a man who had a very shady character, but he was sound on the atonement. What is the use of being sound on the atonement if the atonement does not make you live the Christ life?"

What is the good of all your orthodoxy unless the orthodoxy of creed issues in orthopraxy of conduct? You are saved that you may be good and do good continually; and unless you are doing good you may be steeped to the eyebrows in the correct set of creeds, and it will only drown you.

Ragland: "God has his workers. He gets them through salvation. He creates them in Christ Jesus. The saved of Christ are the workers with God, the workers for God, the good workers of this world."

I am afraid of people who show too much emotion. It is apt to be only sentiment of the flesh. There is emotion or feeling in salvation, but emotion can be from the flesh as well as from the Spirit.

MacLaren: "Emotional Christianity is necessary, but Christianity, which is mainly or exclusively emotional lives next door to hypocrisy, and there is a door of communication between them. In the order of things, right thought touches the springs of right feeling, and right feeling sets going the wheels of right action. Do not let the team all go roaring out of the waste pipe in however sacred and blessed emotion. See that it is guided so as to drive the spindles and the shuttles and make the web."

IV. The Divine field for service. "Which God hath foreordained that we should walk in them." God has not created us in Christ Jesus to do what we want to do, what brings praise to us, but to do what He commands, to do what brings glory to Him. This is why Christian works are called labors of love and works of faith.

We work at our secular business and work hard. It is thus our business succeeds. Will we work at our God ordained business and work harder that it may succeed?

"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every

one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," II Corinthians 5:8-10.

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servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" Matthew 10:24-25. There is a cup of wrath which Jesus drank alone.

"Death and the curse were in our cup;
O Christ was full for Thee!
But thou hast drained the last dark drop,
Tis empty now for me;
That bitter cup, love drank it up;
Now blessing's draught for me"

There is the cup of salvation for us because Christ drank the cup of God's wrath against sin for sufferings. There is a sense in which we may share his cup. Let us look into His cup to see what was in it, and thereby learn what will be our cup if we choose to be faithful to Him.

SHAME - He who shared the glory with the Father became a spectacle of shame before men. The cross was a shameful death. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God," Hebrews 12:2. Can you share his shame? "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name," Acts 5:41.

SUFFERING - His suffering spoken under the figure of baptism. His suffering was great. Not a few drops sprinkled on Him, but an immersion. To be great is a willingness to suffer with Him. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny him, he also will deny us," II Timothy 2:12.

SERVICE - "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give His life a ransom for many," Matthew 20:28.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

BY: C. D. COLE

INTRODUCTION: We have heard much in recent years about the forgotten man. The reference is usually to the man who is forgotten in the laws passed for human welfare. Most of the legislation today is in the interest of classes or groups of men, and if you do not belong to one of those groups, you will be the forgotten man. There are other ways in which men are forgotten. In the wills of rich uncles or other relatives one will be remembered and another forgotten. Joseph will be remembered as an example of the forgotten man. While in Pharaoh's prison he interpreted the dream of the chief butler, a fellow-prisoner, telling him that he would be released from prison and restored to the king's favor and to his position. He asked the butler to remember him in the day of his prosperity and use his influence to have him released from prison. *"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him,"* Genesis 40:23.

When we think of forgotten and forsaken men, our Lord and Saviour stands out in bold relief. He was forsaken by both God and men, even by His closest friends. If you want to see the forgotten and forsaken man, then look at Calvary, and at the middle cross. The greatest and most astounding event that ever came to pass was the death of our Lord on the cross. Let us turn aside as Moses did when the bush burned, and see this great sight--the Creator crucified. It is the greatest marvel that ever earth or heaven or hell beheld. He did not die on His own account. As a man He had no need to die. He was sinless and might have lived on and on and have seen no death, if He so willed. He had committed no offense, and no punishment was due Him on His own account. For sins not His own He died to atone. Every pang upon the cross was substitutionary. He deserved no blows from His Father's hand, but His smarts were for the sins of others, even His enemies.

It was an accursed death.

The kind of death Christ died indicated that He was cursed by God. There was only one death that God pronounced to be accursed. God did not say, cursed is he that dies by stoning, or by sword, or by hanging, or by a millstone fastened about his neck, or by being eaten of worms, but it was written. *"His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance,"* Deuteronomy 21:23. *"Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,"* Galatians 3:13.

It was a shameful death.

The Roman law subjected only felons to death by crucifixion. A free Roman must not so die, nor a subject of any of the kingdoms Rome had conquered, but only the slave who was bought and sold in the market could be put to such death. A pure and modest person shrinks at the exposure of his body to human gaze, but our Lord, the purest of all human beings, was stripped of his clothing and his body was exposed to the gaze of the curious and vile. Nudism is abhorrent to the clean and pure, but nudism was forced upon our dying Saviour. The heart turns sick as we ponder the shame heaped upon our Lord who deserved worship instead of shame. Oh! the shame that was heaped upon Him. He was ridiculed and taunted. Some passed by and wagged their heads. Some stood still and poked out their tongues at Him. Others sat down and watched him there, and satisfied their malice and scorn. He was

made the center of all sorts of ridicule and shame. He was the drunkard's song, and even the two men crucified with him reviled Him. And all this he suffered for us. Our sin was shameful and He was made to be a shame.

It was a painful death.

I am sure that crucifixion is the most painful death ever inflicted on human beings. Men have been burned, they have been thrown in boiling vats of oil, they have been sawn asunder, they have been hanged, they have been shot, but none of these deaths are as painful as crucifixion. His tender hands and feet are pierced through with nails, the bones are dislocated by the jar when the cross is erected and let fall into the hole in the ground, fever sets in, the mouth becomes hot and the tongue is swollen, and the only moisture given is vinegar mingled with gall.

Besides all this God forsook Him. Martyrs have died awful deaths but they were comforted by the presence of God. But Jesus had no comforter in his death.

It was a lingering death.

However painful a death may be, there is some consolation in thinking that it will soon be over. Death by burning or hanging may be very painful for an instant, but it is soon over and gone. But in crucifixion a man hangs so long, when Pilate found the Saviour dead, he marvelled that he was dead already. Spurgeon tells of hearing a missionary say that he saw a man in Burmah crucified and that he was alive two days after having been nailed to the cross. I have heard of men hanging on the cross for 48 hours, being taken down and healed of their wounds and living for years afterwards.

It was a penal death.

He died the death of the condemned. He was condemned by both the evil and religious tribunals of the country. That country which has been famous for its law said He must die. And that people that has been famous for its religion (the Jews) said He must die. And God condemned him to death. This was perhaps the worst feature about his death. Death by accident, or by sickness misses the sting, which must come into it, if it be caused by law.

Christ was treated as a sinner. He was made to be sin for us. He was satisfying the law that had its clutches about our throat. He faced the hounds of justice that were upon our trail. He was punished in His own body for the sins we had committed. He was expiating the guilt we had incurred.

HOW MAY I GET

THE BENEFITS OF HIS DEATH?

Christ died for others, he died a beneficial death. His death was not the result of a foolish adventure. It was not a dare-devil stunt to satisfy the curiosity monger. His death was to relieve human suffering that is eternal in its duration and terrible in its nature. He suffered the hot fevers of the cross that we might escape the hot fires of hell. But to benefit from His death we must take the place of sinners and trust Him. We must throw ourselves upon Him as our only hope.

When Andrew Fuller was going to preach to an assembly, he rode to the meeting on a horse. There had been a big rain and the rivers were swollen. He got to one river and was afraid to try to cross it. The current looked so strong and he could not tell how deep it was. A farmer who was near by, said, "It is

alright Mr. Fuller; you will get through it all right; the horse will keep his feet." Mr. Fuller went in, and the water got up to his feet, then up to the saddle and he began to get wet. So he thought he had better turn around, and as he was about to do so, the farmer shouted--"Go on Mr. Fuller, go on; I know it is all right." So Mr. Fuller said, "Then I will go on by faith." Now sinner friend, You are in the river of your sins and it looks as if you will drown in them, and you will, unless you trust Jesus Christ to carry you through.