

## "JUST AND TRUE ARE THY WAYS."

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ... for [i.e. because] therein is the righteousness [justice] of God revealed *to* [our] faith, *for* [our further] faith." – Rom. 1:16,17.

While the gospel which Paul preached was "good tidings" to men, it was tidings which did not dishonor God, but on the contrary showed forth and magnified his justice and his law. Suppose Paul had preached, saying – "Ho sinners! God sends you a message of joy, that he has concluded, that the original sentence upon mankind – death – was *too severe*, and he now sends you a word of promise, that he will release you and restore you to life by a resurrection, shortly. So many of you as believe, rejoice and enter his service." Such a message would have been good tidings to men, but therein would be revealed not the justice [righteousness] of God, but injustice, unrighteousness. Such a message would be an admission of error and *injustice* on God's part in the original sentence.

Or secondly, suppose Paul's message had been, "Give ear, O sinners, God now sends you a message of *pardon*. You are guilty, and under condemnation of death justly; not one feature of the death sentence was unjust or unmerited, but God has *changed his plans*, and proposes to *set aside his own just verdict* and allow his love to rule him *now*, as he at first allowed his justice to rule him. He therefore offers *pardon* to all who will accept of it, and full restoration to all he once took from us."

Such a message might seem to men to be good tidings, but therein would be revealed unrighteousness, or *lack of justice* on God's part; for while claiming, that his original sentence was *just*, he would thus be undoing his own *just* work, which would be rank *injustice*. According to Justice it would be as wrong, as unjust [unrighteous], to let a guilty one go free from the *just penalty* of his guilt, as to punish one not

guilty. Justice would be equally violated in either case. So if this had been God's plan, Paul would have been ashamed of it; *for* therein would have been revealed *injustice* on God's part.

Besides, if God was sincere and honest and just in his original sentence upon the sinner – death – were he afterward to as sincerely and honestly *reverse his own decree* and pardon the guilty, it would show *change* on his part: that he like fallen imperfect [R924 : page 5] human beings is ruled by impulse, whiles just and whiles *unjustly loving*. If such were our view of our Creator, what dependence could we place upon his promises more than on his threats? If he should change and clear the guilty, whose life he once declared forfeited, might he not change *again* and rescind and recall the *unjust pardon* and inflict the just penalty? If he *changes* his plans even once in six thousand years, we have no security for eternity. Such a plan would leave us as uncertain of God's promises and threatenings, as many earthly children are uncertain of the promises and threatenings of their parents. Such a message, when thus examined, would not really be *very* good tidings, and Paul would be ashamed of it, for therein would be revealed the unrighteousness and changeableness of God.

Or thirdly, suppose Paul's message had run thus: "Beloved, I have a glorious message for you from God; it is this: God wishes you now to know, that he is about to restore and bless you, and wishes you to come into harmony with him and his arrangements. God in the past has only deceived us, but thus did evil that good might come; but now he will deceive us no more. Adam's trial and fall, and through his fall from divine favor, the fall of *all*, was a farce, and the sentence of death, dust to dust, pronounced in Eden, was a mere deception. God *never meant* [R925 : page 5] such a penalty, though he pronounced it. And for thousands of years God has simply been *pretending* wrath and death against sinners, and has *brought* pain, and trouble, and death on the world, to carry out his great deception. Really, God *never meant* what he said, that death should be the wages of sin; and he *never will inflict such a penalty* – it was all a deception. *Now* God is telling

us the truth, telling us of his love and favor; he is *no longer* trifling with us; and presently he will remove present evils, which he put upon our race not as a penalty, for we never really and justly deserved it, but he put them upon us as a blessing, which shall be for our good."

What kind of "good tidings" to men would this be? It might be considered good news in that it would hold out a hope of escape from the *pretended* but unmerited chastisement for sin, never imputed to them by God; but such a message would proclaim God a liar; and any message from so unscrupulous a being would be unworthy of the slightest acceptance or credence. And such a message should not be heeded at all.

So, then, none of these is the gospel of Christ which Paul preached, and of which he was not ashamed; for Paul's message revealed the righteousness, the justice of God, which these do not. Besides, in none of the above is Christ a *necessity*, though some of our day who preach one or other of the above gospels of the *unrighteousness* of God, drag into their message the name of Christ and his *example*. But Paul's message was not good tidings, with which Christ's *name* and *example* merely were connected, but good tidings *of Christ*, making him and his sacrifice the basis or foundation of the good tidings.

And fourthly, let us suppose Paul's message to drag in the *name* and *example* of Christ, as so many now preach it and believe it, thus: "Oh! sinners, I come to you with the message of reconciliation! God is pining for your love and favor. He has been trying to draw you to himself for thousands of years, and finally sent his Son to tell you that he loves you and wants you to love him. Do not believe those parts of the Scripture which teach that 'God is angry with the wicked;' ignore those also which speak of the wrath of God *now revealed against sin and sinners*, in death and misery, as we see them all about us; endeavor to bury your senses and believe that God is not, and never was angry with the wicked; and believe also that death never *was* and never will

be the wages of sin. Cast such Scriptures and facts from your minds, if you find no way of twisting them to fit this message. Then, accept of this as God's message: God wants you to look at Jesus and his perfect, sinless life and to follow his *example* perfectly. Do this and you shall have life and every favor of God. But you had best, when *talking* of this matter, use the words *Ransom* and *Sacrifice* for sins, often, so as to draw attention away from the fact that this gospel contains no thought of a ransom from guilt, condemnation and death, and no thought of a sacrifice, except it be that each sinner would thus sacrifice his own sins. This thought we could not admit unless by supposing that Christ Jesus was a sinner and *sacrificed his sins*, and that thus *sinner*s are to follow his example and sacrifice each his own sins. Should this point be noticed by any who do their own thinking, pass it over by saying that the *philosophy* of the plan of salvation cannot be understood; and thus smother the objections."

Of all the foregoing this is the most deceptive, in that it furnishes greater opportunities for misapplying those scriptures which applied and were given to the Jew under Law, and not under favor in Christ, and those also which mention the privilege of *saints, already justified from sin* by faith in Christ's blood, to join with Him in sacrifice, becoming so far as possible imitators of him, not in putting away their sins, (*He* had none and *theirs* are already reckoned as blotted out), but in sacrificing pleasures and interests *not sinful*, for the good of others.

This is the weakest of all these four false messages for it embraces all the defects of the others and adds to them. This message ignores the Scriptural penalty for sin, as well as the *fact* of death, offering no solution for the same. It thus implies, either that no sentence was pronounced and that man has been unjustly punished thus far, or else that God will *unjustly* ignore, and set aside, and cancel that sentence, having *changed* his plan. And lastly, after all this, it has no "good tidings" in it; for it lays down conditions which no *sinner* can comply with: namely, *following Christ's example perfectly*. No saint (justified from sin and restored to divine favor through *faith in the sacrifice for*

*his sin* which Christ gave, and supported and helped in every time of need), can hope to follow his Master's example *perfectly*, and how useless would it be for a sinner to attempt it (*unjustified* by faith in the ransom, unreconciled, still under condemnation, the merits of Christ not *imputed* to him, to cover as a robe of righteousness his filthy rags;) and how absurd to tell such to go to God and *be reconciled* by following the example of Christ. No, there is no good tidings in this to any who can and do use their reasoning powers. They see how the whole Jewish nation for hundreds of years tried to commend themselves to God by good works, yet all failed; and by works and sacrifices none were reconciled or justified. Faith – faith in Christ's finished work on our behalf – *a ransom*, corresponding price, given *for all*, is the only *ground* of reconciliation, on which the sinner can come to God. All his works and sacrifices are blemished, dead and unacceptable, until he is reconciled to God through the death of Christ, the just one who died for the unjust, to bring us to God. Thus we who were as sinners afar off, under condemnation, are brought nigh to God – within reach of divine favors, blessings, and promises, by the blood of Christ. – Eph. 2:13.

The Gospel, the good tidings of great joy which Paul preached, not only did not reveal God as changeable, unreliable, and unrighteous, but on the contrary it did reveal a plan, by which the justice, as well as the love of God came to our rescue, for having so loved us as to provide our ransom, He is *just* to forgive us our sins once atoned for "by the death of his Son." This gospel admits of our guilt. It admits the death-penalty to be the just wages of sin. It acknowledges the *facts* of dying and death all about us, as effects of that penalty pronounced upon our perfect representative, of whose condemnation to death we partake by inheritance. It acknowledges that this penalty, being a *just* one, can never *justly* be set aside. Paul's gospel shows how the Son of God became a man, perfect and sinless like our representative, and then gave himself a *ransom* or corresponding price for Adam, and hence for all who were condemned with him, through his failure. This was the *foundation* fact of Paul's gospel. The second part was, that Christ

having thus paid our ransom price, by meeting the full demands of justice, against Adam and all whom Adam represented in his failure – a man for a man – his resurrection in another and higher nature proved that God had accepted and rewarded his sacrifice of himself, by thus creating him again and highly exalting him even to the divine nature; and this not by taking back our ransom price – his sacrificed humanity – but allowing it to remain dead to all eternity, that we might go free. He now lives, the divine Christ, to accomplish for all in *due* time the blessings which as a ransom for all he secured by his death as "the *man* Christ Jesus." God can and will now *justly*, JUSTIFY freely all who call upon him for it, through him who is the "way and the life," who redeemed us with his own blood and now lives, exalted and powerful, in due time to release, restore, and bring back to harmony with God all the redeemed ones who will accept of his favor, when brought to a *full knowledge of it*. This basis of all that Paul preached, he declares in few words, saying: "I delivered unto you first of all [as the *foundation* of the gospel] that which I also received [first of all], How that Christ died FOR OUR SINS according to the Scriptures," and rose again the third day for our justification. – 1 Cor. 15:3,4; Rom. 4:25.

Another feature of the Apostle's message built upon this, was, that as the ransom had been given for *all*, and as believing thereon was the only way by which any could receive the benefits of that ransom (a second chance or trial for life) THEREFORE it must sooner or later be testified to all. – 1 Tim. 2:6.

Another feature of his message was concerning further favor, open to *justified* believers during the Gospel age, namely, "access into *this grace* (favor) wherein ye stand," rejoicing "in *hope of the glory* of God" (Rom. 5:2). Access to justification, divine favor, harmony and peace, came first through *faith in the ransom*. But *next* came access to the *glory* of God, the privilege of becoming heirs of glory, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, their Lord, on a specified condition: namely, If they would *suffer with him*. Access to this high calling, this invitation to

suffer with Christ now, and afterward to reign with him, and be made like him partaker of the divine nature, was offered not to sinners, but only to those justified from sin through faith in his blood. Faith in his blood changed them from being children of wrath under condemnation, and made them children of God through faith, under his love and favor. And it was not until we ceased to be condemned sinners and became *justified human sons* of God, that we were invited to *sacrifice* our human rights and privileges, and reckon ourselves thus followers in Jesus' footsteps, and heirs *with* him of future glories. [R926 : page 5]

We praise God, then, not only that the time is coming, when the good tidings of great joy, of redemption and forgiveness of sins *through* him that loved us and bought us with his own precious blood, shall be made known unto ALL PEOPLE, but we praise him also, that the plan he has chosen is wise and just, as well as loving. We thank him that we can see how he can be *just* while justifying the guilty ones whom he once justly condemned, *through* him whom he set forth to be the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Thanks be to God! Paul was not ashamed of this gospel, and we are not ashamed of this gospel of which we also are made ministers and ambassadors; for therein *is revealed* the righteousness of God, appealing to our faith as reasonable, and furnishing us a firm foundation for faith and trust in all his future dealings – those revealed to faith and those unseen as yet. Truly it is written, that all who have the harp of God in tune and have gotten the victory over the doctrines of the beast and his image, etc., can sing heartily of this gospel, saying, "Great and marvelous are thy works [plans], Lord God Almighty; JUST AND TRUE ARE THY WAYS." – Rev. 15:2,3.

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