# The Throne of Grace

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Title and Author Information

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# The Throne of Grace

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Hebrew 4:16

Jesus the Son of God is our Great High Priest. He has offered His one sacrifice, whereby He hath forever perfected them that are sanctified (Heb 10:14). His offering has been accepted, and He Himself acknowledged of the Father. He has passed within the veil; He has gone into the heavens as our forerunner, to appear in the presence of God for us; He has taken His seat upon the Throne of Grace, the Mercy Seat above! This "High Priest of our profession" (Heb 3:1) is altogether such an one as we need. Both His office and His character make Him most suitable for sinners. In His office there is pardon and cleansing proclaimed to us; and in His character there shine forth the irresistible attractions of grace and love. He is an High Priest of good things to come (Heb 9:11). He is a "merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Heb 2:17). He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way (Heb 5:2). Such is the High Priest of Whom the Apostle speaks.

Seeing, therefore, we have such a friend above, such a condescending, compassionate, tender-hearted brother, now at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, let us no longer stand afar off, but, laying aside our guilt and fear, let us boldly approach the throne of grace, whereon this gracious one is seated, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. The throne is erected, the High Priest is there; the way is open; the veil is rent; every necessary provision has been made; nothing is wanting for the sinner's assurance; access to God is free; everything invites us. Then let us approach, let us go up to the mercy seat, with reverential feelings, yet with calm and trustful hearts (Joh 4:10). Jesus is there, why stand aloof? Jesus is there, why fear and doubt? Jesus is there, why be afraid to lay our whole case before Him? Does He not say, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid" (Mar 6:50)?

Looking then within the veil, we see a throne, and behold, it is a throne of grace! And for whom is it reared? For sinners. And how are they to come? Boldly. And what gives sinners such boldness? The throne itself. And what do they obtain by coming? They obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

## 1. The Throne of Grace

The throne is a throne of grace. Elsewhere it is called a "mercy seat." And it is placed in the holy of holies, the immediate presence of God, to show us that His mercy and His holiness flow from the same deep fountain, and that in order to get grace we must come as near God as to obtain holiness (Exo 19:4-6). Many speak as if grace were dispensed by God only at a distance from His holy presence, but here we are taught that its dwelling is the secret of His tabernacle, the innermost shrine of His temple, the very holiest chamber of His secret presence. It is into these we must enter if we would have grace; and these are all thrown open to us through the precious blood that is sprinkled upon the threshold (Eph 2:13). It is called a throne because it is the seat of rightful authority, the place where government is administered, so that whatever is done here is done by the authority of the King, and in a righteous way, according to the strictest laws of the kingdom.

But why is it called a throne of grace? First, because it is founded upon grace. It is upon the free, everlasting love of the Father that this throne is built. Every stone in its foundation is free

love. And it is in the infinite depths of the Father's bosom that these foundations are laid. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” (Joh 3:16). Second, because every part of it throughout is grace. Not only the foundation, but every stone in the entire fabric is of grace. It is cemented together by grace. The cornerstone is grace. The headstone is grace. Every ornament wherewith it is adorned is grace. Its covering is grace. Nothing is to be seen in it, or about it, or upon it, but grace. Third, it is erected for purposes of grace. Here grace is dispensed, nothing but grace, yet all in a righteous way. Nothing but grace proceeds from this throne. Everything connected with it and coming from it is grace-grace unmixed and pure. Not partly grace and partly something else, but grace altogether and exclusively. It is not called a throne of righteousness, nor a throne of judgment, nor a throne of merit; but in distinction from all these it is called a throne of grace. It is founded on grace. It is composed of grace. It is adorned with grace. It is erected for purposes of grace. He Who sits thereon is gracious. Its laws are grace. Its transactions are grace. It has nothing to do with merit, or claim, or worthiness, but with the opposites of all these. It is grace to the uttermost, grace without mixture, grace which knows no bounds. It is grace without terms and conditions and qualifications; grace which takes simply for granted man’s total worthlessness, helplessness, and sin (Mat 9:11-12; Rom 3:24; Gal 3:22; 1Ti 1:12-16).

## 2. For Whom Is This Throne of Grace Erected?

For whom is this throne of grace erected? For those who need grace, whose case can be met by nothing but free love. It is for sinners, for the lost, the helpless, the worthless, the undone. It is for those who have no merit, no price, no recommendation, who are utterly destitute of every qualification, who cannot point to one good thing about them, whose “whole head is sick, and whose whole heart is faint” (Isa 1:5). It is for those who would not be allowed to approach any other throne; who would not be listened to for a moment anywhere else. They would be driven from a throne of merit, or righteousness, or judgment; but they are welcome to a throne of grace. It is the very place forthem. Itis expressly provided for such as they. Had they any merit they might go to a throne of merit. Had they any righteousness, they might go to a throne of righteousness. Had they any hope of urging a successful plea in self-defense, they might go to a throne of judgment. But seeing they are utterly destitute of all these, whither can they betake themselves but to a throne which welcomes those who are rejected everywhere else, and which asks no claim but that of wretchedness, and want, and sin? This throne is intended not for those who have anything, but for those who are in want of everything. And it is just their having nothing that makes them welcome here. To whom does the physician come? Not to the whole, but to the sick. For whom is the hospital reared? For the diseased it is their disease that constitutes their claim for admittance there. The worse their disease, the more suitable are they for it, and the more welcome should it be to them. It is their need of healing that makes them fit objects for it. So it is our need of grace that makes us fit objects for a throne of grace.

But further, all else are excluded from this throne but they who need grace. Not only is it intended for them, and suited to their case, but all, save they, are positively shut out from it. It is just the very place for a sinner, but for none else. Its gates are closed against all those who come with any other plea than their wants. Hence, so many are sent empty away. They acknowledge a throne of grace, profess to come to it, and to come to it earnestly, but they do not come empty, they do not come destitute. They try to establish some claim even when professing to have none. They are not content to be mere receivers, mere debtors to grace. They want to come with a price. They are too proud to come without it. Hence, they try to turn everything into a price. They turn their earnestness, or their convictions, or their terrors, or even

their very act of coming, into a price, and hope, that because of these, they may be accepted. No wonder that they return as empty as they come; for they came as those who had something, not as those who were destitute of everything. They came to it not purely as a throne of grace, or at least a throne of grace to them. They came to it as partly a throne of merit, which must be approached only by those who have some qualification to bring. Perhaps they admit that it is purely a throne of grace, and must be approached only as such; but then they think that they, individually, dare not expect to receive anything until conscious of some inward feeling, as a token from God that they are accepted. In other words, they profess to believe that all things are ready, only they are waiting for some personal invitation to the feast. Now, what is this but saying that the throne of grace is not open to sinners as such, but to those to whom God gives some additional token of welcome; and that no sinner ought to go with boldness to the throne, until he is in some mysterious way assured, not only that the throne is erected for sinners, but in a special manner for Himself. We might as well deny that it is a throne of grace, and that we are sinners. For if it be such a throne of grace, and if it be erected simply for those who need grace, then it must be as free to each one reading these lines as to any saint that ever approached it; and each one who really knows this, will come without hesitation or suspicion. Though conscious of ten thousand wants, and ten thousand sins, yet here is the place where he is welcome, just because he has all these wants, and is loaded with all these sins.

## 3. How Are We to Come to This Throne?

How are we to come to this throne? The apostle answers, we are to come "boldly"—not doubtingly, hesitatingly, uncertainly, but "boldly." We are to come confidently, "in the full assurance of faith," certain of obtaining an answer, not thinking it possible that we can be refused; not counting it presumptuous to come so boldly, but knowing that it is only when coming thus boldly that we come in true humility, and that all doubting springs from pride and self-righteousness. In another part of this epistle we read, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith" (10:22): and again, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all such as diligently seek him" (11:6). We are not only warranted to come boldly, but we are commanded to do so. It is our sin if we come doubtingly. It is as much God's command to come boldly as it is to come at all. No one doubts that God invites and enjoins all sinners to come to this throne; no one, then, can doubt that He commands them to come boldly. If we are warranted to come at all, we are warranted to come boldly. It is our sin to refuse to come, it is equally our sin not to come boldly. God, in providing this throne of grace, calls on us to come to it as boldly as the innocent go to a throne of righteousness, or the worthy to a throne of merit. Nothing less than such a throne could have entitled us to come to God at all, and nothing more is needed to warrant us to come with entire boldness and confidence, even from the first moment that we draw near to that throne. A sinner coming for the first time is no more warranted to come doubtingly, than is a saint just stepping into glory. Both have the same throne to go to; both equally need it: both ought to come with the same boldness, for both come simply as sinners. All the graces of the saint cannot give him boldness, and all the want of these in the sinner ought not to prevent it. Are we satisfied that it is really a throne of grace? Then let us come boldly: let us draw near in the full assurance of faith. It is the simple boldness that glorifies God. It is this that He expects and delights in. It is to give this that He has prepared such a throne. And it is this that honors that throne which He has erected. Why, then, should any sinner come with less than boldness to such a throne as this?

## 4. What Gives This Boldness?

What gives this boldness? It is the simple fact that it is a throne of grace we are coming to, that emboldens and assures us. So long as we do not understand the real nature of that throne, or come to it with a price or claim in our hand; so long as we conceive it to be partly a throne of merit requiring some qualification on our part, so long it is impossible that we can come with boldness. But when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see that it is entirely a throne of grace, then this sight alone and by itself, dissipates our fears and draws us in happy confidence to a throne so suitable and so glorious. Nothing more is needed to remove every fear than this simple fact. It was our not seeing this that first raised suspicions in our hearts, and made us come trembling and uncertain; and it is our seeing this, and this alone, that allays these suspicions and inspires us with the confidence of a child coming to a father's knee. Whenever we try to draw our boldness from any other source, immediately our souls are overclouded and our hands hang down. It is a throne of grace, and what more can we say? What more does a guilty soul need to know, in order to assure him, not only that he is welcome, but that it would be most dishonoring to God and to His throne to come with less than the assured expectation of being heard.

Our fears may whisper, "You are unworthy." True, but it is a throne of grace, a throne just for the unworthy and none else. Why, then, should our worthiness make us doubt? Still we may say, but alas, we have no good about us, no evidences of grace, no deep convictions of sin, no repentance, no right feelings, no faith, no love, no humility. True, but it is a throne of grace, and why therefore should the want of all these make you hesitate to come boldly? The want of these would have disqualified you from going to any other throne. You might well have doubted, had it been a throne of merit or of righteousness; but seeing it is a throne of grace, all grace, nothing but grace, how is it possible for even you to doubt? To make these things reasons for not coming boldly would just be to deny that it is a throne of grace at all. It is the grace that is in the throne, and not the grace that is in us, that gives us boldness. Nor is it partly the one and partly the other, it is the former alone that can really do so. It is not what we see or feel in ourselves; it is simply what we see in the throne that imparts confidence. Every other source of confidence is fluctuating and uncertain. This alone is steadfast. It changes not; neither can it ever lose its power. Nothing will suit a sinner's case but something without him and independent of him, something which abides the same amid all his manifold changes and uncertain frames. And here is the very thing he needs—a throne of grace, and that grace the grace of Him Who is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb 13:8).

He that is not satisfied with this simple fact shows either that he does not understand its meaning, or that he is too proud to be entirely a debtor to the free love of God. He who is not content with this, as of itself sufficient to dispel all his doubts, must just go on doubting; for how is it possible that the sight of anything else can give him confidence when a throne of grace has failed to do so? And if at length the Holy Spirit graciously remove his fears, it will not be by turning his eyes to any objects within, but by showing him more fully the free grace of the throne, and the assurance which that of itself gives him that he is welcome, though the chief of sinners.

Are you then coming to this throne without boldness? Does not this show you that you have much to learn as to the nature of that throne you are coming to? If you understood this, is it possible that such uncertainty could remain? You say, But though I have not this confidence, I am earnest and importunate. Well, but you might be so, even though there were no throne at all to go to. It is confidence more than earnestness that a throne of grace calls forth. At the throne of judgment men will be earnest enough, but there will be no boldness then. Earnestness without confidence shows that you do not know that it is a throne of grace at which you are pleading. Your earnestness shows that you are anxious enough to secure the blessings sought; but it does not show that you know the way of obtaining them. It rather shows that you are upon

a plan of your own for buying them with your own fervent prayers. Your earnestness does not honor the throne nor Him Who sits thereon. Nay, it dishonors Him, for it takes for granted that He is a hard and austere Man whom you cannot implicitly trust, and from whom you can obtain nothing but by dint of earnest importunity and effort. It is your confidence, your expectation, your trust, that honor both the throne and the God Who erected it for sinners such as you. The sooner, therefore, you trust, and the more implicit is your confidence, the more are you giving glory to God.

Our expectation of receiving should be a confident one, just because it is not founded upon anything in our character or doings, but upon something altogether independent of us, which is not affected by our fluctuations in the least, and abides ever the same. Yet, strange to say, there are many who think it unsafe to have this boldness till some foundation has been laid for it in the improved condition of their own souls. What! Is it unsafe to build upon the rock alone? Is the fabric insecure unless sand be mingled with the foundation rock? Is the garment not wide enough to wrap us unless eked out by tatters of our own? Are we to doubt so long as we have merely the throne to embolden us, but to cease our doubts so soon as we discover some good thing in ourselves?

But may we not be Christians without having this boldness? I am not careful to answer a question like this. This, however, I may say, that matters have come to a sad pass indeed when a man's only comfort is that he may be a Christian and yet not know it, that he may be a believer and yet have no confidence, that he may be a child of God and yet not be sure whether God be his Father or not.

Do you say then, Tell me what I am to do? Ah, are you bent upon doing something, thereby proving that you are not satisfied with what has been already done by another. You want me to put you upon doing something in order to get this boldness; whereas I want to put you off doing anything in order to get this, and simply to take it from what another has done. But you say, Tell me how I am to trust? Ah, do I need to tell the child how to trust its parent, or throw itself upon the bosom of its mother? Is it not enough that it knows its parent's heart? And is it not enough that you know the heart of God and see the throne of grace He has erected? What a display of self-righteousness is the struggle to believe! What a manifest proof that all unbelief is the belief of a lie—a lie which it costs such a desperate struggle to part with!

Such then is the nature and meaning of that voice which speaks to you from the Throne of Grace, that it leaves you no other alternative but either to doubt God's word and deny His truth, or else to enter upon immediate peace and assured reconciliation.

## 5. What Do We Obtain by Coming?

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Hebrews 4:16

What do we obtain by coming? Every blessing that we stand in need of and that to the full. Here is the fountain of all blessing, from pardon of sin up to the fullest amount of holiness and joy. These the apostle sums up under two heads "mercy and grace." He says, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." These two words comprehend everything. First, there is mercy, then, there is grace.

### Mercy

First, that we may obtain mercy. Mercy is tender love to the miserable and guilty, showing itself in forgiving and blessing them. It is the feeling called forth by the sinner's lost estate, and therefore regards him simply as a sinner, a lost one. Now this forgiving love is just what the

sinner needs at first. It is the first thing that he cries for when awakened to a sense of sin. It is also the first thing which God bestows, and until He has given this He can give nothing else. Such is exactly the view of it presented here by the apostle. It lies uppermost on the throne of grace, placed so as to draw our attention at once. It is the first object that attracts our eye and invites our hand. Hence the words of the passage literally are "that we may take mercy"—take it as a thing held out to us—take it as a thing pressed most fervently and freely upon our notice and acceptance. It is mercy that the sinner needs, for he is guilty, condemned, under the law, under the curse, under wrath; and it is mercy that is first extended to him that he may be delivered from guilt and condemnation, sheltered from the curse and wrath which were his due, and brought out from being under the law to be under grace.

Sinner! There is mercy for thee! it lies upon the mercy seat inviting thee to take it. It is mercy to the vilest, mercy to the uttermost, mercy which embraces every sinner on this side of hell! And it is mercy now, mercy to thee as thou standest in thy sin, mercy in which there is no delay, no uncertainty! Take it and be forgiven. Take it and enter into peace with God!

## Help in time of need

Second, that we may find grace to help in time of need, or more literally, "grace for all needful help." Having obtained mercy, it is grace that is next presented to us; that is, not merely the free love of God, but that full measure of infinite blessing which that free love bestows. Hence it is written of Christ, "of his fullness have all we received and grace for grace" (Joh 1:16). Hence also in the apostolic salutations "grace" is the whole sum and burden of all their prayers in behalf of their brethren. Hence also it was said to Paul in his hour of trial "my grace is sufficient for thee" (2Co 12:9), and hence Paul exhorted Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2Ti 2:1). So here it seems to be used as comprising all fullness and variety of blessing, "the manifold grace of God" (1Pe 4:10).

We enter into the Holy of Holies, we go up to the mercy seat. Its covering is mercy. We remove the covering and wrap it round our guilty wrath-deserving souls. Then are we safe, for the covering which wraps us is divine. Not a drop or ray of wrath can penetrate it. But having obtained this, we begin to discover that we need much more than this. This is enough to shield us from wrath; but we need to have our emptiness filled, our hunger satisfied, and our thirst quenched. We need to be delivered from a body of death; we need to be made holy, and strengthened in the inner-man. How are we to obtain these? We look around, and behold the mercy seat itself contains the fountain of all these needed blessings. Beneath the covering which we had removed, we discern this precious fountain; and now we are put in possession of everything we require. We take our stand at the side of this well of water, and drink without ceasing from its exhaustless stores. We have found supply for every want, free provision for every various state of our souls. It is just with us as with some poor bankrupt, whose debts some friend has undertaken to cancel. He gets his past debts paid, but what is he to live upon? His compassionate friend steps forward, and tells him that he is welcome to draw upon Him at any time, and to any amount he pleases. Such is the manner in which we first obtain mercy, and then have the fountain of grace opened to us, that out of it we may draw continually and without limit or condition.

In this infinite fountain of the manifold grace of God, there is every needful provision for a saint during all his pilgrimage. There is something here for all times and seasons, for all states and circumstances, for all times and trials. We are unholy; iniquities prevail against us; the flesh lusteth against the spirit. But here is grace to enable us to be holy. We walk too much with the world, too little with God; our walk at the best is uneven, distant, changeful. Here is grace to enable us to walk with God, like Enoch; to have our conversation in Heaven, even when

dwelling on the earth. Our souls cleave unto the dust; the things of earth engross and depress us. Here is grace to enable us to set our affections on things above, to live as those who are already seated with Christ in heavenly places, and from these look down upon the earth (Eph 2:6). We have daily infirmities, both of body and spirit, to struggle with. Here is grace to enable us to be strong in the midst of weakness, yea, to glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on us (2Co 12:9). We have a race to run. Here is grace to enable us to run it well, to run it with patience. We have enemies to war with, not only flesh and blood, but principalities and powers. Here is grace to make us more than conquerors through Him that loved us (Rom 8:37). Here, in short, is grace for everything, for every want, for every time—grace wherewith to live, grace wherewith to die. Why then should we be poor so long as God is rich? Why should we be weak so long as He is mighty? Why should we be empty so long as He is full? Why should any necessity or trial ever be too great for us, seeing we have Him to undertake for us, and seeing we have grace like this to help us in time of need? Why should we ever either fear or doubt, seeing we have a fountain of free love like this to draw from continually? 0h folly, passing all other folly! 0h wickedness incredible and inexcusable, for the child of faith to give way to perplexity and fear! "Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (Joh 15:4).

## 6. Conclusion

Such is the Throne of Grace! Such its freeness to every sinner. Such the boldness with which he ought to come: such the sure ground of confidence in coming: such the blessing to be obtained. Come then, sinner, come! The throne invites you, and says COME! The High Priest that is seated on it, invites you, and says COME! God the Father, Who erected that throne for such as you, says COME! The Word says, COME! Ministers say, COME! This tract says, COME! Each passing hour says, COME. Each trial that afflicts you says, COME! Every voice above you and around you, says COME. COME boldly to this throne of grace.

Remember that this throne will not remain forever. It has its set time. After that, it must be removed, and in its room the throne of judgment will be set up. And oh! How different the one from the other! The one is all grace together. The other has no grace at all. All about it and proceeding from it, is righteousness, judgment, condemnation! Hear the description of it: "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them; and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev 20:11-12). How soon the throne of grace will be taken down, and this awful throne set up, you know not. It may be soon. Time cannot always last. Christ will not always tarry. He will come. Then time shall be no longer. Then grace shall be at an end. Then the acceptable year of the Lord shall close, and the day of vengeance begin (Isa 61:2). Then you shall hear no longer the gracious invitation of the Savior, "Come unto me." All that you shall hear will be the sentence of the Judge, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mat 25:41).

Stand no longer without. Tarry no longer by the way. Enter into the sanctuary. Come within the veil, for behold it is rent. Go up to the mercy seat. Go as thou art. Go boldly, even though the chief of sinners. Remember it is a throne of grace thou art going to; therefore let no amount of sin in you, lead you to despond, or to draw near uncertainly. Go up to it. All that thou needest is there. Take the full measure of everlasting blessings. Fear not. Shrink not. It is just for such as thee. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

# Righteous Reconciliation

"He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—2 Corinthians 5:21

"Be reconciled to God," was the apostle's message wherever he came. To Jew and Gentile, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, to all alike he proclaimed it. As though God did beseech them by him, he prayed them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. This is God's message still to an alienated world. He is still as gracious and as sincere in His proposals of peace and friendship. He still stretches out His hand all day long, to a disobedient and gainsaying people (Isa 65:2; Rom 10:21). He asks us and entreats us to become His friends, telling us how willing He is to forget all our past enmity, and to remember our iniquities no more. Be THOU reconciled to Me, is God's own special entreaty to every sinner.

These proposals of peace are not mere well-sounding words. There is nothing indistinct or uncertain about them. They rest upon a sure foundation; a foundation deep and broad, laid by God Himself, such as to assure us that the reconciliation proposed is as righteous as it is real. It is founded upon righteousness. In it there is no compromise of justice. The law is not annulled, but magnified and made honorable. The grounds of quarrel and alienation have been removed, and a solid foundation for agreement laid; so that it is not merely a gracious, but a righteous thing in God to be reconciled to sinners, to love, to pardon, to save, to bless them. Hence there is no possibility of this agreement giving way. The controversy between the sinner and God, once settled, is settled forever. And these are the grounds of this settlement, "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him."

Thus we learn that God becomes reconciled to us, not by His passing by sin with indifference as if it were a trifle, but by His laying it on another, condemning it in another, punishing it in another, and so removing it clean away from between us and Him, never again to be the ground of quarrel, or the occasion of separation between us. Thus there is not merely grace for us, but righteous grace, grace that condemns the sin, yet justifies the sinner, grace that pardons the transgressor, and yet magnifies the law he has transgressed. Thus God, Who before was righteously our enemy, can now be as righteously our friend. That righteousness which was against us, is now upon our side. It is a righteous peace, a righteous reconciliation, a righteous settlement of the controversy between us and God, which is now proclaimed to us through the finished work of the Divine Substitute, the mighty sin-bearer, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

## 1. The Author Is God the Father.

Observe the author of the reconciliation: it is God the Father. He hath made Him to be sin for us. It is in the infinite bosom of the Father that it had its origin. It is from His eternal love that it flowed forth. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us" (1Jo 4:10). The proposals of reconciliation came from Him, not from us. He thought on us ere ever we thought on Him. He sought our friendship when we thought not of seeking His. He formed the purpose, devised the plan, prepared the way, accomplished the end! And all at an infinite cost! It was He Who saw us in our blood, and said to us "Live" (Eze 16:6)! It was He Who in the fullness of a love which is absolutely without measure, said, "I will reconcile them to Myself; I will remove the ground of separation; I will level the mountain-barrier; I will suffer nothing to stand in the way of this My purpose of love; I will love them freely; I will receive them graciously."

## 2. The Instrument Is the Son

The instrument of effecting the reconciliation: the Son of the Father—his holy Son, Who knew no sin; in Whom there was no spot, no stain, no shadow of iniquity. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," infinitely pure, and immeasurably removed from sin. He was "acquainted with grief," but not with sin. He was holy from eternity as the everlasting Son of the Father. He was holy as Immanuel, God with us—holy in His conception, holy in His birth, holy in His life, holy in His death—altogether holy, tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). No language of man can express His infinite holiness, His irreconcilable opposition to all iniquity, whether as God or as man. In Him dwelt all the infinite holiness of the Godhead, and all the perfect holiness of the unfallen creature. It was His infinite holiness that fitted Him for being the instrument of reconciliation. By none but an infinitely holy Being could sin be borne and put away. It was utterly impossible that any less holy being could accomplish this. And it was thus that God set up the highest possible standard of holiness in the very person of Him Who was bearing sin, that sin and holiness might be more strongly contrasted with each other, the hatefulness of the one exposed to view, and the beauty of the other set forth in its aspect of most lovable perfection. It was thus, too, that God declared His love of holiness and His hatred of sin, by means of that very instrument through which He was reconciling the sinner to Himself.

## 3. The Manner

"For he hath made himto besin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—2 Corinthians 5:21

The manner of accomplishing this: He made the sinless one to be sin for us. It was thus that He laid the foundation of our peace. He did this, not by passing by sin or treating it with indifference, but by placing another in our room to bear its penalty, and that other His own holy well-beloved Son. "He made him to be sin for us."

### He was made sin

First, He was made sin. This cannot mean that He was in any sense or degree sinful, for He knew no sin. Yet it means more than merely that He was made a sin-offering. This would not be giving the word its natural meaning, it would weaken the expression, it would destroy the contrast between His being made sin, and our being made righteousness. Doubtless He was a sin-offering, a trespass-offering, a burnt-offering. He was all offerings in one, the sum and antitype of all. Yet this does not exhaust the meaning. The meaning evidently is, that God dealt with Him as if He were really a sinner, such as we are. He treated Him as if all iniquity was centered in Him. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was clothed with our guilt. He bore the burden of our iniquities. He was dealt with as if under the curse; He was made a curse for us. He received upon His head the vials of the Father's wrath. He drank the cup of trembling which is the sinner's portion. In all respects the Father dealt with Him as guilty of our transgressions. "He made him to be sin."

### He was made sin for us

Second, He was made sin for us. He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (1 Pet. 3:18). He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He was treated as a sinner, because He stood as our Sin-bearer, our scapegoat, our substitute, our surety. Our guilt, our curse, our chastisement, were

all transferred from us to Him. Our debts and responsibilities were all devolved on Him. He met the law in all its claims, and satisfied them for us. He came under obedience to the law in all its duties, and fulfilled it for us. It was in our room and as our representative that He acted, obeyed, suffered, and died. He bore our sins that we might not bear them; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed (Isa 53). All this has been done. It is finished. The Sin-bearer has accomplished the work which the Father gave Him to do.

## 4. The Consequences

The blessed consequences of this: that we might be made, or, simply and literally, that we might be, the righteousness of God in Him. By Christ's bearing wrath for us we are delivered from wrath, and receive forgiveness. But this is not all. Through Him we are accepted before God. Through Him we are made righteous; nay, divinely righteous, obtaining "the righteousness of God in him." By this exchange between the sinner and the Savior we get all that is His, and He takes all that is ours. We not merely get a righteousness, but God's own righteousness, a righteousness divinely perfect, divinely fair, divinely precious, divinely glorious. God saw in Christ all our guilt, and He sees in us all His righteousness. He saw in Him all our unworthiness: He sees in us all His worthiness. He entirely beholds us in this light.

He ceases to see in us anything else than Christ's perfection; and hence we are spoken of as actually being the righteousness of God inHim would have been much to have given us what Adam had before he fell. It would have been more to have bestowed on us an angel's righteousness. It would have been more still to have clothed us with an archangel's beauty and glory; but He has gone beyond all this, infinitely beyond it all! He has bestowed on us Divine glory and beauty; nothing less than the righteousness of His own eternal Son! He looks on us in Him, blesses us in Him, loves us in Him, and will hereafter glorify and reward us in Him. We are "complete in him" (Col 2:10). It is not said we shall be, but we are complete! Complete in His completeness, righteous in His righteousness, comely in His comeliness, perfect in His perfection. "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee" (Song 4:7). It is our connection with Him through believing that gives us this completeness in the Father's eyes. To the end of our earthly course we are incomplete in ourselves; yet from the moment we believed we became complete in Him. Paul refers to the same high standing when he speaks of being "found in him" (Php 3:9), and explains this as meaning "not having his own righteousness," but "the righteousness of God." Being "found in him," then, is being regarded by God according to what is in Him, and not according to what is in us. Here self-righteousness stumbles, and suggests a thousand doubts and perplexities. It says, were I more holy, more penitent, more earnest, more prayerful, had I more evidences of the Spirit's work in me, I could be satisfied. Now, what is this but seeking to be found, not in Him, but in your own holiness, or penitence, or prayers, or graces? What is it but saying, God cannot look upon me as righteous in Christ, except I have something of my own in addition, to recommend me to His favor? If God is to treat us in any measure according to what we are in respect of holiness, or grace, or love, then He must cease to look upon us in the face of His anointed Son. We must either be wholly found in Christ, or not at all. We must either be dealt with wholly according to what He is, or wholly according to what we are. There must be no mingling of the two, no adding of the Spirit's work to complete the work of Christ as our righteousness before God.

All this simply in consequence of our connection with Jesus! All this righteousness, this acceptance, this completeness, simply as belonging to Him? But what forms this connection between the sinner and the Savior? How is the exchange accomplished? What is the link that binds us to this righteousness, as our sins were bound to Him, so that we get all its benefits? We answer, it is written, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that

believeth" (Rom 10:4). Again it is written, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom 4:5). Again it is written, "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb 3:14). It is our believing, then, that forms the connection between us and Christ, not our working, or our feeling, or our deserving. When the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us, He does not so work in us as to give us something in ourselves to rest on, something to prepare us for receiving the righteousness of Christ. He opens our eyes and shows us the glory of the Savior, so that thereby we are wholly led away from ourselves to Him. That which He shows us in Jesus is what we rest on, not that which He works in us; so that as soon as He shows us Jesus, straightway we are irresistibly drawn to Him. We see how altogether suitable He is, how excellent is the way of being saved through Him, how complete the provision made for our acceptance with the Father.

And, believing, we have life through His name. His mantle is thrown over us, and His beauty covers all our deformity. We become the righteousness of God in Him. Thus, in point of acceptance with God, there is no difference between one believer and another, or between the same believer at the beginning and at the end of his career, just as in respect of condemnation, there is no difference between one sinner and another. So, soon as we believe we are entirely justified, and stand "accepted in the Beloved." The question is not, how far on are you in the life of faith, but are you believing at all? Is Jesus everything to you for pardon and acceptance? All turns on the one point of owning Him to be everything—saying Amen to the Father's testimony regarding Him. Then "He of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (1Co 1:30).

Such are the grounds on which God's message of reconciliation is founded. Without these, to have spoken of restoration to God's favor, would have been saying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace. But with these we can say, Peace, peace, to the sinner when there is peace (Jer 6:14). Grace can flow freely forth now, because righteousness has had its due. On this footing it is, that God is now sending abroad His proposals of friendship to us. He stretches out His hand to all sinners, entreating them to be at peace, and telling them that there is nothing now to prevent a lasting friendship being established between Him and them. God's gracious heart is now pouring itself down upon this guilty world of ours in a full stream of love, through this righteous channel. It is this that enables God to meet the sinner just as he is and just where he stands.

## 5. "Be Reconciled to God"

And it is because of this righteous provision for peace between the world and God, that we go forth to tell men of God's gracious mind regarding them, and His proposals of friendship to them. It is because of this that we are enabled to go up to every man, and say personally to him, "Be reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20).

First, be reconciled to God, for see how He hates sin. Before He could pardon it, He must lay it on His own Son, and when laid on Him it must be punished in Him. He must bear the infinite wrath of God against iniquity. How infinitely He must hate sin; how certainly and swiftly He will avenge it! In clinging to sin you are clinging to that abominable thing which He hates, and on which His terrible vengeance is about to descend.

Second, be reconciled to God, for see how earnestly He seeks to be reconciled. What infinite pains He has taken to secure this! At what a cost He accomplished it! If He had not been in earnest about this, would He have parted with His own Son? Would He have bruised Him and put Him to grief and shame? Would He have emptied the vials of His wrath on Him? Would He have refused to let the cup of agony pass from His holy lips? How much He must have been

bent on reconciliation, when He could consent to all this, rather than that we should remain unreconciled! How sincere and true must His entreaties of reconciliation be!

Third, be reconciled to God, for see what a righteous reconciliation this is. Its foundations are laid on righteousness, and therefore they are immovable. You cannot say, we are not sure whether it is a real reconciliation, or whether it will prove lasting. It is righteous, and therefore it is real, and sure, and lasting. What can ever occur to break up a friendship founded upon righteousness? What can ever renew the breach which has thus been healed, or sever the golden link by which the soul is inseparably bound to God?

Fourth, be reconciled, for see the blessed effects of this. It puts you in possession of such mighty blessings. It accomplishes such a glorious exchange between Christ and your soul. It clothes you with raiment so divine. It provides for you such a righteousness, so spotless, so precious, so divinely perfect—better than Adam's, more excellent than that of angels—the very righteousness of God! What a dignity, what a glory is the portion of believers! Not merely to be restored to what we lost in Adam, but to a glory far brighter, an inheritance far richer, a crown far more resplendent! To be exalted above angels, and placed upon the very throne of God's eternal Son: "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (Isa 54:17).

Fifth, be reconciled, for learn the awful consequences of remaining unreconciled. If unreconciled, then are you still enemies, unrighteous, condemned, children of wrath, bearing your own sins and sinking under its weight to the lowest hell. No removal of the curse for you! No bearing of the wrath for you! No deliverance from the second death! Great is the inheritance of the saints in light, so great shall be your inheritance of darkness. Souls saved by grace are made heirs of an infinite glory and blessedness; so you who reject this grace must be heirs of infinite shame and woe. Ransomed souls in heaven are raised far above angels; so you who remain unreconciled must go down to a place in hell far lower than the devils. Yours must be the place in hell—lower than Sodom and Gomorrah, lower than Tyre and Sidon, lower even than Chorazin and Bethsaida—for you have rejected the great salvation in a way such as no devil ever could do, and such as none of these guilty cities ever did. 0h dreadful doom of unreconciled sinners! The lowest place in hell; the very "blackness of darkness," in a region where all is night (Jude 1:13)!

Be reconciled then, for now is the accepted time and the day of salvation. "This is the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luk 4:19; Isa 61:2). The day of vengeance is at hand (Isa 13:6). "Agree with thine adversary quickly, ere the day of reckoning arrive" (Mat 5:25). Be reconciled, for time is short, days and years are flying swiftly on, eternity is at hand. You may soon be beyond the region where it is possible for a sinner to be reconciled. Hope will soon be exchanged for despair. The possibility of being saved will soon pass into the utter and awful certainty that you are lost, forever lost! Be reconciled, for days of darkness are near. The last days are already coming into view, if indeed we have not already entered on them. The time of fearful tribulation is approaching, and what unreconciled soul will be able to abide it? Who but a child of light will be able to make his way onward in those days of utter darkness. "Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness" (Jer 13:16). Be reconciled to God, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh! This world's history is rapidly nearing its close. It will not be long till the bridegroom come and the door be shut! It will not be long till the Judge descend and summon you to His bar. Jesus has long delayed His coming, out of long-suffering love to a rebellious world, but He will not always delay it. He will come at length. How soon I know not. It may be very soon. There is nothing that man knows of between us and His coming. It may be at the very door! His chariot may be already on its way. Oh, then be reconciled to God! "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye

perish from the way, when once his wrath is kindled but a little.”

# Believe and Live

"If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"—John 8:46

In these simple words, our Lord appeals to the truth of what He was saying as the ground upon which He expected to be believed. By this He shows us that the truth of a thing is the real ground of faith. Our reason for believing a thing is, that we think it to be true, and our reason for not believing a thing is, that we do not think it true. If we see it to be really true, we cannot help believing it; and if what is thus seen to be true be also good, we cannot help being made glad by it (Pro 12:25; Act 13:48).

Faith, then, is the receiving as true what God declares to be so, and unbelief is not receiving as true what He declares to be so. Saving faith is the believing that as true which God has made known for our salvation. Christ and His work are the things which God has revealed for salvation, and therefore saving faith is believing that to be true which God has told us regarding Christ and His work (Joh 20:31).

In order, then, to faith in God's word, the only question that arises is, "Is this word perfectly true?" In order to faith in Christ, the question is, "Is all that God has told us about Christ perfectly true?" (Joh 5:31-32; 3Jo 12). Is Christ really altogether worthy of our trust? If we are satisfied of this, then straightway we believe; nay, we cannot but believe. If we do not believe, it must just be because we are not satisfied that what is told us is really true, or that Christ is so worthy of our confidence as God represents Him to be. For if we see it to be just as God says it is, then we believe, and believing we have peace with God—our minds are set at rest.

## 1. Depending on Feelings

But here many will say, "Oh, we believe all that God has told us about Christ, but we don't feel it; it has no effect upon us." Now I ask, are you sure that you are believing the very thing that God has declared regarding Christ, or only something else which seems very like it? Are you not saying, "All this is true, no doubt; but it is not true to me till I experience some change within which will warrant me in believing that it is true to me." If this be what you are saying, then it is plain that you are not believing the testimony of God concerning Christ, but some other thing. God's testimony is something which is true, whether you believe it or not, whether you are conscious of any change or not. If, then, you are saying that however true the facts of Christ's death and resurrection may be, yet these things are nothing to you personally until you are conscious of some inward change, then you are not believing the truth of God. You are denying God's testimony; you are believing only a part of it, and thereby, in reality, denying it all. You are making God a liar (1Jo 5:10). And, lastly, you are putting aside the very instrument by which the Holy Spirit works the change you so much desire—I mean the truth regarding Christ and His work, which God has declared to you, that, by believing it, you may be renewed and sanctified (1Pe 1:22-23). Remember, God never says, here is a testimony which is true to you as soon as you have been regenerated. No; that would be no testimony at all; that would be no gospel at all. He says, here is a testimony which is true to you, whether you receive or reject it: here is a testimony, by believing which you are to be renewed and sanctified (2Th 2:12-13).

I know that the Holy Spirit must work in you in order to your believing, as well as after you have believed. But I am speaking at present merely of the thing that is done; not of the agent, Who works unseen, like the wind that bloweth as it listeth.

You say, that though the testimony is most true, and though it is "a faithful saying, and

worthy of all acceptation," yet it does not exactly suit you, for you are one of those who cannot feel. In answer to this, I say that it is most suitable for you, for it provides for your want of feeling. It does so, for it tells you of One Who can give you all the feeling you want—of Him Who is "exalted a Prince and a Savior to give repentance" (Act 5:31)—of Him Who has the Holy Spirit to dispense that Spirit by Whom alone your insensibility can be removed. It does so, for it sets before you the very truth most fitted to make you feel. God says to you, Believe what I have made known to you concerning My Son. You reply, I do not feel. Well, but believe, in order that you may feel. You never can feel until you believe. It is the truth regarding Jesus and His finished work that produces feeling in the soul. You want faith, you say. How then do you think to obtain it? Not by some prodigious exertion of mind to grasp the truth; for faith is the simple and natural impression which truth, as truth, makes upon the mind. You think, then, perhaps, that you must just wait till this new principle starts up within you, and then you will be able to exercise faith on Christ. When this is done, then you suppose your faith will bring you life. Now, herein you err; for it is not faith that causes life; it is the truth which does this; it is the truth which produces both faith and life. It is not your own act of believing that is the means of life; it is the thing which you believe, that is, the gospel. The truth is the instrument, though the Holy Spirit is the agent. You must therefore look out from yourself for the truth, not inwardly upon yourself for faith, or for some conscious movement of the Spirit upon you, in order to be enabled to believe. Hear, then, what the gospel says to you, and thus you will get faith, and hope, and life, and peace, and everything you need (Isa 55:3).

## 2. Depending on "Inward Changes"

God says to you and to every sinner, Believe My word, and you shall have everything. You say, No; give me first some inward change of heart as a personal pledge that this word is true to me, and then I will believe it. God says, What? Is not My word true? Can any inward pledge make it more so? Is it not insulting Me to ask for anything more than My simple declaration? To wait for feeling before you will believe, is both to question My veracity and to reverse My order of procedure. Reader, mark this! God says believe, and then you will feel. You say, I must feel before I can believe. Do you say, How can I believe if I do not feel? Rather say, How can I feel if I do not believe?[1] Oh, that I could persuade you and every weary sinner at once to throw yourselves upon the simple truth and testimony of God, in spite of all your want of feeling. Oh, that I could bring you at once to say, "Well, it is all true, most certainly and entirely true! (Joh 19:35; 21:24). The whole work is done. It is finished (Joh 17:4; 19:30; Heb 10:10,12,14). The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isa 53:5-6; 1Pe 2:24). It is true I am not actually forgiven until I believe; but provision, full provision, has been made for my forgiveness, for my peace, for my salvation. If I believe this, then I receive them all. And is it not all true? What then, can keep me from believing it? I do not feel, indeed, as I ought to do; but shall I add to the guilt of not feeling, the guilt of not believing too? Whether I feel it or not, the thing is true; and it is the truth of the thing, not my feeling it, that is the ground of forgiveness; and then the only way of feeling it is to believe it, for how can I feel a thing which I do not first believe?"

## 3. Seeing God's Testimony as True

It is upon this point that God's controversy with the sinner turns. And this he will not give up. The sinner must be brought to see that the very first thing he is to do is to receive God's testimony concerning His Son as true, and receiving it as true, to go to God in confidence as to a father. This one point God disputes with the sinner; and to bring him to this point, He allows him to go on groping in darkness, sometimes for years. This may seem a small point to many,

but it is not so. They may wonder why a sinner should be kept so long in darkness for this sole reason, and why so much importance should be attached to it. God's honor is involved in it. The veracity of His word and character is involved in it. The truth and freeness of the gospel are involved in it. There is as much self-righteousness, and as great a denial of the gospel in waiting for so much feeling, as in wanting for so many good deeds. Peace gotten in such a way would be at the expense of God's truthfulness, and by a denial of the sufficiency and perfection of the Savior's work. If you put away from you the grace of God because you have no feeling, no love, no holiness, or because your faith is so defective, then it is plain that you are wanting to make a savior of these, and "to be found" in them, not in Christ.

Poor sinner, who hast so long sought peace in vain, think of this! This is God's controversy with you. He asks you to believe, and you will not. You so far assent to the testimony, but you deny its bearing upon yourself. This is direct unbelief. This is making God a liar. And hence He disputes the point with you. You must believe His whole testimony, else you can no more get peace and pardon from it than devils can. They, of course, believe that what has been said concerning Christ is true. But this brings neither pardon nor peace to them. Why? Because they know that this testimony has no bearing upon their lost estate, and wears no kindly aspect to them. You must see that you, as a sinner, have an interest in that testimony (Luk 2:10-11; Joh 3:14-18). It has a most blessed bearing upon you. The devils believe the work of Christ and remain unblest, for they know they are excluded from it. You believe it, and are blest, because you know that you are not excluded from, but invited to share its benefits. Poor sinner! There is absolutely nothing between you and peace! It is at your very door (Rom. 10:8-9). Yet there is but one way to it; and that way is just the very way which you are so obstinately refusing to enter—believing the record that God has given you of His Son, that in Him you have eternal life. You are seeking the way to the kingdom. God says, there is the gate; it is open, open to you, to you as you are—enter in (Joh 10:9; Heb 10:19,22). You hasten forward, but forgetting or mistaking the directions, you miss the gate; and not finding ready entrance, you try to force your way over the walls! Alas! They are walls which reach to heaven, and cannot be climbed! Return, return, retrace your footsteps, seek the open gate, and enter in! Believe and live!

Oh! If it be all true that Jesus was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification; if it be true that His work is finished and our redemption completed, that by that work He removed the obstruction that stood between us and God, and rent the veil which excluded us from "the holy of holies;" if it be true that, in His infinitely precious and all-sufficient work, there is full provision to be found for the forgiveness of every guilty sinner upon earth, then why should any soul remain in darkness? (Joh 8:12, 12:46). Is the gospel not to all? Are the glad tidings not to every sinner? What says our Lord in His commission to the apostles?

"Preach the gospel to every creature" (Mar 16:15), that is, say to every creature it is for him. Do not say they are not glad tidings to me until I am renewed. That is evident absurdity. If they be glad tidings at all, they are so whether you are changed or not, whether you believe them or not. If they be not glad tidings to you, they are not so to any. Nay, if they be not glad tidings to you, then, of course, you are bound not to believe them at all; and in that case you will be under no guilt and no condemnation for not believing them. And besides, if the gospel does not extend to you, neither does the law; for you can find your own name as little in the one as in the other. And it would be as reasonable to say that the law does not condemn you, because you don't feel yourself to be a sinner, as to say that the gospel does not bring you forgiveness, because you do not feel yourself a renewed soul. If you will deny the gospel, deny the law too. If you will exclude yourself from the justifying power of the one, you may with as much reason exclude yourself from the condemning power of the other (Rom 5:15-21). Think on this and receive the gospel! Believe and live!

## 4. Unbelief

But you still say, I believe that the tidings in themselves are glad, and that they ought to fill me with gladness; but still they do not, and how is this? Again, I say, it is because you do not believe them, or at least that part of them which connects you with Christ, which bears upon yourself. But you say, I do believe them! Do you? Then you are a pardoned sinner, a saved soul; for Scripture says, "He that believeth...hath everlasting life" (Joh 3:36). Nay, you reply, I have not yet reached that point. I do not yet believe the gospel so as to be saved by it. Then you really do not believe it, or at least you do not believe it to be so true that you can trust your soul upon it! You cannot trust your soul upon it till you get something more, which you call feeling, to make it sufficient to bear the whole weight of your immortality! Does not that show you that you do not believe? For then you would feel yourself perfectly safe in God's hands, far safer in His hands than your own; and feeling that, you would commit your soul to His without one fear (Psa 31:5).

Now, what is it that makes a sinner feel that he is perfectly safe in committing his soul into God's hands? It is the knowledge that God has, by His Son, accomplished a work so perfect, so glorious, so all-sufficient, that it is no longer necessary that the sinner should die; nay, that it is now righteous in God to forgive and bless the sinner; and that God welcomes every guilty sinner back to Him just as if he had never sinned (Luk 15:7,10,12-24). Now that this work is done, why does not every sinner that hears it come and commit his soul to God? Just because he does not feel satisfied that the work is sufficient. He is, unconsciously perhaps, allowing some secret doubts of this kind to lurk in his mind. God declares, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat 3:17, 17:15). But he is not yet at one with God on this point. The moment that he comes to be at one with God in respect to the work of Christ, that moment he casts himself into his Father's arms, and is at peace! Oh, then, believe and live; believe and be at peace.

## 5. The Love of God

And this brings us to another view of the gospel, that is, the aspect in which it presents God's character to us, that of love—compassionate, unutterable love. In God's character, love is an essential part, for "God is love." But, then, how shall God show His love to sinners and yet be just? The work of Christ declares this. It discloses to us the depth of God's love to man, even when he became a sinner. It shows us that having secured all the ends of holiness and justice by the death of His Son in the room of the sinner, He is now at full liberty to let that love flow out to sinners. The blood of Christ proclaims to us how much God is in earnest in His hatred of sin on the one hand, and in His love to the sinner upon the other. Christ's work is the expression of God's love to sinners. It declares the infinite extent of that unutterable love. It has removed every ground of suspicion and distrust. It gives every sinner perfect ground of confidence in Him. An unfallen being cannot distrust God. The fall introduced an element of distrust. It was impossible that we could trust God, or feel ourselves safe in His hands, so long as we saw that He was under the necessity of punishing us. So long as we saw that He could neither be righteous nor holy unless He condemned us, so long we could not feel anything but dread of Him, and would see that our only security lay in fleeing from His presence. All this insecurity and distrust have been wholly removed by the death of Christ. God is no longer under the necessity of punishing the sinner. He is now at liberty to give full vent to His love. Nay, it is now a righteous and holy thing in Him to forgive the sinner (Rom 3:26; 1Jo 1:9). He is more glorified now in forgiving than in punishing the sinner. In His character, as revealed and ascertained to us in the work of Christ, there is full ground of confidence for every sinner. All may find refuge here. Acquaint thyself with Him, and be at peace (Job 22:21). To know God is to be at peace;

and all our disquietude arises from our not knowing Him. “They that know thy name will put their trust in thee” (Psa 9:10); that is, there is something in God’s name or character which cannot be known without producing confidence.

Here, then, there is full and sufficient ground of trust for sinners, a ground of confidence altogether independent of anything good in them. It is easy to see how God’s nature is fitted to give confidence to all unfallen beings. But here the question is, Is there enough in that character to warrant the confidence of those in whom there is absolutely no good? The gospel answers, Yes! It was for this very end that the Father sent His Son—to reveal His character to sinners; and it was for this that Jesus died and rose again, that a way might be opened up for sinners to avail themselves of that character. To all, then, this character is proclaimed as a ground of confidence, in virtue of which every sinner in the world may return to God in the perfect assurance of a gracious and most fatherly welcome. Anxious sinner! Think on this. “Hear, and your soul shall live” (Isa 55:3)!

## 6. How Shall I Come?

But it is perhaps asked here, Am I to come just as I am? Is this ground of confidence open to me as I am? Yes, just as you are. And am I at liberty to exercise confidence towards God in the first moment of my return; or am I not to wait for some more feeling, or conviction, or preparation? Must I not go and pray that I may be enabled to return; and use the means for helping this forward? Here you ask, Am I at liberty to trust at first; is my first act to be an act of confidence? To that I answer, Most certainly. The very thing which God wants you to do, and without which everything else is but an empty sacrifice, is to come and trust in Him (Psa 32:10, 34:8; Pro 30:5); and if you are not at liberty to do so at first, you never can be so; for the grounds of our confidence never alter, and you have just as much ground of confidence in God’s character at this moment as you ever can have. You think it presumption to put perfect confidence in God at once, and at first. It is not so. There is no presumption in doing that which God asks you to do, and in which He delights (Joh 4:10; Rom 10:11-13; 1Ti 4:10). Not to do so is far greater presumption; nay, it is worse, it is making God a liar.

And mark this, you must either trust or distrust God; and will you dare say it is your duty to distrust God when you come to Him? You shrink from such profanity. Then shrink from the awful guilt of not trusting God the first moment of your coming near to Him (Eph 1:13, 3:12; Heb 10:22, 11:6). Again you say, “I must wait and prepare myself, use the means, and pray that I may be enabled to return.” Nay, you must not wait; you must arise and go to your Father; and as for preparation, the only preparation I know of is just believing the record which He has given you of His Son. As to means, the simple truth regarding Jesus and His work is the only effectual means which Scripture sets before you. As to praying that you may be enabled to trust, etc., I ask, How can you pray to one in whom you have no confidence? You must trust before you can pray (Psa 7:1; 1Ch 5:20). If, then, you have at this moment sufficient reason for trusting God, what should hinder you doing so? What prevents your first act of return from being an act of confidence? The truth is, you are not yet fully persuaded that God’s character is really such as to afford ground of confidence. You want to get evidence of some change in yourself, and then you will believe this—that is to say, you want to go to God on some better footing than that of a sinner; and then you will be able to trust Him, and then you expect Him to recognize your newly-acquired claim. Such presumption! Such perversion of the gospel! To make your own character, and not God’s, your ground of confidence! Will God accept this at your hands?

Remember that the very first act of a sinner’s return to God is that by which, believing all that God has declared about His love in Christ, and His willingness to welcome every sinner who will return, he puts his trust in Him and says, “Abba, Father!” (Rom 8:15). Here is no

mystery and no mistake. God says, Return! (Isa 44:22; Jer 31:12,21), and that one word is sufficient for you, for it shows you the posture in which God is standing towards you, and that His feelings towards you are those of unutterable compassion and benignity. What more could you have to give you confidence in God! With such evidence of His character, how can you help trusting Him; or how could any amount of feeling in you give you greater ground of confidence than you will at this moment possess? Whether you will believe it or not, you have already most ample ground of confidence towards God, ground which remains the same whatever the state of your feelings may be. All you have to do is to avail yourself of this, by going to Him in confidence as one who no longer doubts what He has told you about Himself and His Son. Believing that testimony, go to Him as your Father; speak to Him as your Father; ask of Him what you will and it shall be done unto you. When, then, at any time, you lose your peace or hope, it is because you are forgetting the ground of your confidence, and letting go your hold of the testimony. And when you are seeking your way back to peace and confidence, do not begin to search for evidences of your own good estate, or pore over your past acts of faith, or attempt to work yourself up into great fervor of feeling; but go simply back to the sure testimony of God regarding the finished work of His Son, and say, "Is not all this still true, still the same? Then I need not fear nor be troubled. Why art thou cast down, 0h my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? (Psa 42:5,11), still trust in God: return into thy rest, 0h my soul."

## 7. Your Will

Do not say, I cannot believe. Christ says, Ye will not (Joh 5:40). It is your unwillingness that keeps you from believing. Do not say, I am seeking Christ, but cannot find Him. This is not true. It is Christ Who is seeking you, and not you who are seeking Christ. Cease to flee from Him. Allow Him to save you.[2] Do not mock Him by trying to save yourselves; or by trying to help Him to save you; or by trying to persuade Him to help you to save yourselves. It is thus that you thrust salvation from you. And so determined are you not to be saved in God's way, that till the Almighty Spirit make you willing, you will not give up these attempts to be your own savior: you will not consent to let Christ save you wholly. Do not say, I have done all I can, and am waiting for the Spirit. It is not true. He is waiting for you. He would come in and dwell in you if you would only give over resisting Him. Do not excuse yourselves and throw the blame on God, by referring to our Lord's words, "No man can come to me except the Father draw him" (Joh 6:44); for the meaning of that is plain, as showing the manner in which our unwillingness is overcome. We must be drawn, for we struggle and resist. And would you say that persons must go on in profligacy, because Scripture has said "they cannot cease from sin" (2Pe 2:14). Do not say, I am sure I am willing; remember, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. It is your unwillingness that keeps you from believing. If you can believe man's word, surely you can believe God's word, for it is the same act of mind in the one case as in the other: nay, you ought surely far more readily to believe God's word than man's word, for you have far better ground for believing the former to be true than the latter. When believing anything, you simply ask, Is it true? Or, in believing any person, you simply ask, is he worthy of credit? If satisfied that the person is worthy of credit, and the thing true, you at once believe it. If you know the thing to be true, whether it be spoken by God or man, how can you help believing it? Do you ask, What then keeps one from believing? I answer, many things, but chiefly these: hatred of truth, unwillingness, love of sin, pride, love of approbation (Joh 5:44), dishonesty (Mat 13:19, compared with Luke 8:15). These are some of the hindrances. But will you dare excuse yourselves by pleading these?

But then, if faith be so simple a thing, is it not incredible that we should get forgiveness, and life, and peace, and all the blessings of the kingdom, upon the putting forth of so simple an act?

Now, does not this show that you want to make a merit of your faith, to couple so many things with it as to make it somewhat deserving of such blessings? And if you couple your feelings to your faith, in order to give it weight, why may not another man couple his works? It is just because it is so simple, and allows no merit at all to man, that such mighty consequences hang upon it. It is evident that in making such an objection, you are supposing faith to have some merit, and that you are laying such stress upon the change wrought in you by the Spirit, as actually to make it part of the price of your redemption, and turning it into a self-righteous plea for acceptance with God. Or at least you are making your consciousness of the Spirit's work your warrant for believing and your ground of confidence. Now the Spirit's work must not be confounded with the work of Christ; and yet, according to your ideas, it seems as if it were the Spirit's work, and not Christ's, that contained the gospel! Oh, then, throw yourself upon the simple truth that Jesus died and rose again. "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation" (1Ti 1:15); that is, it is all true, and it is the very thing for you. Believe and live!

## 8. Being Sure

Do not say, I am not sure whether I believe or not, whether I love or not. If you say thus, the probability is that you neither believe nor love. And if you are content to remain in that state; if you say, as many do, a man cannot make sure of these things—then you may be quite sure that you have neither part nor lot in the matter. What! Can you not be sure whether you believe a thing or not? Does the prisoner not know whether he has believed the tidings of his respite and deliverance? What! Can you not be sure whether you love God or not? Is it so hard a thing for us to know whether or not we love an object? Are earthly loves accompanied with these uncertainties? Does the friend not know what friend he loves, and who it is that loves him in return. Does the natural eye not feel the difference when midnight is exchanged for the brightness of the rising sun (Joh 9:25; Col 1:13)? Ah! When thus you try to magnify the difficulties of making sure of salvation, is it not because you love the darkness rather than the light? How can you have one moment's peace so long as you are in doubt whether God be your Father or not? How can you live, how can you eat, how can you sleep, so long as you are not sure whether or not you are His child? How long will you go on praying that God may become your Father, instead of at once believing His testimony and going to Him in confidence as your Father? It will not do. There can be no life in religion, no liberty in God's service, no repose of spirit, till "Abba, Father" is the joyful utterance of the lip, the natural and spontaneous breathing of the heart (Rom 8:14-15; Gal 4:5-7)!

We say not these things to cause anyone to despair. Oh, no! But for the very opposite end. It is to bring every doubting, troubled spirit, at once to peace, by showing him where that peace is to be found. Weary sinners! Here are glad tidings for you! There is but a step between you and life! This very moment you may enter into peace! This very moment you may come and say, Abba, Father! All things are ready and you are welcome! Your Father seeks you: He has no pleasure in your death: He is in real earnest when He asks you to turn and live. His interest in your welfare is sincere and deep. Oh, then, return and be at rest! Believe what He has told you about the finished work of His Son, and arise and go to Him; enter again your forgotten home, take your place at the table, and rejoice with them that rejoice over you—"This our brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luk 15:32).

Ho, ye that are afar off—wandering in misery through the waste howling wilderness—return, return! The storm is rising, the last fatal storm—and where will you find shelter? Here is the refuge from the storm and the covert from the tempest—in the finished and accepted work of Immanuel (Isa 25:4, 26:20, 32:2; Mat 23:37). Place yourselves beneath this precious covert! Here is the paternal wing stretched out—oh, flee, flee to its shadow, that you may be sheltered

there! Oh, ere that wing be folded up, and all who have taken refuge beneath its ample stretch, be gathered up along with it—ere the covert be withdrawn and you left unsheltered amid the approaching storm—ere grace be gone and wrath begun—oh, flee, flee to the everlasting shelter of the all-protecting wing! “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust” (Psa 91:4).

# The Well of Living Water

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that bath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."—Isaiah 55:1

## 1. The Invitation

It is God Who is speaking to us in these gracious words. It is He Who says, "Ho!" and thus calls the attention of heedless men to His message of love. It is God Himself, even our own God, Who is thus calling on the children of men to come to the waters. He sees men everywhere turned away from Him, wandering in search of other objects, their ear closed against every voice, but that of the world, and He summons their attention. He invites them to stop and listen to His message. Ho, every heedless sinner; ho, every thirsty soul, there are tidings for thee! Come to the waters!

Is this invitation, then, to all sinners without exception? Or is it only a certain class that is addressed? Are all invited just as sinners? Is everyone at once to take the message as spoken to himself? Or is it only those who are quaked and prepared in some way that are addressed?

It is evident that the term "thirsty," is here used not to single out a peculiar class of sinners, but simply to describe the natural unhappy state of every unconverted soul. The thirst spoken of is not the thirsting after righteousness, but simply the sense of misery, and the desire to be happy which is in every fallen child of Adam, before he ever begins to thirst after righteousness at all. This is plain from the second verse, where those who are invited are described as "spending money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not" (Isa 55:2). That is to say, they are poor worldlings, throwing away their all upon vanity; toiling for what cannot feed their souls, nor yield them any return. Their way of spending their money and their labor is one which will do nothing for their souls. It brings them no ease. It does not fill the dreary void of the heart, that is left by the absence of God. It leaves them emptier, thirstier, hungrier, than before. These are the men that are invited. They are the same that Jesus invites when He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28), in which words He speaks of the burden which every man is bearing who remains away from God, just as the prophet declares the thirst that every man is enduring who has forsaken the fountain of living waters.

The words are therefore addressed to all! COME YE TO THE WATERS. To every sorrowful soul that says, "Who will show me any good?" to every weary sinner that would fain be happy, but knows not how; to every worldly sinner that is drinking from the world's broken cisterns—to all such, it is said, "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." He makes no exception. He says nothing that would exclude any. He invites ALL; and He invites them just as they are.

## 2. There Are Waters!

Here then is God's solemn declaration, that there are waters. It is no uncertain, no doubtful thing. There is such a thing as perfect blessedness for the soul. Most men seem to think, that as they have long gone from one thing to another, seeking happiness, and have always failed, they must just be contented to remain unhappy and make the best of a bad bargain. They have had their trials, but they are not worse off than others. They do not say that they have got their heart's desire, but merely that they have got all a man is likely to get, and have therefore no

right to complain. This is the best the poor soul can hope for, in that world to which he clings so fondly!

But there are waters! There are none in the world; it is a wilderness. But they are to be found in God. God says He has waters for us. He has that which will satisfy the soul, which will give us perfect peace, something that will make us supremely, infinitely blessed, so that we shall never thirst again. And He not only provides these, but He presses us to come to them. He would not have us remain another hour without them. It is the poor and the miserable that He invites; and He repeats the message, "Come ye," to show how earnestly He is pressing us to come.

And lest we should imagine that we are to buy or to earn these blessings ourselves, He tells us they are altogether free. They have been bought for us already. They are ours for the taking; it is not needful that we should have something of our own to buy them with. Our getting them does not depend upon our having anything, but takes for granted our wanting[3] everything. Our plea with God is not what we have, but what we need. Nor does the word "buy" here used, contradict this. It is employed to show us that though we have nothing, we are to come with the same confidence as if we had the full purchase-money to give! Though we could buy them all ourselves, we could not be more certain of obtaining these blessings! "Buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Every kind of enjoyment, every kind of refreshment is to be found here. And all free, all within your reach. It matters not how poor you be, how sinful, how helpless, how undeserving—the waters are free, free to the vilest, free to you!

Come with all your poverty, with all your guilt, with all your misery, and take the free waters of this "pure river, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." Drink and be blessed! Drink, yea, drink abundantly! Why spend money for that which will not satisfy your soul? God expostulates with you, in regard to this. He asks you, is it wise to act thus? Is it reasonable? Is it not madness in the extreme? Why then persist in it? Why not come at once, and drink freely of the water of life? It is this water which would quench your thirst forever!

Hear how God addresses you, and how again He says, "Hearken unto me; incline your ear, hear and your soul shall live." Thus we are taught that the source of all our misery is our not hearkening to God. We have hearkened to ourselves, to our friends, to the world, to the devil, but we have refused to listen to God. This has been our misery. Now the cure is just the opposite. We must listen to God. How simple, how blessed! The entrance of His words giveth light and peace. In hearkening to Him we shall find life to our souls. Hear and your souls shall live. Listen and live. No more! Oh, sinner, could life be had on easier terms than this? Could salvation be brought nearer, or made freer than this? Could the gate of heaven be thrown more widely open, or a more gracious, more certain welcome be presented to you?

## 3. Coming with Money

There is in us a constant tendency to come to God with money and with price, to do something to distinguish ourselves from others, and to get out of the common state of mankind; and in this spirit men read the words of the Holy Ghost, and instead of encouraging words, they make them discouraging. Thus, when it is said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," people say, "Yes, but I must come; if I do not come I will not get the rest." Now the intention of God is to fix your attention on the Person to Whom you are to come, "Come unto <u>me</u>;" but in a self-righteous state we fix our thoughts on the "come;" and we suppose this must be the money, this must be the price, and get at once into difficulties as to the way we should come. God wants us to think only about the "me;" but we in our self-righteousness think only about the "come." Thus we entangle ourselves in the thickets of unbelief, and draw darkness over our souls.

The Holy Ghost has used a variety of expressions, in order to prevent this error, and yet men will fall into it. For example, it is said in one place, Come; in another place it is said, Look; in another, Believe; in another, Hear, all to prevent your fixing on the act of your own mind, and to fix your attention on the object, which is Jesus Christ. Had it been any other subject than that of salvation, people would have committed no mistake about it. If I had said, "Hear! I have good news for you"; you would never have asked, How am I to hear? If I had said, "Look, and you will be rejoiced at what you see"; you would never have asked, how you were to look? If I had said, "Believe and you will find it much to your advantage"; you would merely consider whether what I said was true, without thinking of the act of believing. It is not our own act of believing, but the object believed, that is to bring us hope and peace. If we seek to draw our hope from knowing that we have believed, we are as far from the spirit of the gospel as the man who rests his hopes upon his alms-deeds. When we make our own faith the source of comfort, we are drawing from a broken cistern. It is impossible to obtain peace, or strength, or holiness, from knowing that we believe a fact, however true and important that fact may be. The fact believed may be a comfort to us; but our knowing that we believe it cannot be so.

When seeking peace for the soul, the question is not "Have we believed?" but "Has God, in very deed, made His Son a propitiation for sin?" Why is it that when such expressions are used in religion, they turn people's attention away from the thing spoken of to themselves? Just because men would turn the act of believing, looking, etc. (which is a bare receiving of what God says), into the money and the price by which to purchase what God gives. The variety of expressions used—Come, Hear, Look, Believe—is employed in order that we might not turn our attention away from what God says, and be taken up with thinking about some particular way of receiving it. "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isa 55:3). "This is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1Jo 5:11). Thus the news which God sends you is, just like every other piece of news, to put you in the attitude of a listener and not of a doer, in the attitude of a receiver and not of a worker at all.

## 4. Giving of Life

The thing which God is here said to give, is life, not mere safety, and security from wrath, not mere deliverance from hell. What, then, is this eternal life which God gives you? God's gift is His own life; not the life of mere enjoyment, the birds of the air and the beasts of the field have that life, but the life which God Himself had before worlds were. In other words, the purpose of God is not simply to make you happy, but to make you happy with God's own happiness—not simply to give you joy, but to give you the joy of the Lord—not simply to make you drink of the rivers of pleasure, but to make you drink out of the rivers of God's own pleasures, and out of the fountains of God's own happiness, that your joy should be the very same as his, springing from the very same source, and produced by the very same cause. God's best gifts are no portion for man. He Himself is the soul's only portion; he that does not know God as the light, the life, the blessedness of his soul, knows not God, and is without a portion at all! Life eternal does not consist in knowing that there is a God, and that there is a Savior, but in knowing God, and knowing the Savior, as the child knows his father, and as the friend knows his friend. Till we see Him and feel Him in His perpetually pervading presence of infinite holiness, and love, and beauty, and wisdom, we cannot be said to know that God for Whom we were created. This presence of His is our real home and our real joy, and until we become sensible of it, we are without a home, and without a joy, and without a portion in the universe! We are friendless and desolate!

God Himself is the soul's inheritance. The Lord's portion is His people, and the people's

portion is the Lord. God Himself, I say, is our inheritance. My enjoyment is to be in God, so that it continues as long as I continue and God exists, although the whole of creation were swept away. How, then, is God to be thus enjoyed? A person is to be thus an heir of God, by having God's own character in him. You may enjoy God's gifts, without enjoying His mind; but you cannot enjoy God Himself, without having His mind. If there is a person who has the power, and also the inclination to bestow much kindness upon me, I may feel an interest in that person and like his kindness, but if that person is to be enjoyed himself, apart from his gifts, it must be something in his character, something in his mind, something in him that would exist although his gifts should cease, from which my enjoyment is to spring. Now I cannot rejoice in God's holiness unless I am holy; I cannot rejoice in God's love unless I love; I cannot rejoice in God's righteousness unless I am righteous, nor in His truth unless I am true. Therefore it is, that in being renewed, we are said to be made partakers of the Divine nature, and are called to have the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus.

When God, therefore, speaks of waters, He means something in drinking of which you will be partakers of a Divine nature, something in drinking of which you will share in God's own blessedness. Where are these waters? How is man to be partaker of a Divine nature? How am I to feel as God feels? How am I, who by nature hate my God, and hate my neighbor, to love as God loves, to be holy as God is holy? Where is the provision for all this? It is in the sure mercies of David, "Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people."

Do you see then the difference between God's giving you a happiness, and God giving you His own happiness, and that this last is what God gives you in Christ? Are you giving God glory for this unspeakable gift? And can you bear witness that it is eternal life to know Christ? Can you, individually, say of what you have heard, "I know it is God's plan, because I am under its operation; it is taking effect in me; I find all things pertaining to life and godliness in Christ Jesus; I am made a sharer in a Divine nature"? If not, you are still without God and without hope in the world. You are not of that family of which Jesus Christ is the elder brother; you have not in you the mind of Christ. You may be earnest, you may be serious, you may be pains-taking, but you are not yet a Christian; God's plan has not yet begun to be accomplished in you.

## 5. Refusing to Believe

I beseech you see if this be the case. If so, and if God's purpose is not accomplished in you, why is it so? What is your excuse? There can be no real excuse, for there can be no reason but one. You are making God a liar. You are refusing to believe the record which He hath given you of His Son. There is no excuse but this horrid one, that when God is giving you in Christ all things pertaining to life and godliness, you do not believe that all these things are so entirely free to you; and your reason for making God a liar, for refusing to believe the freeness of His gift to you, is the pride of your heart.

The pride of the heart, in respect of pardon, is, that a man would have it said that he himself had bought it. Though you should, in doing what you can in the way of purchase, say it is little, and talk of its unworthiness, and call this humility, your attempt to purchase sufficiently shows your pride; and all your professions of humility will not screen you from the charge which God has against you, for not rejoicing in what He has provided for you in Christ, for refusing to glorify Him in giving thanks for His unspeakable gift. There are waters for you, free to you at this moment, open to you as you are! God invites and welcomes you to the fountain; yet you will not come—or when you think of coming, you insist upon bringing a price in your hand. This is your pride, your presumption. Oh, let it not be your ruin!

## 6. Conclusion

I have now declared to you the gospel of the grace of God; and I beseech you that you refuse not the word spoken, for that word shall judge you at the last day; and take heed that you are not found at that day on the left hand of the throne, from being too proud to receive salvation freely, to take the water of life without money and without price. This is the awful condemnation.

Oh! Then, wilt thou not come to the waters and take them freely? And if thou sayest that thou canst not because thine evil heart of unbelief will not allow thee, wilt thou not cry to Him Who made thy heart, and Who can make it new, and ask Him to lead thee to these living streams? And surely He will lead thee. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (Joh 4:10). The woman of Samaria had told our Lord that He ought not to have thought of asking anything of her on account of the disputes between His nation and hers. Such is the love of man to man! The Jew refuses water to the Samaritan, and the Samaritan to the Jew! But such is not the love of God! His is a free and boundless love, which gives liberally to all. If she had known the fullness of that love, how willing to give and how much it had already given unasked, she could not have allowed one suspicion to enter her mind. If she had known that He Who spoke to her was Himself the great gift of God to a lost world, and the dispenser of all other gifts, she would have asked, and He would have given her living water!

He speaks of His giving as the natural consequence of her asking! He speaks of the giving as necessarily following the asking, of the former as inseparable from the latter. How touching the declaration, how precious the promise! Sinner as she was, He told her that she had but to ask, and she was sure of receiving! Sinner as she was, she sought and she obtained, she asked and He gave! Ask, then, and you shall receive; and when you receive, oh!, then, all is well: the darkness is past, and the true light has risen! "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things" (Rom 8:32).

Ho ye thirsty!, parched and fainting,
Here are waters, turn and see!
To the thirstiest, poorest, vilest
Without money all is free
Thirsty sinner!
Drink and stay not, 'tis for thee.

Ho ye weary!, toiling, burdened,
With a world of woes opprest;
Come!—it is thy Lord invites thee,
Lay thy head upon my breast.
Weary sinner!
Come to Jesus, come and rest.

Ho ye wounded!, bruised, broken,
Come, and health divine receive;
Look to him Who heals the wounded,
He alone can healing give.
Wounded sinner!
Look to Jesus, look and live.

The Throne of Grace is a wonderful explanation of the Gospel's good news, in the simple, convincing, and strong language of a pastor who loves his sheep. It combines four separate tracts written by Bonar for outreach in his own land of nineteenth-century Scotland:

- The Throne of Grace – amplifies the freeness of the Gospel

- Righteous Reconciliation – explains how God can be both just and merciful toward sinners who deserve punishment

- Believe and Live – opens the childlike trust of Biblical faith

- The Well of Living Water – unfolds the Gospel's being without money and without price, and the sinner's need to come!

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889) was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, the brother of Andrew Bonar. Following his education at the University of Edinburgh, he maintained an active and powerful ministry for more than half a century. He pastored one of the main Presbyterian churches in Edinburgh until his death, which became known for its solid Bible teaching and revival. Throughout his life, he avoided all sensationalism and was a calm, patient, solemn, and steady writer. He was foremost a winner of souls, although he was also a great preacher and hymn writer (writing 600 hymns, over 100 of which are still in use). Like his contemporary Spurgeon, he had a special gift to put great truths into plain and understandable language. His tracts and books have become Christian classics, being in continual use since their writing. The following lines, taken from one of his hymns, express Bonar's view of the work of his glorious Savior, Jesus Christ.

Glory be to Him who loved us, washed us from each spot and stain.
Glory be to Him who bought us, made us kings with Him to reign!
Glory, glory, to the Lamb that once was slain!

[1] "Faith must first go before, and then feeling will follow.... Though you do not feel as you would, yet doubt not, but hope beyond all hope, as Abraham did; for always, as I said, faith goeth before feeling" – Becon, one of the Reformers.

[2] Editor: Here Bonar is not alluding to Arminian theology, where God is powerless to save a soul until he "opens the door of his heart and allows Christ to come in!" Rather, Bonar is balancing the sovereignty of God in salvation with the sinner's responsibility to seek after God and submit himself to Him.

[3] wanting – lacking.