

1210
LH 338

1210

A sermon preached by the late Mr. J.F. Hazelton on 17th May 1908 from the text Galatians 2 19. "For I through the law am dead to the law that I might live unto God."

This is a very remarkable verse, and some might be inclined to say a hard text, or a difficult text, and even in secret thought, a dry text, but if such a thought is in the heart there must be something very seriously wrong. The Apostle did not find it a dry subject; those to whom he wrote did not find it dry, for it dealt with their eternal standing before God. If we are dead to the law we are alive unto God, to heaven, to peace, to all things pure and holy, and being alive unto God, we have the pledge that when these immortal spirits of ours escape from their clay tenements, they shall enter the joy of their Lord. On the other hand, if we are alive to the law we are dead to God, strangers to His grace, strangers to His peace, and strangers to all things pure and true.

What is it that so often prompts people in this day to say a text like this is difficult and dry? Is it lack of Bible study, is it indolence that sends them simply to a Scripture the meaning of which lies entirely on the surface, is it a lack of the realisation of sin, or tenderness of conscience that makes them think it would be better by far for the preacher to take a plain simple passage rather than one such as this? Martin Luther, who wrote on the Book of Galatians in a way that it had not been written upon since the Apostles' days, says, "The truths of this Book, when they take hold of our hearts, make us able to stand against all the dangers of death, against all the terrors of conscience, and the terrors of sin." There must then be a secret here, for the truths of this Book felt in the heart of Luther made him able to stand against all the dangers of death; he thought nothing of them because he rejoiced in that Christ had made his peace with God. Our own John Bunyan says (as any reader of "Grace Abounding" may see for himself) that being in a sad and melancholy state spiritually, "One day God, who worketh all our ways for us, caused me to find a copy of Luther on the Galatians, and when I got hold of it, it was ready to fall piece from piece if I did but turn the pages over", but he says "if ever a man wrote a book out of my heart and out of his, that book is Luther on the Galatians, and I do prefer this book, except the Holy Scriptures, before all books that I have ever seen as most fit for a wounded conscience."

This epistle then is the book that Bunyan found with all his tenderness, "most fit for a wounded conscience", so there must be balm in our text. Yes, the full salvation of our God is here; His finished salvation, and His complete and glorious redemption.

Let us remember that the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, as inspired by the Holy Ghost, were addressed to plain and simple-minded men and women, for the most part poor and uneducated.

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

They were not sent to leaders and teachers, but to regenerated Jews, to regenerated idolaters, to those who had been brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light; and the Apostle wrote upon themes which were the very life of the people to whom these letters were addressed, and by whom no doubt they were read with the deepest interest. They dealt with doctrines, but with doctrines received in the love of them, which the Apostle says is the only way to receive truth - to take the doctrines of our most holy faith into our very hearts, so that the heart's tendrils may twine around them and by faith become the food of our souls - truth to live and die upon. If we simply hold the truth and nothing more, we may part with it, but when the Truth holds us, when the Gospel meets our case and we cling to it, that is receiving the truth in the love of it, and we can never, never more be parted from it. You know there is an old Latin motto, "teneo teneor" - I hold and I am held. That is the Christian's motto, ^{embraced which means} and the Gospel as set forth in this verse today, the saving truth for life and for death. We have to die, and the time may come when you will know there is no hope for you; or it may be sudden death will overtake you. Pray with Tiptaft, "Lord make me right and keep me right!" There is no hesitation in this Gospel, and there is no boasting. I know--it is a "Thus saith the Lord." The Apostle did not apologise for what men would call his intolerance, when he says "If any man come unto you with any other Gospel....let him be accursed." It was the Gospel of which he never wearied, and which meets the case of those that have to do with "this present evil world", as he calls it. It is a busy world, a light-hearted world, a pleasure-seeking world, but it is a world of sin, and pain, and broken hearts, and weeping eyes, and death and the grave. Oh, to be right with God, right in time, right for eternity!

Let us speak first about the FACT ASSERTED - "I through the law am dead to the law"; and secondly about the BLESSED RESULT - "that I might live unto God."

First, the FACT ASSERTED - "I through the law am dead to the law." Now there was a great fault in the Galatian church, and the whole scope of this letter was to counteract that fault, which is also natural to every human heart, and natural even to the hearts of God's people, i.e., legalism or legality. Let me try to explain it. The Galatians were a heathen people, but the Gospel being preached to them, the Lord in accordance with His own Word, did then what He is doing now - not converting the world, but calling out, wherever His Gospel is faithfully preached, a people to His Name. These called-out people received the message; they believed it on sound honest credible testimony, for those who had brought the message had, many of them, seen our blessed Lord, and were eye-witnesses of the things which they described. They not only received their message on sound testimony, but that message was accompanied

by the power of God the Holy Spirit, so that they were translated out of Satan's kingdom into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. Whenever God is doing a work, the devil is always busy, this is our own individual experience, as Joseph Hart says - when God plants His grace in the heart

"That moment the conflict begins".

The good seed of truth was sown among these Galatians, and Satan was busy scattering the tares of legalism - an evil doctrine - so that it came to pass that the pure and precious truth of God became greatly overlaid with error, and the Galatians became entangled in the meshes of the enemy.

What was the Gospel which the Apostle Paul and others proclaimed to them? It was the Gospel (and there is no other) of pardon and peace through our Lord Jesus Christ alone, and they had received that gladly. But very soon they became frightened at the very simplicity of the truth of God, at the very simplicity of God's way of salvation, and the Apostle was always anxious with regard to this, warning those to whom he wrote, lest they should be removed from the "simplicity that is in Christ".

Simple! What does it mean? Literally it means without folds, without intricacies, to be so plain that "he who runs may read, and that the wayfaring man though a fool may not err therein". The Galatians became frightened at the simplicity of the truth, and began to fear that it would not do to trust exclusively in the finished work of Christ. There is however no other Gospel but that - the Gospel that affirms that God has done it all, and that the work of Christ in a sinner's heart is His from beginning to end. The Galatians were frightened at the simplicity of the truth that salvation depends entirely on the work of Christ - nothing more and nothing less. They began to look about for props, props of their own doings, props of Jewish ceremonial observancies. Their fault is also ours naturally, for it is not in any human heart by nature to trust implicitly in the record which God has given to us of His Son.

This truth has been manifest down all the ages - God stands alone with His Word, and the world by nature stands opposed to Him - the world professing and the world profane; there is no middle path. Here is God in His Trinity of Persons with His own blessed Word, the record which He has given of His dear Son, and there is the world by nature, wrapped up in legality and pride of its own performances, opposing God and His Word, but right down the ages we see passing from one side to the other - passing from the world opposing to God and His Word - a multitude that no man can number. They come through the power of the Grace of God, and they come believing the record that God hath given to us of His Son. If today you receive this Word in its

entirety and in its integrity as the record given by the holy and heart-searching God of His dear Son, who is the sinner's only Saviour, and His work the only way of salvation, Christ has done great things for you! You may not have the peace and the joy and the assurance that you long and pray for, but do you, can you say "That Word from the beginning to the very end is Thy record; Lord, Thy Word speaks to me, and on the truths this Book discloses I build my hope for time and for eternity. The Word is Thine, the salvation is Thine, the work is Thine, and

"The work which Thy goodness begins
The Arm of Thy Strength must complete."

If this is your language then Christ has indeed done great things for you.

Here then is the principle which was in the Galatian Church and which I have referred to as an illustration of the same principle that is in our own evil hearts of unbelief - the principle of introducing that which would mar and stain the blessed Gospel of the Grace of God; the principle of creature works. But the Apostle says clearly the Law can never save, never justify, for in the 7th chapter of His Epistle to the Romans he writes "When the commandment came" (that is God's law) to my heart and I felt what God demanded and by His law insisted upon, "sin revived and I died". What is his meaning? Why this I was going on full of zeal, full of religion of a natural kind, an ecclesiastic of the ecclesiastics, and did not feel I was a sinner, but, when the Law of God became real to me, "sin revived lifted up its head in my heart - and I felt what an awful sinner I was, so that I died to all hope of salvation in the things that I was so diligently practising. And how did the commandment come? It was the last commandment - "Thou shalt not covet", and the Apostle says, when that came home to my heart I saw that I had broken that law, and was guilty of all. What a mercy when we die to all hope of salvation under the law, when we die to all in which we once trusted, and live unto God!

How is the spirit of legality shown? Look at the Pharisee. He said "Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men, or even as this publican". Humanly speaking the Pharisee very likely was a moral and honest man, and in all probability the publican was, or had been, a very great cheat, as we know many of them were. Then again, another man will enumerate his moralities - "I have never committed murder, I have never stolen etc, etc. But the snare is this - men take the few fair flowers that may grow here and there, and overlook altogether the poisonous and ruinous weeds. Another discovers a fault in his neighbour, which he believes he has not himself, and the spirit of it all is that the man believes he can find salvation in himself in whole or in part; but when God deals with the soul we die to all that, and, in relation to dying to the law, we live unto God.

What a great and glorious Gospel there is in connection with this! "If righteousness come by the law", if a man can save himself, "then Christ is dead in vain", the gift of a precious Saviour is all in vain. Again, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law", and the coming and gift of the Lord Jesus Christ would have been absolutely in vain.

How does the gift come? How does the blessing come of death unto the law, and of life unto God? We have not to go outside this letter to find the answer. Here in the 4th chapter we have it - "God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law to redeem (to buy back; not simply to purchase, but to buy back those given to Him from all eternity by His Father, the eternally loved people of the living God) "them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." If Christ has redeemed us, He has redeemed us from every vestige of the curse of the law, for He stood as our Surety, Substitute and Representative under the whole weight of heaped up sins of His dear people, a multitude that no man can number. He stood there in our place with that appalling load upon Him, and God treated Him as if personally a sinner. There was no sin in Him, but "He was made sin", the sin offering, "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him". He was "made a curse for us"; there is nothing left for us to do. We are no longer under the law, but under grace; we are dead to the law, so the law has no curse for those who are in Christ Jesus and those for whom He died.

Now what evidence have we in our own hearts, or is there a total absence of evidence, that Jesus died for us? We must bring all these things down to a point of experience. Of what avail is it to hear this great and glorious salvation preached if in the heart there is no response? Our text gives the evidence, "That I might live unto God." The 5th and 6th verses of the 4th chapter of this epistle shed a beautiful light on this redemption and its purpose; the 5th says "He died to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons", which "sons" are they whose place He occupied, and whose curse He endured; then the 6th verse goes further and says, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father." This brings conviction of sin, penitence, a looking to Jesus and a crying for mercy, and these experienced will be the token "in your hearts" that you are redeemed and therefore "sons", and entitled to cry "Abba, Father". If there is life in our souls, God hath sent forth His Son for us, and now sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. Through the death of Christ we are dead to all the claims of God's law and justice that we may live unto God.

This does not mean that the child of God is careless with

regard to sin. Look at the result of Christ's redemption for a moment - "That I might live unto God". That word of Hart's already quoted as to the conflict beginning the moment grace enters the heart expresses the position. We are dead to the law, but not oblivious to sin within; we cannot be because of the life of God in our souls contending with the foes in our own hearts. The oldest Christian is painfully conscious of this conflict, but you "live unto God", you have been loosed from the hold of the law, have been married to Another, brought into vital union with Christ the Lord, and now fruits unto righteousness are to be the result.

Think of that word in the 3rd of Colossians. "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God". "Therefore it does not matter how we live," says someone. Perish the thought! Wherever the truth to which I have been referring enters the heart this follows:- "Mortify therefore", - because we are dead, "Mortify therefore your members" (the members of the old nature) "which are upon the earth". He who feels anything of the love of Jesus, he who is looking to Calvary's Cross for salvation and peace will hate sin, and as the love of God enters his soul he will seek day by day to obtain victory over indwelling sin. This is his language:-

'Twas I that shed the sacred Blood,
I nailed Him to the tree,
I crucified the Christ of God,
I joined the mockery.

Yet not the less that Blood avails
To cleanse away my sin,
And not the less that Cross prevails
To give me peace within.

We live unto God through the Spirit of His Son conveying into our hearts the Life Eternal. This is beautifully typified in the 14th chapter of Leviticus, where the leper is excluded from the congregation of Israel, and you will find that right through the history of his cleansing he was passive; he could not be otherwise for he was a banished man. The priest accomplished all. Even when a leper was to be pronounced clean, he stood by while two birds were brought, of which in accordance with God's command, one was killed over an earthen vessel full of running water, that the blood of the slain bird might be mingled with the running water. Then the priest sprinkled the leper seven times with the water and blood, and taking the living bird he dipped it in the blood of its dead fellow and let it loose to soar heavenwards. The slain and the living bird typify the one Christ. The living bird, soaring heavenwards, bore upon its wing the significant token of accomplished atonement, and is a type of the Lord Jesus entering into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us with His shed blood. And what is

true there of our dear Lord, is also true of His people. They are sprinkled by the blood of Jesus, plunged in that precious blood -

Let the water and the blood
 From Thy wounded side which flowed,
 Be of sin the double cure,
 Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

He that is "dead to the law", is like the living bird soaring upwards; he who is dead to the law lives unto God, entering into Gospel liberty, and desiring under the sweet graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit those things which make for our eternal peace.

Jesus my all to Heaven is gone,
 He whom I fix my hopes upon,
 His track I see, and I'll pursue
 The narrow way till Him I view.

Every redeemed soul can truthfully say "Oh! this Gospel meets my case. I believe the record that God hath given to me of His dear Son. Unbelief is in my heart and will remain there more or less to the very end, but Lord, help my unbelief and increase my faith that I may, during all my days, live a life of faith upon the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me. With no stock of grace in myself, but a full store in my beloved Lord, and depending upon Him, from His fulness I shall receive grace, even grace upon the top of grace." Amen.