

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

THE APPOINTMENTS OF GOD.

In considering the appointments of God, respecting our eternal future, two facts meet us plainly: First, These appointments are all made for our good and none for evil. Second, These appointments are not left among God's secrets, but are plainly revealed for us and for our children. "For God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus." I. Thess. v. 9. God's word and works reveal and explain His appointments.

God has two classes of appointments, *absolute* and *conditional*. The first never fails of accomplishment, the second sometimes does. To understand these two classes we must always observe the distinction between them. To confound the two is sure to lead to error and confusion.

God gives us the means of good *unconditionally*, but He gives the good that come through those means *conditionally*. The same rule obtains in nature and in grace. The Lord gives the farmer a fruitful earth and rain from heaven and fruitful seasons and these without any condition on the farmer's part. God's appointment in this is *ABSOLUTE*. But He gives these blessings in order that the farmer may cultivate the earth, sow the seed and reap a crop that will fill him with food and gladness. He gives to all *unconditionally* the means of raising a crop, but does not give to all farmers, whether they work for it or not a crop, for it is only "the willing and obedient that shall eat the fruit of the land." This is plain enough in things temporal, nor is it less plain in spiritual things. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." This was done without any condition on the part of a lost world. No one of the lost even asked for this "unspeakable gift." It was *absolute*. But God gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John iii. 16). Thus, it is very plain that God gave His beloved Son without any condition on the part of the lost, but gives eternal life to the lost on condition that they believe on His Son. One gift is *absolute* the other *conditional*. We thus learn how an *absolute* appointment cannot fail, and a *conditional* may and will when the conditions are not fulfilled—hence the difference between the two.

Universalists say, God will save all for whom Jesus died. Hyper-Calvinists say the same. One party sees plainly that Jesus died for all, that He, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, etc., etc. The other sees as plainly that all will not be saved, that at the judgment one part "will go away into everlasting punishment and the other into life eternal." The first party concludes positively that all will be saved for Jesus died for all, and it is the will of God that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. The second party concludes that Jesus did not die for all for some will go away to everlasting punishment. Here, then, are the two conclusions: First, *All will be saved*. Second, *Jesus did not die for all*. Is either of these conclusions in the Bible? No, indeed. But they are contradicted scores of times in the Bible. What, then, leads to the mistakes of both parties? Why it is in ignoring the distinction between the two classes of appointments and making them *all absolute*. A popular preacher said once: "If God wants to save a man and the man is not saved it proves that the devil is stronger than God." If that were true it would place in the hand of every evil-doer a triumphant weapon

against the righteous judgment of God. It is not because of God's weakness and the devil's superior strength that the idler does not reap nor the rejecter of Christ is not saved.

Let us notice WHERE AND WHY God's *conditional* promises have failed. "Wherefore, the Lord God of Israel saith: 'I said, indeed, that thy house and the house of thy fathers should walk before Me for ever;' but now the Lord saith, 'Far be it from Me, for them that honor Me, I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'" (I. Sam. ii. 30). Here the Lord declares that what He had appointed, and emphatically declared, respecting the house or family of Eli, would NOT BE FULFILLED, because Eli's sons had despised and dishonored Him before the people, instead of fulfilling the conditions of His appointment.

"Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for His life and thy people for His people." (I. Kings xx. 42). Here was God's will opposed and His appointment broken, not because Satan was stronger than God, but because Ahab did not obey the Lord's command in the destruction of a wicked king, but made a bargain with him and sent him away, and for so doing would suffer death in his stead. So God's conditional appointments are not accomplished when moral agents refuse to act their part in the matter.

It was God's appointment to gather the Jews under the spreading wings of His dear Son who would save them from their sins and their punishment. But this appointment failed because they would not be gathered. If any doubt this let them hear the words of the weeping Jesus: "How oft would I have gathered Thy children . . . and ye would not." (Luke xiii. 34, 35).

In the 7th chapter of Luke, at the 30th verse, we learn what was the *counsel* of God which is the same as His appointment. It was that men should believe John's preaching and be baptized of him. God had but one counsel in the matter. While the publicans justified God or went with His counsel, the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves—not being baptized of Him. Here God's appointment failed in one case and was fulfilled in another, because one party justified God in doing what He appointed and the other rejected His counsel. We here see where God's conditional appointments have failed and why they have failed because moral agents have refused to do their part in the divine appointment. We will now show that God

HAS APPOINTED MEN TO BE SAVED BY JESUS CHRIST.

All Christ's actions on earth as well as His teaching by words confirm the fact that He came not to destroy but to save men. God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world—but that the world through Him might be saved. His inspired apostles' testimony on the matter is as follows: One says, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." (I. John ii. 2). Another says, "That he, by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. ii. 9). And again it is said of God, "Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and man—the man Christ Jesus who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time." (I. Tim. ii. 4, 5, 6). Here it is plainly declared that Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all and also that God will have all men to be saved.

The Gospel, as Paul defines it in I. Cor. xv., is that Christ died for our sins and was buried and rose again. When Jesus sent this Gospel it was to be preached in all the world to every creature. Not merely before every creature but to every creature. That is His apostles were by Him commanded to tell every lost man and woman that

Jesus died for their sins, etc., etc. What they were to tell every sinner is true, it hence follows inevitably that He died for all. Nothing is more absurd than to tell a man that Jesus died for him if he will only believe it. We are to tell him that the Gospel is true whether he believes it so or not. His unbelief does not alter the truth but it will condemn him for not believing what is true and will ever remain true forever.

God has prepared a kingdom for men from the foundation of the world, and in the last judgment Jesus will welcome those on His right hand to it. But He will send those on his left hand away into a place not prepared for them, but prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matt. xxv. 34-41). When men by sin lost all claim to the place which God had prepared for them, He gave His dear Son to save them and fit them for that kingdom, but those that despise the love of God and reject the Saviour will be sent to another place prepared for others. It will eternally torment the lost to know that they have opposed the counsel of God and rejected the offered love of Jesus while they might have gained eternal life and honored and justified a merciful Saviour. While men are now refusing to accept the pardoning mercy of God they know very well they are breaking His appointments. How will they feel when all their liberty is taken from them, and they bound hand and foot are in outer darkness?

When a sinner, moved by the dying love of Jesus, turns to God, he enjoys a sense of pardoning mercy which is greatly enhanced by the thought that God's purposes are fulfilled in his case. It is no wonder that there is joy among the angels of God when one sinner repents.

It is an encouragement to those who are laboring to save men that they are laboring together with God, not only to save others, but to accomplish His appointments and to honor Him before the universe. It is an encouragement which disarms opposition, rebukes supineness, and inspires hope—a hope that maketh not ashamed. And when they shall have ceased from their labors and their works have followed them, when they see the King in His beauty and be made like Him, and know Him and His appointments even as they are known, they will be fully fitted for the joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Original Contributions.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPEL.

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God promises every person salvation, pardon of sin, that believes and obeys the Gospel of Christ. It is of very great importance, then, that we know what this Gospel is. In I. Cor., xv. 1-5, we are plainly told just what it is. Paul says he received it from Christ; preached it to the Corinthians and that they were saved by it. Now this same Gospel saves the whole world if accepted, for Paul tells us again that it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes it. These three great facts that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, are what God calls on us to believe with all the heart, and if we go to the Bible and with a true, anxious heart read and meditate as we read the four books—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, that tells us so plainly what Jesus did for us, we cannot help believing; and as we learn how much Jesus loves us, even to die for us, we cannot help loving Him and feeling our need of Him as our Saviour. We then decide to break off from our sins to come to Christ and be saved. It is the determination of our hearts to follow Christ; this is repentance, and