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EDITORIAL.

MERCY AND TRUTH.

(A part of a discourse delivered at New Glasgow, January 10.)

Mercy and Truth are met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other;
Truth shall spring out of the earth, and
Righteousness shall look down from heaven.
—Psalms lxxv. 10 11

Many things in the Old Testament point to the salvation of Christ revealed in the New. God claimed as His family the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which grew so large as to become a nation. He dearly loved that nation, gave them the beautiful land of Canaan. They bore His name and had His worship, and His oracles, while the other nations had not. It was very hard for a loving Father to punish His children, and especially by an alien nation, but to be true to His character they must be punished for persisting in sin and rebellion. His truth prevented His mercy flowing to them.

David is thought in this psalm to allude to the return of Israel from Babylon, after 70 years of sore captivity. It was sad indeed to witness their rich and beautiful house, in which their fathers worshipped God, stripped and burned, their king disgraced and slain, and them and their children in heathen slavery; but this was the fruit of their disobedience. But after they were punished and humbled, truth and justice met and they were restored to their land and were permitted to rebuild the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. While this was transacted on earth, righteousness looked down with approving smiles from Heaven.

While these things came prophetically before the Psalmist's mind, it is thought, and justly, that he rose far higher to the contemplation of the divine attributes meeting in the person and work of the Son of David and the Son of God. Whatever he saw of God's truth and mercy shining in this, it was but a glimmering type of the glory that shines in the face of this anointed sacrifice, Priest, Mediator, and method of approaching God, but pointed to Him who is the true High Priest, true Sacrifice and only Mediator between God and man. He is the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Him, and is hence called by David in this sublime passage, TRUTH. He is the true God and eternal life.

We will consider law—its penalty and its transgression. Some men who are ignorant of the scriptures, of useful arts and economy, are quite expert in the knowledge of law, of its penalties and the best methods of evading them, others who are intelligent in Bible knowledge, in arts and economy, don't know so much when it comes to points of law; how is this? The law was not made for a righteous man but for the lawless, etc. The honest man is not brought even into a court of law on his own account and seldom attends, but a lawless man is often there. When a man commits capital crime how soon he seeks out the ablest and most unscrupulous lawyer to assist him in his trouble. An innocent man needs nothing of the kind. Just laws are to prevent or punish wrong and "work wrath" on their victims. They proclaim "tribulation and wrath" instead of mercy "on every one that doeth evil." How truth and mercy can meet in all their glory in the case of the guilty, or in other words how God justifies the ungodly and still remains JUST, is the grandest discovery in the universe. No wonder that the angels desired to look into it. We will refer to a few facts in ancient history, not in an attempt to reach the unsearchable, but what may be useful in speaking of law in general and its penalties.

Case 1. It is said of Brutus, a Roman general, that when his army was drawn up in form of battle before the enemy who confronted the whole length of his lines, he ordered his men not to accept a challenge from the foe to single combat to decide the issue of the day, and pronounced the sentence of death on the man who should disobey. Soon a strong man from the enemy came forward into the space between, and insultingly challenged Rome's strongest man to meet him. After enduring for a long time his bragadoia and charges of cowardice, the martial spirit of one of Brutus' sons was so stung and aroused by his insolence that he rushed into the space, fought a terrible duel, slew his enemy, stripped him of his armour, won the day for his countrymen and returned to the army amid their triumphant shouts. But their joy was soon turned to deepest sadness when they realized the doom of the heroic youth. He had disobeyed a military order whose penalty was death, and although the pity of a father's heart pled for mercy there was none for his son. He had violated law, and if Brutus spared him he could never punish another, the army would be disorganized and the country ruined. Mercy and truth could not meet here and he must die.

Case 2. An ancient king passed a law against adultery, and decreed that the transgressor was to lose both his eyes. His own son was the first to break the law. He was brought to his father who also yearned in pity for his son, but law and government were involved, justice and honor at stake. He discovered an expedient. He was higher in rank and law than the offender, no subject was so high. He had one of his own eyes taken out and one of his son's, and thus he honored law and so far spared his son. Truth and mercy met in this case. Had a subject offered one or even both of his eyes to spare the prince it could not, on account of inferiority be accepted, but the sacrifice being made voluntary by one higher than the offender, justice was satisfied and crime condemned. Besides the effect this self-denial would have upon the son, every time his subjects looked they could see mercy and truth shining in the face of their noble sovereign, kindling afresh their regard for law and increasing their admiration of and affection for him who was so just and yet so merciful.

We will suppose a thousand men rise in rebellion against a king who had an only son. Some of the rebels were young and led into it, they were conquered and brought to justice, their sentence was ten years banishment with hard labor. The King and his son both pitied the rebels, but law must take its course. The Prince says, "To save these rebels I will go in their place and put in the ten years slavery." The King accepts the offer and the Prince puts in the time, enduring the greatest hardships but grandly bearing it all. No law required him to make this offer, but he did it for the love and pity he had for the rebels. The King was under no obligation to accept the offer, but love for the rebels caused him to give up his son. Such was the love of both father and son. At the end of the ten years the Prince returned and was crowned King; his first act was a proclamation of pardon to the thousand rebels that in consequence of his bearing their punishment he would pardon every one of them on plain terms which he distinctly mentioned. Suppose a number of these refuse the pardon and would not come to terms but rejected the whole that was done by the king and his son, what would be the just and natural consequence? Would these rebels be pardoned when it was remembered that the prince did all this that they might, not that they must be saved. Certainly they would be guilty of rebellion increased and aggravated a thousand fold by their rejection of the offered pardon and contempt for all that the king and his son had done and suffered to reconcile them to favor and happiness. All that witnessed it

would justify the hat that refused any other sacrifice but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.

On the other hand when the rebels heard the amnesty proclamation, when they heard what the King and Prince had done for them, they believed it with all their heart and gladly submitted to the terms of reconciliation, how inexpressible the happiness of all concerned. The King's love for the rebels has annihilated their enmity and kindled their love. The prince remembered his sacrifice and suffering and is satisfied, and the brightest banners of the nation float in the breeze at the reception of these trophies of a sovereign's wisdom and love.

But anything to compare with the redemption of our fallen race by the Son of God, eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, and many an enlightened mind hath struggled with the question, "how shall I my Saviour set forth."

Sin hath entered into the world, and death by sin. It affects the whole race. The very ground is cursed for it, man must labor and suffer and die till he return to that ground from which he was taken. It was pure when he came from it but cursed when he returned. Without shedding of blood was no remission, and God's worshippers offered sacrifice for 4,000 years. But it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins, and even when God's own nation was at the zenith of its glory, his prophet exclaiming "sacrifice and offerings thou did not desire but a body hast thou prepared me," Ps. xl. 6, 7, uttering 1,000 years in advance His words who came as it was written in the volume of the book, to do thy will, O God. He came to take away these sacrifices that He might establish the sacrifice of that body God had prepared for Him. Heb. xvi. He who came in dignity far above every creature named in heaven or earth says, "I go to do thy will, O God, I'll go to seek and save the lost. Have they reproached thee? let these reproaches fall on me. Have they broken thy holy law? I will fulfil that law and make it honorable. Are they for sin accursed? I will be made accursed by hanging on a tree. Are they all doomed to sink into the ground that was cursed for sin? my dead body shall lie with them." Thus the Just offers himself for the unjust that He might bring them to God. No law required this, but He who was before all law and above all law volunteered this sacrifice, and the loving Father accepted it. He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. The dignity of Christ gave a value to His sacrifice. No creature however high or however pure could give his life for another, because it was not his own to give, but Jesus in whom is life (Jno. i. 4) laid down His life, for He had power to lay it down and had power to take it again. God could honourably pardon sinners through the death of His son. Here mercy and truth meet together and righteousness and peace kiss each other, because the True One or Truth has sprang out of the earth and righteousness has looked down from heaven.

How hard, how cruel for lost sinners to reject a pardon which Jesus offers through His death, and immediately after He was crowned Lord of all. They not only refuse the full pardon of all their past sins, but they add to them the far greater and the unpardonable crime of treating with despite the wisdom and love of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

But who can describe the blessedness of receiving that salvation; to have the blessed assurance that all that has ever been done against a loving Father is blotted out of his books never to come up again, to have the enmity destroyed by the blood of the cross, and the Holy Spirit bearing witness with our own spirits that we are the children of God.

"Happy day when Jesus washed my sins away."

O sinner, will you accept of a full and a free pardon from Him who speaks from the very throne of heaven "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." How can you refuse His love and be lost for ever?