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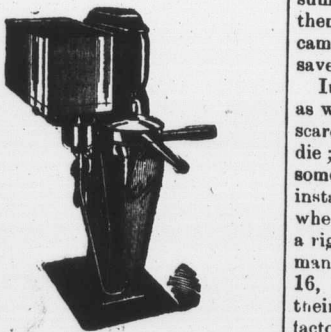
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Man's Fall and Recovery

"So then, as through one trespass, the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so, through one act of righteousness, the free gift came unto all men to justification of life."—Rom. V, 18 (Am. Rev.)

One writer has said: "This epistle is very difficult, mysterious, wonderful, and sublime, but contains much that even a child can understand; like a rock a man cannot climb, with mosses and flowers at its foot an infant can gather."

If St. Paul in Rom. V 15, teaches that through offense of one man many are dead, that his character was marred on account of disobedience, that in his natural state all his tempers are sensual and earthly, and his affections set on temporal things and not on things eternal, and that he merited no interposition in his behalf; he just as plainly teaches in Rom. V: 7, 8, that His love is impartial and universal, that the blood of Christ, God's dear Son, atones for all the race, and that every son of man has the transcendent privilege of being restored to righteousness, and true holiness, of being made into a vessel unto honor. We believe that Christ tasted death for every man, but none can partake of the benefit except in believers.

Many there are who do not believe these things. They believe in a partial atonement only, or the doctrine of particular redemption with its associate doctrines of particular election and particular reprobation. We have not so learned Christ. If these doctrines be true, then free-will, or the doctrine that man chooses or rejects salvation, is almost abrogated. We institute a battle-field here, and humbly assert that the grace of God is not only unmerited on the sinner's part, but that it is boundless and free.

Again, there are those who never heard perhaps, of absolute predestination, yet they are grinding in the prison-house as did Samson, waiting for God to compel them to be saved, saying, "If I am to be saved, I will be; if I am to be lost, I will be." These seem to be trusting in traditional or parental teaching to guide them, instead of the Word.

There is yet another class of people who are under the fatal delusion that man, after all, is not so very bad, and if they do not actually commit murder, adultery or theft in very deed, but keep well within the civil law, being fair outwardly, they are not far from the kingdom, but actually in it. A certain man was heard to exclaim, "She is a good girl; what has she ever done?" Pharisees were sticklers for forms and ceremonies yet the Master accused them of being whited sepulchres because of their uncleanliness inside. The heart was not right.

Now, there are very few persons who dare to make shipwreck of life intentionally, but nearly all seek in some way to build surely. When we build upon the rock Christ Jesus, the rains may descend, the floods come and the winds blow, and beat upon that house, but it falls not, for it is founded upon a rock. Dear reader, let us search the Word as for eternity. To that end, O Lord we pray to be instructed and enlightened as we consider:

1. Man's love to each other partial.
2. God's love to us impartial.
Man's love to each other partial. Man is the noblest of all God's creatures, is fearfully and wonderfully made, endued with great powers, and yet he is a finite being. No man can redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him—Ps. XLIX., 7. His attributes are limited. The scriptures declare this when they say that a measure of faith only is given unto every regenerate man—Rom VII 3., and likewise also in regard to hope and love. God has unlimited power and wisdom and love, but the creature can only love in proportion to his knowledge. The disciples marvelled when they beheld their Master in conversation with a Samaritan heretic (John IV., 27), but their all seeing Master beheld in her a convert. The disciples love to the woman was partial, it was biased, unnatural.

When the Master was ill-received in a Samaritan village (Lu IX., 53), his disciples, James and John, entreated that fire be sent from heaven to consume them; but the Master rebuked them and said that the Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them.

In the text we have Paul's testimony as well. The great apostle says, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." Not an instance do we find in the word of God where any person sacrificed his life for a righteous man, i. e. a moral, upright man; but we do find in 2 Sam. XXII, 16, where a number of men risked their lives for a good man, i. e. a benefactor to society. Paul plainly states though that the occasion was a chance one. We read thus, David was in an hold, and longed for water, and three mighty men, Adino, Eleazar, and Shamah, broke through the ranks of the uncircumcised and obtained the precious draught at the risk of their own lives.

Many no doubt will not be exactly suited with the above interpretation, and say that we have put man in too low a scale. They will affirm that they are the martyrs' spirit, that if they are a holy people—and rightly; that they are perfected in love; that they have the martyr's spirit; that it the

awful fires of persecution broke out they would be able to stand the test. We admit that many would gladly do it; but for whom would they sacrifice their life?—humanity or divinity?—Christ or the creature?

One of the chief lessons to be noted in this text is the vast difference between man's love and the love of God. Paul contrasts them; he notices what men will scarcely do for each other; then exultingly and proudly, speaks in wonderful measure of God's sacrificial nature. Is it any wonder that St. Augustine exclaims in rapturous accents in regard to the incarnation of Christ, "O, marvellous mystery! O, inexplicable conjunction!" Men have been martyred for truth, for causes, for Christ, but Christ died an ignominious death for us, for sinners. How he loved us! it is indeed ineffable.

God's love to us impartial. Men may have the love of God in their hearts, yet abound in love, but in comparison to God's love, it is only as a drop of water, to the mighty rushing torrent. God's love is impartial, unbiased and without distinction in regard to man. It is high, and deep, and voluminous, and past finite man's conception in full. When we are loosed from these tabernacles, when we see not through a glass darkly, but face to face we will have a better conception of His love. We can have a foretaste here though, as did Moses the meek, the consecrated Isaiah, the weeping Jeremiah, the holy Paul, the loving John.

The text says that God commendeth his love toward us. Now the word "commendeth" means, "displayeth," a setting off, and is in glorious contrast to all that men will do for each other. The manifestation of God in Christ is the most wonderful expression of God's love to us. God gave his only begotten Son—the Word—the Word became flesh, dwelt among us, wept with us, suffered with us, experienced Daniels for us, sweat great drops of blood, took the sins of the whole world upon him, and on Calvary testified that the sacrifice was finished and—Glory to God!—rose again for our justification. The atonement for all mankind has been made, and in all embracing, Luther, a profound theologian and Master in Israel, held this opinion when he said that salvation had come to all, but upon only believers. So then we must believe to receive. To reap the merits of Christ's death we must exercise faith, (Heb. XI, 6.

This love was commended toward us while we were yet sinners, while we were as yet unholy, while we were as yet aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise. If a man wishes to how narrow his character is, let him look into God's looking glass, the Bible. He can see himself there as one that is dead i. e. without life, without spiritual life. He that believeth on the Son hath life, John III 36. Paul in Eph II, 1, said that the Ephesians were dead in trespasses, and in sins. When Adam left the garden of Eden he was a dead man spiritually speaking, for he had sinned.

We might say also that the sinner is without hope in regard to the world to come, Eph. II, 12. When a man is utterly without hope in regard to temporal things he sometimes ends all by suicide. Is it any wonder then that the hopeless impenitent cries for the rocks, and the mountains to fall upon him and hide him, as he stands before the bar of Almighty God to give an account of every deed done in the body.

Again we see that this love was shed abroad while we were yet without strength. Surely mercy is added to mercy. The sinner is helpless and nothing stands between him and perdition. He does not belong to the bridehood for he has on no wedding garment. There is no intervening Christ for him; no intercessor. He is without strength because he is without God, (Rom. V, 6). Israel the beloved of the Lord was in Egypt groaning under bondage, and oppression, and forced to give in a certain toll of bricks with means. These men were to help themselves but when the mighty God instituted Moses to be their deliverer, who could deny them deliverance? Neither Pharaoh, and his hosts nor the impassable red sea could do it for God came to their help.

"When Israel of the Lord beloved, Out from the land of bondage came; Her fathers God before her mov'd, An awful guide in smoke and flame."

The Bible may be called a history of redemption. It is completed now. God's love—in Christ—was manifested toward us in due time. God's time is the right time. The apostle says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons."

"The church has its own ages." God does nothing prematurely but foresees the end from the beginning waits until all is ripe for the execution of his purpose. Had Christ come directly after the fall of man the enormity and deadly fruits of sin would not have been realized fully by man, so as to feel his desperate state, and need of a Savior. Man's inability to save himself whether by obedience to the law, whether that of Moses or that of conscience, was completely manifested;

all prophecies of various ages found common centre in this particular time. God often permits evil long before he teaches the remedy. The small pox was a scourge for long years but vaccination brought relief. It was essential to the honor of God's law to permit evil long before He revealed the remedy."

Now, beloved, thou hast heard in part of God's great love wherewith he loved us, and how rich in mercy he is, even willing that none should perish but that all should come to repentance. Dost thou love God? Hast thou ever tasted and seen that the Lord is good; if thou hast thou canst indeed say with the Psalmist, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Jesus came among men saying, "Repent—i. e. leave off sinning—for the kingdom is at hand" Didst thou ever repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Art thou covered with the garments of salvation, and hast thou on the robe of righteousness? Hast thou on the wedding garment? Without thou shall never receive an entrance to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Sinner thou art just on the verge of the rest so sweet; for thou hast heard the blessed invitation from God himself, and Jesus stands waiting, but thou art also just on the verge of eternal damnation, for if God should snap the brittle thread of life thou wouldst go down quick into hell. Oh profit by Lot's example and flee from the wrath to come. Flee quickly for thou hast no time to lose. Flee for thy life. Flee now. Listen. All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass (I Pet. I, 24) To day you may be the picture of health with cheeks fairer than Spring, and sweeter than the virgin rose; but to-morrow you may be in an opposite state to this. These short lived beauties fade. To-day you may be in manhood's fiery prime; but to-morrow you may be a shorn Samson. The way to the kingdom is easy. There are only three steps from the bondage of this world, to the kingdom of God, and these are, "Repentance, prayer and faith. Take them."

These last few lines we address in particular to heads of families. Oh father if thou art a poor child of the wreck or a backslider—and they will have a place in the heart of God—consider your responsibility toward your Maker. The scripture command that the weaker vessel—your wife—learn of you at home; but how can she? how will she do it when thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked? "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in fire that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see" (Rev. III 18). Dear brother, consider also the example you place before your children if you have any. You love them, would shield them, and would make almost any sacrifice for them, and yet you refuse to obey the simple command of scripture, to "Train up the child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Don't you see your reward? There is that scattereth yet increaseth. Remember that hardly a tree falls in the woods without doing more or less damage, sometimes taking other trees down with it or at the least damaging others to some extent. So it is in regard to ruler of a house. But example is better than precept even.

My hope and prayer is that God may take these few lines and use them to His honor and Glory. Amen.
John S. Eaton

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