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FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD.—Paul.

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WHAT SHALL I DO TO BE SAVED?

BY REV. THEO. CUYLER.

"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This was the eager question of a large company of people at Jerusalem who were "pricked to the heart." Their consciences were aroused under plain preaching to them as sinners who had "crucified and slain" the Messiah. They felt keenly. But the apostle Peter did not stop to commend them for feeling so tenderly, or to exhort them to deepen their emotions. He endeavored to lift the whole matter of their salvation out of the vapory region of emotion, and to base it on the solid ground of principle.

It is a sad mischief to thousands in our congregations that they feel so much and do so little. They melt under eloquent preaching, perhaps shed tears. (So they do over a pathetic novel.) Their consciences are touched. They make good resolutions; and then go home, and straightway forget what manner of persons they have been. This is a most dangerous and damaging process. My friend, don't you know that to weep over sin, and then not quit the sin—to have a good feeling, and then not to carry it out into practice—does you a most serious harm? It is a wrong upon the Holy Spirit, and a terrible wrong to yourself. It hardens your heart most fearfully. The most difficult persons in our congregations to deal with are those emotional people who have wept and resolved an hundred times, and yet have never lifted a finger to obey Christ. I am afraid that their tears in this world are but a prelude to bitterer tears in perdition. Hell is full of weepers. Even Satan himself may be wrung with intense and inconceivable anguish. It is well to feel, but it is not enough to feel. An ounce of faith is worth a ton of feeling.

But what answer does Peter make to his awakened and anxious auditors? Does he tell them that they have no natural ability to do their duty? Does he address them as "poor sinners," more to be pitied than blamed? Does he offer to pray for them, and thus lead them to cling to his skirts, instead of clinging to the Saviour? Does he urge them to take to reading, or even to come often and hear him preach the gospel. No, indeed! All such inventions and devices he leaves to modern pretenders and false guides in divinity. His auditors demanded to know what they should do—and he gives them at once a piece of work—of thorough work for the heart and the daily life. He knew that sinners must "work out their own salvation," even while God was "working in them to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Peter's answer to their question begins with one short word, that flashes like a saber, and cuts like a saber too; "Repent!" "Oh! but," they might say, "we are penitent, we feel sorry, we are pierced to the heart." Very true. But feeling keenly is not always repentance. For, if so, then every inebriate would be repentant:

no man suffer keener self-loathing and misery than does a drunkard while he is sober. Repentance is an infinitely deeper thing than sorrow, or suffering, or dread of a wrath to come. It is the taking of a right view of sin as sinful, and then quitting it. I look at a glass of exhilarating drink which I hold in my hand, and say to myself, "That is a poison. It has an adder in it; it is death!" and then drop it in a moment. That is a genuine repentance of the sin of tipping, and it is the only kind of repentance that can save an inebriate. God's grace may be operating upon the inebriate, but still he must renounce the fatal cup of his own accord and for himself. The fact that God's spirit awakens repentance and promotes repentance in a sinner's heart does not alter one whit that other fact that repentance must be your own act. You must forsake your sins voluntarily. There is no merit in a Tweed's giving up the practice of plundering when he has no longer the power to plunder. If you only give up wrong-doing reluctantly, and then hanker after your sinful practices again, that is not repentance. Evangelical repentance implies change of mind, change of purpose, change of conduct. We repeat once more that it is the taking of a right view of all sin as utterly wicked, and then quitting it. My friend, have you done this? Then you have put your foot on the first round of the ladder that leads upward and heavenward.

Another vital point is unconditional submission to God. When a certain commander of a conquered fort inquired of his conqueror on what terms the fortress should be given up, the memorable reply was, "Unconditional surrender." If you are a sinner, then your heart is a rebel fortress. It must be yielded to the Lord, yielded entirely and yielded without any conditions on your side. Do not stop to bargain with God. Put in no selfish demands. Saul of Tarsus yielded up every point when he cried out from the ground, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" An intelligent woman who had been in deep distress for many weeks, finally said, "Peace with God I know nothing about, but I have done quarreling with Him. I am justly condemned. I have resolved to submit to God and serve Him, and do all the good I can as long as I live, and then go to hell, as I deserve." Her pastor quietly replied, "You will find it hard to get to hell in that way." He said no more. The frank, honest-hearted woman soon found that her calm, willing submission to God—her willingness that God should reign, while she patiently did her duty, was bringing her abiding peace and strength. She became a strong, consistent Christian. Her will yielded to God's will. To know the will of the Lord Jesus, and to do it in His strength is the very core of true religion.

Especially I entreat you not to demand of God the ready pay of "comfort and joy." Don't stop to think about happiness. A wounded soldier must not expect any comfort until the bullet is extracted. When the festering rifle ball is out he will feel better and get well. So, when the festering sin comes out of your heart,

and all the wicked enmity to God, you will find true comfort, but not before. Do not be selfishly greedy of enjoyment. Paul was perfectly content to suffer hunger, and weariness, and prisons and death for Jesus' sake. He was not everlastingly begging to be happy, happy, happy, like certain watery professors now-a-days. To do Christ's will and to save souls was his joy and crown.

Peter did not stop with preaching repentance of sin. He pointed to Christ and enjoined immediate confession of the Lord Jesus. To quit sin and follow the Divine Saviour was the sum and substance of the duty which Peter laid upon those anxious inquirers. This, too, is your duty. Begin at once to do the first thing which Christ bids you. At whatever point Christ is pressing you yield. Obey. When you yield even one single point to please Christ, the change is begun. When you yield one point from principle, you will be ready to yield all. To be willing to trust on Christ and to go with Christ is to be a converted man or woman. When you consent to obey Christ, and to do this at all hazards, and cost what it will, you are a Christian. As to raptures and ecstasies, it will be time enough to look for them when you get into heaven.

In these plain, practical counsels I have said nothing about prayer. For, if you are trying to do what the Word of God and the Holy Spirit command you, it must inevitably lead you to pray fervently. And unless you actually do what the Lord requires of you, all the prayer in the universe cannot save your soul.

IS THE OLD FAITH DYING.

It is often said specifically that men of affairs, as a class, have lost their interest in the churches, and an attempt was lately made to test the truth of this assertion. In an Eastern city, with a population of a little less than forty thousand, the president and cashier of one of the national banks were requested to furnish a list of the fifty strongest business firms in the city, with the name of the head of each firm. The gentlemen furnishing the list had no knowledge whatever of the use to be made of it. In classifying fifty-four names thus given it was found that there were seven whose relation to the churches was unknown to the gentleman who had obtained the list; six who were not identified with any of them; and forty-one who were all regular attendants upon the churches and generous supporters of their work—the great majority of them communicants. In a Western city of a little more than sixty thousand inhabitants, a similar list of fifty-two names were obtained in the same way; and the analysis showed three whose ecclesiastical standing was unknown; one Jew, six not connected with the churches, and forty-two regular church-goers, of whom thirty-one were communicants. These lists were both made up by well-informed and sagacious business men. The cities represented by them are not conspicuously religious communities, and the composition of them gives small color to the notion that the business men