

THE GOSPEL IN EZEKIEL

Illustrated in a Series of Discourses

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

MAN AN OBJECT OF DIVINE MERCY

Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went (Ezekiel 36:22).

We have seen a sere and yellow leaf, tenacious of its hold, hang on the tree all the winter through; and there it kept dancing and whirling idly in the wind, not beautiful or graceful, out of place and season, in humbling contrast with the young and fresh companions which budding spring had hung around it.

Like that wrinkled and withered thing, some men (who were better in their graves) hang too long upon this world. They live too long; they die too late, for themselves at least. Half-dead and half-alive, mind and memory faded, surviving both their faculties and usefulness, and but mere wrecks of what once they were, they tax affection, to conceal from strangers' eyes the sad ravages of time, and do for them the tender office of the ivy, when she kindly hides beneath her green and glossy mantle the crumbling ruin or old hollow tree.

It was the happy fate of Moses—and one most singular at his age—neither to outlive his honor nor usefulness: the day he laid down his leadership saw him lay down his life: death found him at his post. Palinurus was swept from the helm. When Heaven saw meet to take Moses, he was one whom the earth and church would have gladly retained: but the time has arrived when the pilot, who, in calm and storm, through winter and summer seas, has steered the commonwealth of Israel for well nigh half a century, is to resign the helm into other hands. A faithful God calls a faithful servant to his reward and rest. He did not leave them, however, till these weary voyagers were brought within sight of land, and, indeed, to the month of the very haven they had so long desired and looked to see.

The children of Israel have reached the banks of Jordan, and—grateful sight to eyes weary of these naked mountains and the dead flat level of barren sands—the people cluster with eager looks on every summit, and, scattered along the banks, they gaze across the flood on the Land of Promise. How they feed their eyes, and never weary looking on the verdant pastures, the golden harvests, the rocks clothed with vines, the swelling hills crowned with wood, the plains studded with villages and cities teeming with a population that told how rich the soil.

And how well described, the land as one **“full of corn and wine, and flowing with milk and honey.”** In this posture of affairs, before he ascends to his rest, Moses summons the tribes of Israel; and, like the members of a family who gather from their different and distant homes around a father’s death-bed, they come to receive the old man’s blessing, his parting counsels, and last, long farewell.

Propped upon pillows, bending on his staff, panting for breath, speaking in brief and broken sentences, by those groping hands that felt for Ephraim’s and Manasseh’s head betraying the stone-blindness of a great old age, Jacob gave his blessing to the twelve sons, who all—uncommon fortune in so large a family—survived their parent, and were themselves the fathers of the living millions now swarming beneath the eye of Moses.

But how different the bearing and aspect of Moses from that of the hoary patriarch! An old man! if not as old a man, of age not much short of Jacob’s!

One hundred and twenty years had passed on his head, but they had neither blanched his beard nor thinned his locks, nor drawn a wrinkle on his lofty brow: that eye had lost none of its fire, nor that arm any of its force, since the day when, striking in for a brother’s cause, he bestrode a prostrate Hebrew, and, parrying the blow of the Egyptian, gave it back, like a battle-axe, on his head. Nearly the same age as Jacob, whose bent and venerable appearance, as he entered leaning on Joseph’s arm, led Pharaoh to ask, **“How old art thou?”**

Moses bore himself erect, and looked the same as on the day, forty years before, when he strode into Pharaoh’s hall, and demanded of an angry king that the Hebrews should go free. The sun that went down in the evening of summer’s longest day, sunk as full and bright, as if it had set at noon; **“his eye was not dim, nor was his natural strength abated.”** His life closed amid the rich glories of the noblest address that grace, genius, patriotism, and piety ever uttered.

Standing on some rocky platform, with his back to the sky, and his face to the people, Moses delivered an address never forgotten, and that for long ages continued to sound its trumpet echoes in the ears, and to breathe courage into the hearts of Israel. He blessed the tribes in succession, and—charged with inspiration, as a cloud with lightning—he burst forth at the close into these glowing exclamations—“There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heavens in thy help; thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.

“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” Jordan gleamed in his eye, and stretching out his arms to the land across its flood, he cried—**“Israel then shall dwell in safety alone; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; his heaven shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?”**—Glorious words to the Hebrews! and most gracious in Christian eyes.

Faith claims them as part of her inheritance, and looking on that mighty multitude as the dying type of a never-dying church, serves us heirs of entail to the spiritual blessings which lay concealed beneath the vail of these earthly promises.

It is not, however, so much of the close as of the commencement of Moses' speech, that I would speak. Their deliverer from the house of bondage, and leader of their exodus to the promised land, he was a type of Jesus. That host, supplied with streams from the flinty rock, guided by the Shekinah, and fed with manna from the skies, in its grievous bondage and great deliverance, its pilgrim wanderings and hard-fought battles, its trials and crowning triumph, was a type of the Church of Christ.

We are undoubtedly heirs of all its promises; but as we cannot take the sweet and reject the bitter, in serving ourselves heirs to Israel's promises, we become heirs also to her chastisements, her guilt and sin, her warnings and rebukes.

Now, listen to Moses as he addressed the very people of whose coming fortunes he spoke such glorious things:— **"Hear, Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself: Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land. Understand, therefore, that thou goest not in for your own sakes. The Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people, and hast been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you."**

If there be a man still on earth, in a situation corresponding to theirs who stood on the brink of the flood, and saw Canaan's fair fields inviting them to cross, that man is a dying Christian. With life fast ebbing— his battle fought, the journey finished, the desert traveled, the world with its rough paths and vanities behind him, heaven opening its glories to his eye, and death's cold, dark stream rolling at his feet—he stands on the bank of the river and, ready to pass on when the High Priest has gone down to divide the flood, he waits but the summons to go.

Well—I repair to the chamber where this good man dies, and, sitting down beside his bed, I open the Bible, and read these words in his listening ears, **"Thou art to pass Jordan this day. Speak not thou in thine heart, saying, for my own righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess the land. Understand, that the Lord giveth thee not this good land for thy righteousness and uprightness; for thou art stiffnecked, and hast been rebellious against the Lord."**

To some, who, taking compassion on our ignorance, might turn round to tell us, what a good man he had been, what an example of piety, how bright he had shone, how much the church would lament his death, and how much the poor would miss his charity, these words would sound hard and harsh, unseasonable and most uncharitable. But whatever harshness might appear to others in such an address, this, I am sure, would be that Christian's humble, prompt, hearty response:— How true! how characteristic! what a faithful picture! how descriptive alike of my original unregenerate state, and the many short-comings of my renewed nature! Raising his dying eye to heaven, and clasping his hands, he hushes into silence the ill-timed praise of his friends, and repeats as his own, the confession of Job— **"I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."**

He clings like Peter to the hand of Jesus. Mercy is all his prayer, and mercy all his praise; hopes of mercy in the future kindle in his eye, and grateful thanks for mercies in the past employ his latest breath, and dwell on his faltering tongue. His last conscious look turns away from his own works to fix itself upon the cross, and the last word that trembles on his quivering lip is, Jesus!

It were not easy to find a better example of this, than one which is recorded in the history of England's greatest apostle. When he lay on an expected deathbed (though God spared him some years longer to the world and church), his attendants asked John Wesley, what were his hopes for eternity? And something like this was his reply—"For fifty years I have been traveling up and down this world, amid scorn and hardship, to preach Jesus Christ: and I have done what in me lay to serve my blessed Master."

What he had done, how poor he lived, how hard he labored, with what holy fire his bosom burned, with what success he preached, how brilliantly he illustrated the character—"dying, and behold we live; unknown, and yet well known; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing all things;"—these things his life and works attest. They are seen in his church's history, and in the crown he wears in heaven so bright with a blaze of jewels—the saved through his agency. Yet thus he spake, "My hopes for eternity? my only hopes rest on Christ;" and as the confession of his faith, he repeated these words:—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

This confession, so redolent of Wesley's piety, and honorable to his memory, and the words of Moses to Israel, are in perfect harmony; and both are in harmony with this great truth of the text, that God saves sinners, not for their sakes, or out of any regard whatever to their worth or merits.

We have already dwelt at some length on this truth. Why, then, it may be asked, choose the same text, and expatiate again on the same theme? If I needed apology or defense for lingering on this humbling, but most salutary and important subject, I would find it in a high example. Observe how Moses, in his dying address to Israel, repeats and repeats, iterates and reiterates, this very truth—"Speak not thou in thine heart, saying, for my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land; but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee."

Again—"Not for thy righteousness, or the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land."

Again—"Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people."

Again—"Remember, forget not how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord."

Again—“**In Horeb ye provoked the Lord to wrath, so that the Lord was angry with you, to have destroyed you.**”

Again— “**The Lord spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiffnecked people; let me alone, that I may destroy them.**”

And again—“**Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.**”

Thus Moses.

A master, who charges his servant with some important message, repeats, and reiterates it in his ear. The teacher, who communicates some leading rule in grammar to his pupils, or some fundamental truth in science to his students, comes over it again and again; just as a carpenter, by repeated blows drives home the nail, and fixes it firm in its place. For the same end we resume our study of the text. It divides itself into two branches; first, what does not; secondly, what does move God to save us.

To the first question our answer is—Not anything in us; to the second—His regard to his own holy name. Now, in speaking on the first of these I remark—

I. The doctrine that God is not moved to save man by any merit or excellence of his, is a truth of the highest importance and consequence to sinners.

This doctrine has a direct and most important bearing on the salvation of sinners. like the rough and stern Baptist it prepares the way for Christ.

- We must be emptied of self before we can be filled with grace;
- We must be stripped of our rags before we can be clothed with righteousness;
- We must be unclothed, that we may be clothed upon;
- We must be wounded, that we may be healed;
- We must be killed, that we may be made alive;
- We must be buried in disgrace, that we may rise in grace.

These words are as true of the soul as the body—“**Sown in corruption, that we may be raised in incorruption; sown in dishonor, that we may be raised in glory; sown in weakness, that we may be raised in power.**”

To borrow an illustration from the surgeon’s art, the ill-set bone must be broken again, that it may be set aright. I would press this truth on your attention, because a soul filled with self has no room for God; and, like the inn of Bethlehem, given to lodge meaner guests, a heart full of pride has no chamber, within which Christ may be born “**in us the hope of glory.**”

To tell man that he has no merit is, no doubt, a humbling statement, and one that lays the loftiest sinner in the dust. This doctrine is the true leveler, it puts all men on the same degraded platform before God; sets kings as low as beggars, and the strictest virtue— virtue which the breath of suspicion never sullied—with base and brazen-faced iniquity.

I admit that, if we had no better righteousness than our own to rest on, we should do our best to establish its claims, and mayhap assert the right of decency to say to harlots, publicans, and sinners, “Stand aside, I am holier than thou.” But why cling to that when we have a better righteousness in our offer? No wonder at all that the mendicant, whose timid knock has called us to the door, stands there shivering in filthy rags. Poor wretch! His crimes or misfortunes have reduced him to these; he has no change of raiment nor choice of clothing; and so—with none kind or rich enough to help him—he must make the best of what he has to robe his nakedness and protect an emaciated frame from the biting cold.

No wonder also, that the prodigal, having spent all his portion in riotous living, in such dress—if dress it could be called—sought his father’s house; nor any wonder that his father, so soon as the quick eyes of love espied him from afar, ran to meet the penitent, fell on his neck, and kissed him in that ragged and loathsome attire. To say nothing of those who have yearned over some unworthy child—every father understands that. But how had the wonder of the story grown, how had son, servants, and neighbors concluded that the wretched youth had drunk away his senses as well as money, had he so loved his rags, as to decline to part with them, and, clinging to these wrecks of better days—these sad memorials of his sin and folly—had he refused to put the foul rags off, that he might put the fair robe on!

He did nothing so foolish; and why should we? Now since God pronounces our righteousness—observe, not our wickednesses, but our devotions, our charities, our costliest sacrifices, our most applauded services—to be “**filthy rags,**” trust not to them.

What man in his senses would think of going to court in rags? Nor think that the righteousness of the cross was wrought to patch up these; to make up, as some say, for what is defective and wanting in our own merits. Nor fancy, like some who would have a Saviour and yet keep their sins, that you may wear the rags beneath this righteousness. Put them away; not as a dress, which a man lays aside, to be afterwards resumed; but cast them away, like a beggar who, having got a better attire, flings his rags into the nearest ditch, and leaves them there in their foulness to rottenness and decay. God says of the soul which Faith has conducted to Jesus—“**take away the filthy garments from him, Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.**”

If this doctrine is humbling to our pride, it is full of encouragement to a poor sinner’s hope. It lays me down, but it is to lift me up. It throws me on the ground, that, like Antæus, the giant of fable, I may rise stronger than I fell. It is not for our sake that we are saved. If Mercy stoops to the lowest guilt, Oh then there is hope of salvation for me—for a man who has nothing that he can call his own but misery and sin; I will not sit here to perish; but following a Manasseh and a Magdalene, a dying thief, and a blood-stained Saul, I will join the throng that, called from highways and hedges, are pouring—a ragged crowd—into the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Are any among you holding back, till, by this or that improvement in your habits, you consider yourselves fit to go to Christ? Fit to go to Christ?—fit to go to Christ you shall never be, but only by going to him.

Your warrant lies in your wants; your plea for mercy in his merits; your plea for an interest in his merits in your own demerits. Hear and adopt the prayer of David—**“For thine own name’s sake, pardon mine iniquity;”** that is his prayer; now what is his plea? **“for it is little,”** **“very little,”** or **“less than others?”** No, He adds and urges this, **“for it is great.”**

Was there ever an invalid so senseless as to say, when I am somewhat better, when this fever burns less fierce, this pulse beats more calm, this running nicer has a less loathsome and offensive discharge, I will repair to the hospital? Yet such is their folly who say, when I am holier, I will go to Jesus.

Go to him as you are; show the physician your wounds, bruises, putrifying sores—how the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint, now he is to take you in as you are—just as you are. You cannot be made holy till you go to him? And what hinders you to go and go now?

What does he say? Hear him—**“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”** And the worse your case is, the greater, in a sense, is your certainty of immediate salvation—yours the hope of the maimed and bleeding soldier, whom kind comrades bear from the deadly trench, and who knows that the worse his wound, the more sure is he of the surgeon’s earliest care; and that from the very couch, where noblest birth or highest rank lies stretched under some less serious injury, that man of humanity—image of the great Physician—will turn away to kneel down by a poor orphan boy, the meanest private, aye, even a mutilated enemy, in haste to tie up the severed vessels, and stem the tide that pours his life’s blood upon the ground. God help you to say with Paul—

“It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,” and believing that, cry with David, **“Make Haste unto me, God. O lord, make no tarrying.”**

II. It is as important for the saint as for the sinner to remember, that he is not saved through personal merit, or for his own sake.

When age has stiffened its bark and fibers, if you bend a branch into a new direction, either turn that to the right hand which had grown to the left, or raise the bough to the skies which had been bent on the ground, it is long before it loses the tendency to resume its old position. And many years after its course has been changed, and the art, that conquer nature, has turned its waters into a new cut, the river needs careful watching; else, when swollen by winter snows or summer floods, it bursts our barriers, sweeps dyke and bulwark to the sea, and, in the pride of victory, foams, and roars, and rages, in its old accustomed channel.

Even so, when God has laid hands upon us, and grace has given our earthly soul a heavenward bent, how prone it is to start back again! When he that sitteth upon the flood, and turneth the hearts of men like the rivers of water, hath sent the current of our tastes and feelings in a new direction, how apt are they, especially in some outburst of sudden temptation that comes down like a thunder-spout, to flow back into the old and deep-worn channels of a corrupt nature! Of this, David and Peter are memorable and dreadful examples.

And who, that has endeavored to keep his heart with diligence, has not felt, and mourned over the tendency to be working out a righteousness of his own, to be pleased with himself, and, by taking some satisfaction in his own merits, to undervalue those of Christ.

So was it with that godly man who, on one occasion—most rare achievement!—offered up a prayer without one wandering thought; and described it as the worst which he had ever offered, because, as he said, the Devil made him proud of it. So was it also with the minister, who, upon being told by one—more ready to praise the preacher than profit by the sermon—that he had delivered an excellent discourse, replied, “You need not tell me that; Satan told me so before I left the pulpit.” Oh! it were well for the best of us that we could say with Paul, “**we are not ignorant of his devices.**”

Step into this room, where the greatest Scotchman lies a dying, and see an example more striking, warning, alarming still. From the iron grasp of kings and princes, Knox has wrung the rights of Scotland. Ready to contend even unto the death, he had bearded proud nobles and prouder churchmen; he had stood under the fire of battle; he had been chained to the galley’s oar; he had occupied the pulpit with a carbine leveled at his fearless head; and to plant God’s truth, and that tree of civil and religious liberty which has struck its roots so deep in our soil, and under whose shadow we are this day sitting, he had fought many a hard-fought battle; but his hardest was fought in the solitude of the night, and amid the quietness of a dying chamber.

One morning his friends enter his apartment. They find him faint and pallid, wearing the look of one who had passed a troubled night. So he had; he had been fighting, not sleeping; wrestling, not resting; and it required all God’s grace to bring him off a conqueror. Till daybreak, Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Covenant; and that long night Knox’ had passed wrestling with the Prince of Darkness. Like Bunyan’s *Pilgrim*, he met Apollyon in the valley, and their swords struck fire in the shadow of death.

The lion is said to be boldest in the storm. His roar is never so loud as is the pauses of the thunder, and when the lightning flashes, brightest are the flashes of his cruel eye; and even so he, who, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking -whom he may devour, often seizes the hour of nature’s distress to assault us with his fiercest temptations.

- Satan tempted Job when he was bowed down with grief.
- Satan tempted Jesus when he was faint with hunger.
- Satan tempted Peter when he was weary with watching and heart-broken with sorrow.

And, reserving perhaps his grand assault on us for times that offer him a great advantage, it was when Knox was worn out, left alone, his head laid low on a dying pillow, that Satan, like a roaring lion, leaped upon his bed. Into that room the Enemy had come; he stands by his bed—he reminds him that he had been a standard-bearer of the truth—a reformer; a bold confessor; a distinguished sufferer; the very foremost man of his time and country; he attempts to persuade him, that surely such rare merits deserve the crown. The Christian conquered—but hard put to it—only conquered through Him that loved him. His shield was the truth of my test; he had been lost, wrecked at the mouth of the very harbor, had he lost sight of this beacon—“I do not this for your sake, but for mine holy name’s sake.”

And seeing, as these cases show, there may be such danger lurking— like a snake among flowers—under our best attainments; seeing that, like the inflammatory attacks to which those are most liable who are highest fed, whose bones are most full of marrow, and whose veins are gorged with blood, we may be exposed to spiritual pride through the very fullness of our graces; seeing that he, who can twist the Bible into arguments for sin, can use our best works as fuel to the fires of vanity, let us watch and pray and learn to be humble.

Oh, it is needful for the holiest to remember, that man's best works are bad at the best; and that, to use the words of Paul, it is **"Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he hath saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."**

III. This doctrine, while it keeps the saint humble, will help to make him holy.

Here—no ornament to park or garden—stands a dwarfed, stunted, bark-bound tree. How am I to develop that dwarfish stem into tall and graceful beauty—to clothe with blossoms these naked branches, and hang them, till they bend, with clustered fruit?

Change such as that is not to be effected by surface dressing, or any care bestowed on the upper soil. The remedy must go to the root, You cannot make that tree grow upwards till you break up the crust— pulverize the hard subsoil, and give the roots room and way to strike deeper down—for, the deeper the root, and the wider spread the fine filaments of its rootlets, the higher the tree lifts an umbrageous bead to heaven, and spreads out its hundred arms, to catch, in dews, rain-drops, and sunbeams, the blessings of the sky.

The believer—

- in respect of character, **"a tree of righteousness of the Lord's planting,"**
- in respect of strength, **"a cedar of Lebanon,"**
- in respect of fruitfulness, an olive,
- in respect of position, **"a palm tree planted in the courts of God's house,"**
- in respect of full supplies of grace, a tree **"by the rivers of water which yieldeth its fruit in its season, and whose leaf doth not wither"**

—offers this analogy between grace and nature. As the tree grows best skyward that grows most downward, the lower the saint grows in humility, the higher he grows in holiness. The soaring corresponds to the sinking, I wish you to think little, very little of yourselves; but why? because the less you think of yourselves, the more will you esteem Christ; and the humbler you are in your own eyes, the higher you will stand in God's. The guest, who, coming modestly in, takes the lowest place at the table, is called up to the seat of honor; and I have always thought, that none are so sure to lie in Jesus' bosom as those I have seen lying lowest at Jesus' feet. Was it not over one, who content to be spoken of as **"a dog,"** held herself well served with crumbs, and asked nothing but the sweepings of the table, that Jesus pronounced this superlative eulogium—**"I have not found such faith; no, not in Israel."** **"God exalteth the humble, and abaseth the proud."**

How important, therefore, the sentiment of my text? Receive it, **“and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.”**

Piety and pride are not less opposed to each other than light and darkness. No doubt strange things—singular conjunctions—are seen in grace as well as in nature. Like an ill-assorted marriage, you may find a sour and ascetic temper allied to genuine faith. Eminent piety has stood blushing in sackcloth on a pillory of shame. The sun of saintship has undergone a dreadful and unlooked for eclipse. Good and great men have fallen into gross sin, causing God’s people to hang down their heads, and cry, as they wept in secret, **“How are the mighty fallen!”** In short, the grace of God has been found in such strange company as to give occasion for the remark of one, who said, “the grace of God will live where neither you nor I could live.” But, among these anomalies, amounting sometimes almost to monstrosities, I will venture to say you never saw, no, nor the church, nor world, nor any eye nor age over yet saw— a saint distinguished for his holiness, who was not also remarkable for his humility. The grandest edifices, the tallest towers, the loftiest spires, rest on deep foundations. The very safety of eminent gifts and preeminent graces lies in their association with deep humility. They were dangerous without it. Great men need to be good men.

Look at this mighty ship—a leviathan on the deep; with her towering masts, and carrying a cloud of canvas, how she steadies herself on the waves, and walks erect upon the rolling waters, like a thing of inherent, self-regulating life! Why—when corn is waving, and trees are bending, and foaming billows roll before the blast and break in thunders on the beach, is she not flung on her beam-ends—sent down—foundering into the deep? Why, because unseen beneath the surface, a vast, well-ballasted hull gives her balance, and, taking hold of the water, keeps her steady under a press of sail, and on the bosom of the swelling sea.

Even so, that the saint may be preserved upright, erect, and kept from falling, God gives him balance and ballast—giving the man, on whom he has bestowed lofty endowments, the grace of a proportionate humility.

We have wondered at the lowliness of a man, who stood among his compeers like Saul among the people — to find him simple, gentle, generous, docile, humble as a little child—till we found that it was with great men as with great trees. What giant tree has not giant roots? When the tempest has blown over some such monarch of the forest, and he lies in death stretched out at his full length upon the ground, on seeing the mighty roots that fed him—the strong cables that moored him to the soil—we cease to wonder at his noble stem, and the broad, leafy, lofty head he raised to heaven, defiant of storms.

Even so, when death has struck down some distinguished saint—whose removal, like that of a great tree, leaves a vast gap below, and whom, brought down now, as it were, to our own level, we can measure better when he has fallen than when he stood—and when the funeral is over, and his repositories are opened, and the secrets of his heart are unlocked and brought to light, ah! now, in the profound humility they reveal—in the spectacle of that honored gray head, laid so low in the dust before God—we see the great roots and strength of his lofty piety.

Would you be holy? learn to be humble. Would you be humble? take my text, and, with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, engrave it upon your heart; or rather pray—Holy Spirit, fountain of light, and giver of all grace, with thine own divine finger inscribe it there!

Would you be holy? you must be humble. Would you be humble? Oh! never forget that the magnet which drew a Saviour from the skies, was not your merit but your misery. **“Be clothed with humility,”** and ere long you shall exchange the sackcloth for a shining robe. What! although this grace may impart to your feelings a somber hue? Gray mornings are the precursors of brightest days; weeping springs are followed by sunny summers and autumns of richest harvest; and in the spiritual as in the natural kingdom— **“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”**

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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