

ILLUSTRATIONS OF BIBLE TRUTH

by

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CHAPTER FOUR

~ H - I ~

HASTY CONCLUSIONS

“Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1).

The folly of snap judgments of others is well illustrated by a story the last Bishop Potter of New York used to tell on himself.

He was sailing for Europe in one of the great trans-Atlantic liners. When he went on board, he found another passenger was to share the cabin with him.

After going to see his accommodations, he came up to the purser's desk and inquired if he could leave his gold watch and other valuables in the ship's safe. He explained that ordinarily he never availed himself of that privilege, but he had been to his cabin and had met the man who was to occupy the other berth and, judging from his appearance, he was afraid that he might not be a very trustworthy person.

The purser accepted the responsibility of caring for the valuables, and remarked, “It's all right, bishop, I'll be very glad to take care of them for you. The other man has been up here and left his for the same reason.”

One is reminded of the lines of Robbie Burns,

“Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see oursel's as others see us.”

It is very easy to form snap judgments, only to find out afterwards that they are utterly unfounded.

“Love believeth all things, hopeth all things.”

HE DID HIS PART

“The son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10)

That man is an utterly lost sinner who could never find his own way back to God, is a very unpalatable truth for the average natural man or woman.

We all like to think there is something we can do to help save ourselves, whereas, according to God’s Word we are not only lost, but without ability to retrieve our condition. It is remarkable how apt the colored folks are in quick illustrations of spiritual realities, as the following instance will show.

A recent convert, a colored man, rose in a meeting to give his testimony to the saving grace of God. He told how the Lord had won his heart and given deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. He spoke of Christ and His work, but said nothing of any efforts of his own.

The leader of the meeting was of a legalistic turn of mind, and when the Negro’s testimony was ended, he said, “Our brother has only told us of the Lord’s part in his salvation. When I was converted there was a whole lot I had to do myself before I could expect the Lord to do anything for me. Brother, didn’t you do your part first before God did His?”

The other was on his feet again in an instant and replied: “Yes, sah, Ah clear done forgot. Ah didn’t tell you ‘bout my part, did I? Well, Ah did my part for over thirty years, runnin’ away from God as fast as evah my sins could carry me. That was my part. An’ God took aftah me till He run me down. That was His part.”

It was well put and tells the story that every redeemed sinner understands.

HELP THOSE WOMEN

“And I intreat thee also, true yoke fellow, help those women . . .” (Philippians 4:3)

He was unschooled, and trying to give a word of exhortation. He fumbled through the opening verses of Philippians 4, but became confused over the names of the two women referred to in verse 2, and so he read, **“I beseech Euodias and I beseech Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord.”** He then proceeded to attempt an application of the truth according to the names as he had misunderstood them.

How much trouble is made among Christians by women like Odious, who are so unpleasant to get on with, and Soontouchy, who get offended over every little trifle!

The application was good, thought the interpretation was faulty.

HOLDING ON TO SPIKES

**“And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark;
for thee have I seen righteous in this generation” (Genesis 7:1).**

Noah, like Abraham, is a very striking example of one who has been declared righteous because of his faith. It was faith that led him to prepare an ark for the saving of his house, when there seemed no evidence of a coming flood. It was faith that led him to obey God and enter that ark, with all his family, when commanded to do so by God. Inside the ark all were secure until the deluge was over. They were kept by omnipotent power. The ark bore all the brunt of the storm. Noah and his household were shut in by God, who had Himself closed the door. The same hand that shut them in shut out all the unbelieving antediluvian world outside. The ark was a type of Christ. All who are in Christ are eternally secure.

Suppose when the ark was completed God had said, “Now, Noah, go and get eight large, strong spikes and drive them into the side of the ark.”

Imagine Noah procuring these spikes and doing as commanded. Then when each spike was securely fastened, let us presume that God said,

“Come thou and all thy house and take hold of these spikes, and all who hang on the end of the flood will be saved.”

How long do you think Noah and the rest would have been secure?

I can imagine each one taking hold of a spike – then the waters rising as the rain poured down. In a few minutes they would have been soaked to the skin. Then think of the terrific strain on joints and muscles as the ark was lifted from the earth and began its perilous voyage through the raging waters. I think I hear Noah calling to his wife, “Mother, how is it going; all is well?”

And she calls back, “I’m holding on. Do pray for me that I may be able to hold out to the end!”

Soon poor Mrs. Ham would cry out, “It’s no use, can’t hang on any longer. I am going to backslide.”

And she would let go and be swept away by the flood. How long do you suppose it would be before every one of them would be obliged to let go and so go down to death?

Thank God, that is not a true picture of His salvation. He is not calling men to hang on to Christ. But just as Noah entered into the ark and found there perfect security, so every believer is in Christ and saved for eternity. It is not a question of our ability to hang on, but of Christ’s ability to carry us safely through to the glory. He who has begun the good work in us will perfect it until the day of manifestation.

HONEST DOUBT

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater” (I John 5:9).

Often when pressing the claims of Christ upon men and urging them to believe the gospel, I have had them seek to parry by declaring that they could not believe, as they were honest doubters. I suppose there is such a thing as an honest doubter, but I dislike the expression when that which men profess honestly to doubt is the infallible Word of the infallible God. Tennyson has written,

“There is more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half your creeds.”

I am not so sure that Tennyson was correct; certainly not if it is a question of doubting the truth of the Gospel. I would not like to go home and tell my wife something and have her say, “Well, my dear, I am trying to believe you, but, honestly, I doubt you. I believe there is more faith in honest doubt than in being too sure you are not trying to put one over on me.”

A lady said when I had explained the way of life as clearly as I knew how and shown her some plain, definite passages from the Holy Scriptures, such as **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life”** (John 5:24) and **“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** (Matthew 11:28), “Well, I am trying to believe.”

“Trying to believe whom?” I inquired. “It is God who has spoken in His Word. What do you mean by saying you are trying to believe Him?”

She saw her sin and her mistake and exclaimed, “Oh, I did not realize what I was saying. Yes, I can and I do believe what God has declared.” And her soul entered into peace.

HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE

“Be not ye called Rabbi” (Matthew 23:8).

“In honor preferring one another” (Romans 12:10).

On one occasion when in London, I was walking home from a meeting; part of the way I was accompanied by the Marquis of Aberdeen (who had presided) and the Lord Bishop of Norwich (who had been one of the speakers). Being an American, and unaccustomed to titles, I felt embarrassed as to how I should address men of their position. I expressed my perplexity, and the Marquis replied, “My dear brother, just address us as your brethren in Christ. We could have no higher honor than that.”

This was surely to enter into the spirit of what the Lord Jesus taught.

We are told to give honor to whom honor is due. On the other hand, the servant of Christ is to seek the honor that cometh from God only. The first passage delivers from rudeness and that pride which apes humility, as it refuses to recognize the gifts which Christ has given to His Church. The other is a rebuke to all self-seeking and fleshly ostentation on the part of those to whom the Lord has entrusted any special ministry for the edification of His Church.

"I'M IN FOR A GOOD TIME"

"She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (I Timothy 5:6).

Some years ago, I had been preaching Christ as God's remedy for man's ruined condition, to the hardy population of a beautiful mining town in the mountain regions of Northern California. One afternoon I noticed in the meeting-hall a young woman whose sin-marked face, weary look and careless demeanor could not fail to attract attention.

Stepping over to her at the close, I asked, "What about your soul? Have you ever thought of preparing for eternity?"

"My soul? – I ain't got none," was the flippant reply, accompanied by a foolish laugh. Further conversation seemed to make no impression, for, after solemnly warning her of coming judgment, she exclaimed, "You ain't going to scare me into religion. Wouldn't I look nice joining you folks? I'm in for a good time –."

"But when you've had your day, when your so-called good time is over forever, when death, judgment, and eternity have to be faced, when God has to be met, what then?"

"Oh, well, of course, I don't intend to live like this right along. I'll get religion when I grow old. I ain't got time for it now."

"Yes; so the devil has deceived thousands, but you may never live to grow old. You may not have time to prepare for eternity, though you must find time to die."

Another laugh greeted this warning, and she was gone. It seemed almost impossible that so young a person could be so hardened. I was told she had abandoned herself to a grossly wicked life, though little more than a child, and was an outcast from respectable society. Alas, how sin degrades, hardens, and blinds its poor victims!

Some weeks after the above conversation, an undertaker came to the house where I was staying; he said that he had a funeral to conduct that was a source of much embarrassment to him. The person to be buried was a young woman of so notorious a character that he could scarcely persuade anyone to act as pall-bearers.

Mentioning her name, he asked if we knew any who might do her this last service. We promptly offered ourselves. That would do. Some former companions of her folly had already promised to be the others.

It was the girl I had so recently spoken to, cut down in a moment – **“suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.”**

Two days earlier, after a public holiday spent in a revolting manner, she was borne home drunk and put into a bed, from which she never arose. In a few hours she had passed into eternity, having died in great agony from the baneful effects of her long debauch. The wine-cup and its accompaniments had claimed another victim.

Awful was the sight of her pale, swollen face. A minister had been called in, but what could he say? What comfort could he give? Of death-bed repentance even he could not speak. No hope could he hold out that she might after all be saved.

She had been asked by her mother if she wanted someone to come in to pray with her.

“No,” she said, “no one.”

“Couldn’t she remember a prayer, then, to say herself – the Lord’s prayer, or any other?”

“No, I can’t”; and instead of prayer there were oaths and groans of anguish.

“She had lived her life,” the minister said, “I shall not speak of it, for it cannot be altered now. You have yours to live yet. I speak then to you,” and he faithfully urged them to flee to Christ alone for refuge.

As I helped to lower the coffin into the grave, my heart was sad indeed. As I turned away, I heard someone exclaim, under his breath, “Just think of it, only seventeen years old, and gone to –!” The last word was lost in the noise about me, or perhaps never uttered.

IN THE CLEFT OF THE ROCK

“Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee” (Psalm 50:15).

Years ago, while working among the Laguna Indians, we were asked to speak at a little village called Pawate. It was in the days before automobiles, and we rode in large wagons drawn by horses for some fourteen miles over rough roads until we reached this village. We had a meeting in the afternoon, and Indians from all about gathered. We started back at 4:30 or 5 o’clock because we were to have a meeting at Casa Blanca that night. We had not gone very far when we saw a terrible storm was about to break over us. Soon we could see that the rain was pouring down at a distance and driving rapidly toward us.

I said, “We are certainly going to get soaked.”

Our driver replied, “I hope not. I think we can make the rock before the storm reaches us. There is a great rock ahead; and if we can make it, we will be sheltered.”

We hurried on and soon saw a vast rock rising right up from the plain, perhaps forty or fifty feet in height, covering possibly an acre or more of ground. As we drew near, we saw a great cave in the rock. Instead of stopping to unhitch the horses, our driver drove right into the cave, and, in another minute or two, the storm broke over the rock in all its fury.

While the storm raged outside, one of the Indians struck up, in the Laguna tongue, “Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee,” and we realized the meaning of the poet’s words then as perhaps never before.

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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