

BACK TO BETHEL

Separation from Sin, and Fellowship with GOD

by

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"Old Testament Heroes," "Meet for the Master's Use," etc.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

GOD'S RUBBISH HEAP

"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" (Isaiah 45:9).

The word "**potsherd**" arrests one. I have in my mind's eye a garden I know full well, and at the end of it in a corner there is quite a heap of rubbish. There are the cinders from the fire by which the hothouse is warmed, and often remnants of decayed vegetable matter, and often pieces of broken pottery, or china. I can see a bit of broken flower pot emerging from the dark cinders. That is a potsherd, a sherd or shred of pottery which is useless. It is fit only to be thrown away. It is waste.

And GOD says that those Israelites who complained about His delivering them by Cyrus were risking being thrown away upon His rubbish heap.

Isaiah seems in fancy to have heard a potsherd talking to a potsherd, one piece of pottery antagonizing another; and he says it is better for a piece of pottery to argue with another piece than for either of them to antagonize the potter.

I am afraid lest some of you may be on GOD's rubbish heap, and I forget everything else in my desire to save your life from being thrown aside as a waste, because if it is thrown aside as waste in this world there is the dread of the waste forever. I dare not hold out to people the hope of a second chance. The whole drift of the Bible is against it. What an awful thing it would be for a man to mislead his fellowmen, who would say to him one day, when he meets them coming back from the Judgment throne as waste product.

"Why didn't you tell us that destiny was irrevocable?"

JERUSALEM'S RUBBISH HEAP

"If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Gehenna, into the fire that never shall be quenched." (Mark 9:43).

Now, what was Gehenna? It is a Hebrew word, the Valley of Hinnons. Just outside of Jerusalem there was a deep ravine which had been used for idolatry, and the good king Josiah resolved that it should be used for a refuse heap of Jerusalem. They did not have the system of drainage that we have, but made use of fire, and for the most part they took their refuse out of Jerusalem, and trundled it over to the Valley of Gehenna, to the fires which were always kept burning.

Gehenna was the rubbish heap of Jerusalem, and CHRIST says that what Gehenna was to Jerusalem, another place is to the universe, and that the man who refused to lose hand or foot or eye that made him offend, was in danger of being flung away by GOD as a waste product. Notice the 44th verse, **"Where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."**

That is GOD's rubbish heap.

I am told that you have in the mountains a number of people who are contemptuously called "white trash." I know there is a good deal of soul-trash about. Maybe if you don't take care, you will become soul-trash, which GOD cannot do anything with, and will have to cast out, to be trodden under foot.

GOD gives every man a chance. He gives him long enough to reveal himself. We say: "He hates nothing that He has made." But after having given man, woman or child a chance of revealing their inner nature and making their final choice, GOD may be compelled to cast a certain number away, because they will not realize the purpose for which they were created.

There is always waste going on. For every acorn that bears an oak are there hundreds of acorns that bear no seed that fructifies. Many professing Christians will never be counted worthy to obtain that world, but will force GOD to throw them aside. Darwin taught us that out of myriads born into the natural world, only a few survive "the survival of the fittest." Now in his sense the word "fit" meant the strongest, the most vigorous; but in the Bible sense the word fit does not mean strong or intellectual, but a certain moral quality about which I wish to speak now.

WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE TEST?

What is it that proves a man to be a waste product? What is the ultimate thing which compels GOD to fling a man or a woman away, like Judas, who went to his own place?

Is it creed?

Supposing a man holds an orthodox creed, does that prove that he will escape the rubbish heap?

I don't think so for a moment. It is not our intellectual standing or opinions which determine our destiny. I say deliberately to you who have been brought up in orthodox views, who attend an evangelical ministry, if that be all, the most orthodox creed on earth cannot save you from being flung away like a potsherd.

Will one passionate sin fling a man on the rubbish heap?

There are sins of passion and sins of will, and I think we ought to make a distinction.

David's sin with Uriah's wife was one of passion, not of final choice, determination and purpose. He was overcome by a gust. Of course I believe that the tree had become somewhat rotten before the trial came, or it would not have gone down in the storm. But, evidently, from CHRIST's treatment of Peter, and of the woman who washed His feet with tears, one momentary outbreak of passion, though it may injure a man as far as his fellow Christians are concerned, is not enough to determine his irrevocable destiny if with bitter tears it is put away.

Will the absence of religious emotion determine our destiny?

There are men who are destitute of emotion. They don't remember having wept a tear. Whenever people become full of excitement, they remain calm and cool, and rather despise those who are swept off their feet by storms of feeling. They have visited churches where a revival has been in full blast, and have come away feeling that it was the antipodes to anything they were conscious of. They are cool, calculating, resolute, determined men, and they are altogether destitute of emotion.

I want to say to any man like that, that the absence of emotion is not a crucial test of character. A man may be without emotion, and unable to appreciate some who are more inclined to be influenced by feeling and religious sentiment. But this is not sufficient to cast a man aside from GOD.

What then? It is not creed, it is not one passionate sin, it is not, so far as I can see, emotional sentiment that determines a man's future but everything depends upon the man's will.

You are not what you believe. You are not what you feel. You are not what you do in a single act. You are what you WILL. You cannot always control your emotion, but you can control your will; and if you are lost, it will not be because your creed is imperfect, or because you are devoid of emotion, but because your will and GOD's will are in collision; because GOD wants one thing and you will not have it.

He wants you to let Him have His will in you. It is not the willing of your will on GOD, but it is your being prepared to accept GOD's will. Hence JESUS said, "**How often would I**" and the Greek is a very strong word for the will "**How often would I gather you as a hen gathers her chicks, but**" and the same Greek word is used again "**ye would not!**"

If any man is a lost soul, let him understand that it is because he said No to GOD.

Why are you not a Christian? Why have you not accepted His mercy? You say:

"I have my objections to Christianity. I am not quite sure that the Bible is true. I am inclined to think there is a good deal in what Ingersoll used to say. I rather doubt the inspiration of the Bible. I have seen a good deal in church people that makes me think they are hypocrites."

Not one of these is the true reason why you are not a Christian. But GOD wants something from you that you won't give, and it is your WILL that is at the root of your apparent infidelity.

That is, there is some habit of your life to which you cling. There is some way of making money which you don't want to give up. Somewhere in your life there is something which has been fighting the will of GOD for years. The strength of your will is so strong in its antagonism to GOD, that if you don't take care you will become a waste product, because GOD can do nothing for you.

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

The whole conception of that passage is in the potter. The potter is the same everywhere. He takes a piece of clay, and sits before his wheel with his foot upon the treadle, desiring to make a vessel for beauty or for use, for a palace or a kitchen.

Here is the clay. The treadle causes the wheel to revolve horizontally. He takes the plastic clay, puts it on the wheel, and as it revolves, with his two hands he begins to make the vessel, shaping it upwards to the lip. But suddenly he comes upon a fault, a bubble, something gritty. He comes back and back to it, but it won't yield to his touch. He takes all the clay off, and kneads it again into a plastic lump.

A second time he begins to build up his conception, and again comes to that flaw; and though he comes back to it two or three times, it won't yield.

What is the man to do? I ask you what would you do? You are anxious to make something, but the clay won't permit you to make it. You are willing with your skill and power to bring the clay to the required shape, but there is something in it that resists you. You take other clay. Ah! this is better! And the first lot is cast away as useless.

GOD called the Jews to be His chosen people and the missionaries of the world. But He had to put them aside and take the Gentiles instead. Similarly you may be on the very verge of missing the grandest chance of being used for the divinest purposes, because you won't yield yourselves to the will of GOD, but cling to your own.

I took up a young fellow once and hoped to make a man of him. He bade fair to be a fine man. When he was about eighteen years he fell. I helped him to regain his feet, and said:

"Young fellow, that is between GOD, you and me. I give you another chance."

He fell a second time, and again I picked him up. I hardly knew what to do about it. I had put money into his education, and it seemed a pity to lose him, so I said:

"I will give you another chance."

He went on for a while, and then he fell a third time. I said:

"I must give you up. I don't say I won't forgive you; of course I will; but I cannot afford to squander more of my time and strength on you."

Are you enjoying evil habits? Are any living in sin? Are you refusing to confess your sin? GOD by His Spirit strives with you. He says, "**Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.**"

In the night, when the house is still, He says, "Don't do this evil thing that I hate."

You reply, "I must do it."

The voice of GOD says, "Let me mould you. Let me make you good. Give up your sin."

You say, "I can't"; but you mean, "I won't."

What are you going to do now? Heaven and hell are waiting to learn your decision. GOD wants to make a saint of you, the devil wants to ruin you. Woe to him that striveth with his Maker! Woe to the man who shoots arrows at the sun! Woe to the man who raises his voice against GOD! Woe to the man who frustrates and neutralizes GOD's purpose!

I see a pierced Hand reaching down and resting upon you. I hear a gentle Voice pleading. It seems as though the Spirit of GOD is bent on making one last effort to impress His will upon you, a will that means only your good. Up to this minute you have refused to take the impression. You say GOD is too hard on you, His dealings are unjust. That woman asks why she was married to a cruel husband; that man asks why GOD let him marry so vain a woman.

Some boy asks why GOD let him be born into a family which opposes his being a Christian.

In one form or another you fight against GOD. But yield, yield!

I don't tell you to wait for feeling. I don't ask you to feel resigned. You cannot begin by feelings. But I say, yield! choose! throw up your arms in surrender, and say,

"My GOD, have your way, and do your will, I will say yes."

Towards the end of the Bible it says they shall say "**Amen Hallelujah**" (Revelation 19:4).

You may depend upon it, that this is in heaven. There are things in our life to which we can't say

"Hallelujah" now, but we can say "Amen," and keep on saying it. We get to the beginning of "Hallelujah" sometimes, but it is rare. Ah, we shall sing it out some day, "**Amen! Hallelujah!**"

Meanwhile let us learn to live always and everywhere saying Yes to GOD. Then, instead of being bits of broken pottery we shall be vessels meet for the Master's use, and prepared for every good work.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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