

W 186  
105

# 'GRACE AND TRUTH'

*Under Twelve Different Aspects.*

BY

W. P. MACKAY, M.A.,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL,

HULL.

'Grace and Truth came by JESUS CHRIST.'—*John's Gospel.*



Edinburgh:

JAMES TAYLOR, 31 CASTLE STREET.

LONDON: J. NISBET AND CO., BERNERS STREET.

MDCCCLXIX.

## INTRODUCTION.

---

'THE law was given by Moses: grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' The law showed what man ought to be. Christ showed what man is, and what God is. The law *was given*, but grace and truth *came*. Calvary tells out for ever what man's true state is, what God's truth is, and what grace means. The law is what I ought to be to God. Grace tells what God is for me. The first word of law is 'Thou,' the first of grace is 'God' so loved, &c., but it is grace through truth: every thing has been gone into, and everything is out.

Man by nature likes neither grace nor truth. He is satisfied neither with perfect justice nor perfect goodness. If John the Baptist comes in righteousness he is hated, and men say he is too harsh, and not human, but has a devil. If Christ comes in love, He is taunted with being a friend of sinners. Hence when the righteous requirements of God's law are preached, many people are apt to turn and say, 'Oh yes, but that is too strict; you must allow a little margin for our imperfection.' My friend, make no provision for the flesh. Alas! it will take far too much, but allow it nothing. When a sanctified walk, separated from the world and all its belongings and spirit are insisted on, a certain class are sure to call this legal preaching.

Suppose a convict, who had just finished his term of penal servitude, wished to lead an honest life. He comes to a man who has a large jewellery establishment, and who needs a night watchman. He is engaged to watch this house through the quiet hours of the night, when he has everything under him, and every opportunity to rob. Suppose the first evening of his watching he met one of his old companions, who accosts him. 'What are *you* doing here?'

'I'm night watchman.' 'Over this jeweller's shop!' 'Yes.' 'Does he know what you are?' 'No, no, be silent; if he knew I should be dismissed.' 'Suppose I let it out that you are a returned convict.' 'Oh, I pray don't it would be my last day here, and I wish to be honest.' 'Well you'll require to give me some money to keep quiet.' 'Very well, but don't let anyone know.' Thus the poor man would be in sad fear and trembling, lest it should come to the ears of his employer what his true character had been before. He would be in terror lest he should meet any of his old friends, and lest his resources should be exhausted in keeping them quiet.

Suppose, however, that instead of the employer ignorantly engaging the man, he went to the convict's cell and said, 'Now I know you, what you are, and what you've done, every robbery you've committed, and that you are worse than you believe yourself to be. I am to give you a chance to become honest, I'll trust you as my night watchman, over my precious goods.' The man is faithful at his post. He meets old companion after old companion, who threaten to inform upon him. He asks. 'What will you tell about me?' 'That you were the ringleader of house-breakers.' 'Yes, but my master knows all that better than you do, he knows me better than I know myself.'

Of course this silences them for ever. This latter is *grace and truth*. The man had been treated in grace, but on the ground that all the truth was out, that his character was known. It is thus God deals with us. He deals in grace, but He knows what He is doing, and with whom he is working,—even the chief of sinners. The whole truth is out about us, and God's grace in the face of this saves, gives a new nature, and puts us down before Himself in the highest places of confidence. Man wonders at this. A wicked companion gets converted, his old associates wonder at his boldness in preaching, (like Peter who denied Christ, accusing his Jerusalem hearers of having denied him). They think if his audience only knew what they know, they

would be suspicious. God knows us better than we know ourselves, and this is our comfort.

Man does not know GRACE. When unadulterated grace, unmixed grace, the grace of God, God's own love, is preached, man cannot take it in. 'Oh, this is downright Antinomianism.' Exactly the cry that was raised against Luther when he preached 'full free justification by grace through faith without the deeds of the law.' Exactly the cry that was raised against Paul, that he made void the law, that he told the people they might sin that grace might abound. Now, unless our Christianity provokes this opposition, it is not scriptural Christianity. Unless the gospel we preach, when presented to the natural mind, brings out these thoughts, it is another gospel than Paul's. Every Christian, mark not some of them, has the Antinomian or God-dishonouring 'flesh,' within him to be watched over and mortified; but this is a different matter. People will readily quote 'Faith without works is dead,' 'We must have works,' and so on; and we most certainly coincide. But follow up the argument by inquiry about the works, and you will, alas, too often find that such have very loose ideas of a Christian's holy walk. Such will quite go in for having a Christian name, going religiously to church, being able to criticise a sermon and a preacher, being acquainted with good people, abstaining from all immorality, being honest and respectable; but the moment we cross the boundary line that separates respectable and easy-going make-the-most-of-Christianity, into the rugged, thorny path of identification with a rejected Christ, separation from the world's gaieties, splendours, and 'evil communications,'—dead to it and all that is therein, taking up Christ's yoke, and denying self,—we are met with the expressions, 'too far,' 'pietism,' 'righteous overmuch,' 'we don't like extremes,' 'legal preaching.'

The *grace of man* would be this, 'Do the best you can by the help of grace, and then wherein you fail grace will step in and make up.' But the first thing the *grace of God* does is to bring 'salvation,' (Titus ii. 11,) &c.

Or, again, man's grace may take this shape, 'Oh yes, we believe in the blood, the precious blood of Christ, only faith can save; and now we have got an easy road to heaven—a sort of short cut in which we can live on good terms with the world and worldly men, and also on first-rate terms with religious men, spend our money to make ourselves comfortable, get a name, honour, or riches here, make ourselves as happy as can be in this world, just take of it what we can enjoy, and go on thus so nicely to heaven.' This is another view of the *grace* that *man* knows about; but the *grace of God* teaches us that, 'denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,' (Titus ii. 12). Thus man knows nothing whatever about GRACE.

Neither does man know TRUTH. He does not know the *truth* about God. He could quite believe that God made the world, and that he is good to a certain extent; but that God looks upon one sin as making a man as really guilty as ten thousand, he cannot understand. Though written as clear as writing can make it in the Book of God, he cannot perceive it. Christ brought out the truth about God, that God could by no means clear the guilty, but that he could impute guilt and impute righteousness. Said an infidel, 'Is it justice for an innocent man to die for a guilty—is it consistent with reason, either in justice to the innocent or the guilty?' 'Well suppose it is not, and we may grant it. But what if God became man, and put away sin—where is your reasoning now? Our gospel is not an innocent man dying for the guilty merely, but the God-man made sin, and putting it away.' Nor does man know the truth about himself, that he is lost. He thinks that he *may* be lost, not that he *is* lost. He hopes, in some vague way, that it will yet be all right. Christ brought out the truth about man, that man was hopelessly gone in sin, that he would kill God if he could.

How few there are in *hell* that ever intended to go there! 'Are you to be in heaven?' Most will answer, 'I *hope* so.' 'And what right have you to *hope* so?' I once quickly said to a poor woman who looked as like a good person as any of her neighbours. 'If you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, why not say so and thank Him, and then begin to hope (not for pardon, there is no such hope in Scripture) for salvation that is to be revealed at perfected redemption? and if not, what right have you to have such presumption as to hope to get to heaven when you have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ?' I saw her some time after, radiant with a settled joy and peace, and she said, 'Yes, sir, you asked me what right I had to hope, and I was rather astonished, but I did not take your word about it, but I went home to my Bible, and there I found that if I was without God, I had to be without hope in this world' (Eph. ii. 12). This led her to discover 'the *sand*' on which she had been building, and by God's Spirit she was led to 'THE ROCK.'

Look at a perfect illustration of grace and truth in the case of the Gentile woman. (Matt. xv. 21-28.)

'Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.' When? After He had exposed the utter hollowness of man's religion, and the character of the Pharisees' heart. In the beginning of the chapter man brought his religion to Christ, and of course Christ showed that it was the *heart* He dealt with, and not religion.

Verse 8 shows us *where* the heart of man is—with his religions, his traditions of the elders, his observances, his washing of hands, cups, dishes, tables. It is 'far from God.' Verse 19 shows us *what* his heart has in it: 'Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.' This is the consequence when man comes to God with his religion—with what he has. 'Do you want to know where you are, and what you are?' Bring your religion to God. But Jesus now goes away to where there is no religion, but plenty of misery; no pro-

fessions, but a great deal of need. He had shown what man's heart has in it—He now wishes to show what is in His heart—a heart that is 'full of grace and truth.'

And behold a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, 'have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David ; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.' She was a Syrophœneecian, a Greek, a Gentile outside of the Jewish territory, a dog in the eyes of every godly Jew. 'Without are dogs.' The dog in the East is not as here domesticated, but is more like a wolf prowling for prey outside the cities—fit emblem of those dwellers by the highways and hedges of Luke xiv., the Gentiles outside the Jewish circle of blessing ; and thus we are called 'Gentile dogs.' She had no claim on the 'Son of David.' 'He came to His own.' Her need, her desire, her heart, her faith, were in the right direction ; but she must intelligently take the right place in order to blessing. Her instincts were right, her apprehension of the truth was wrong. This is the reason of that wonderful next word.

'But He answered her not a word.' Many think that this was merely to try her faith—certainly it was ; but God does many ends by one means. He has to manifest *grace*, but also *truth*. Had He, as 'Son of David,' blessed her, He would not have kept his true place, for 'He was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers' (Rom. xv. 8). And she was 'afar off, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel.' He, as Son of David, 'confirmed the promises ;' she was a 'stranger from the covenants of promise ;' and when she tried that door, she found it righteously shut, because He is faithful and true. He could have no words with her till He got His own and only place in which He could rise above all dispensational thoughts, and let His grace flow forth. Claims of truth had to be settled first, then the fountain of grace could flow ; but her need kept her at the footstool. She asked ignorantly, but was in earnest.

And His disciples came and besought Him, saying,

'Send her away ; for she crieth after us.' One or other of two courses they would suggest. Peter might have said, 'she is a Gentile dog ; she has no right to you as Son of David ; send her away.' This would have been *truth*, but at the expense of *grace* ; but Jesus was showing grace as well as truth. John might have said, 'She is a poor needy woman, just give her what she wants, and send her away.' This would have been *grace*, but at the expense of *truth*. But Jesus was showing truth as well as grace. This is so like man—he cares for little but his own comfort. 'She crieth after us.' 'Us' always must be consulted. How unlike Him who gave 'Himself for us,' when He came as grace and truth. 'What does it matter about dispensational truths, if sinners are saved ?' Such is man's talk—and it matters little to the sinner ; but what of God's claims and God's truth ? 'We don't study dispensational truth, because it is not essential.' Essential to you or to God ? The disciples could not harmonise grace and truth, and therefore they had to sacrifice either, but both are to be seen. Man would either repel from God as an angry Judge, and give no good news to any sinner, or He would undermine the pillars of His throne by giving universal salvation to all ; but 'grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' He now takes occasion from the appeal of the disciples to let out a little of His mind.

But He answered and said, 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' As 'Son of David,' He keeps by His peculiar mission. She does not belong to the lost sheep of Israel's house ; how, therefore, can He speak to her or grant her the request she presented ? He could not deal as 'Son of David' with a Gentile, because she was not of the house of Israel. Was this not truth, some would even think, to harshness ? But this is man's idea of harshness. God's truth is never harsh. Grace without truth is sentimentality. Truth without grace is harshness. All this is only (not to 'send her away,' such was the disciples' easy method, but) to lead her to give Him His true