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“IT’S ALL IN THE DOCUMENT”

In conversing with an inquiring soul, who was seeking to find how he might know his sins were forgiven, it pleased the Lord to use the following illustration, as bringing before him the simple message of the gospel as in Gal. 3:13. He could not get hold of the truth in the verse, and had been told: “Now, my friend, instead of trusting just what that word reveals, and accepting your pardon upon the authority of God’s word, and commencing the service of God as a saved man, you are occupied with looking at your feeling or something in yourself, in some expected change of heart, as a ground of hope that you are saved. Let me give you this illustration: Suppose three men under condemnation for crime, and shut up in prison, were to receive, each of them, as an act of grace from the governor, a pardon. This pardon is a written document signed with the governor’s name and bearing the seal of state. Now upon what ground does the keeper of the prison release these three men from the penalty of their crime?”

“Why, on the ground of the pardon by the governor.”

“Yes, just so. Supposing one of them should come to the keeper after having had the pardon handed to him, and should weep, and cry, and feel bad on account of his crime. Would his weeping and crying and feeling bad be the reason of the keeper unlocking the door and setting him free?”

“No; it would not. He is let go because of the pardon.”

“Supposing another should come after having received the pardon, and begin to beg and plead and pray with the keeper in very earnest, touching words to be released. Would his begging and praying be the reason of the keeper’s unlocking the door when he finally was released?”

“No; the keeper lets him out because he is pardoned.”

“Well, supposing the third one should come after he had received his pardon, and should say: ‘Now, Mr. Keeper, I want to get out and have seen the pardon, but of course before I can be released I must promise you as to my future behaviour, and here are twenty-seven resolutions and promises that I have drawn up in writing that I think will cover the ground.’ The keeper, without reply, unlocks the door and he goes free. Is the door unlocked because of his promises and resolutions?”

"No; it's his pardon, and that alone, that sets him free."

"Very well; now let us pursue the illustration a little further. Let us follow these three men as they leave the prison with their pardons safely in their pockets. The first one, we will imagine, is met, not far from the prison, by the officer who detected him in his crime and was the means of his arrest and punishment. This officer knows that according to the law the man should be in prison. He does not know of the pardon provided by grace. He advances toward the man with keen, suspicious glance. How shall the released man act—what reply make to the searching question: 'Have you any right to be here? Have you been pardoned?' Let us imagine him, if we can, so occupied with himself, so lacking in confidence in the seal of the governor, as to sadly reply: 'Well, I thought I had been pardoned, but since seeing you my crime and my unworthiness come back to me, and I do not feel that I have been. I am unworthy of it, and you can take me back again where I belong. I was wrong in leaving and thinking I was pardoned.' What would you have said to that man if you had been near him?"

"Why, I should have told the foolish fellow to look at his document and show it to the officer, who would very quickly have let him alone."

"Just so. Well, let us follow the second man as with his pardon in his pocket he is getting away from the prison. He is very happy, he is freely and joyfully telling old acquaintances as he meets them that he has been pardoned and delivered from penalty. Soon an officer also stands in his path, and as he recognizes in him a former criminal he asks for evidence of his pardon. Let us imagine him so occupied with himself, so utterly unappreciative of the grace of the governor, and of his only ground of safety, as in the written pardon, as to answer: 'Why, I know I am pardoned because I feel I am pardoned. Don't you see how happy I am?' The answer of the officer would certainly be: 'Well, sir, I make no account of your feeling happy; if you have nothing to show as evidence from the governor that you are pardoned, you will just come right back with me to prison.' Now, what would you have said to that man if you had been there?"

"Why, of course I would have told him to pull out his document and show that, instead of talking of his feelings."

"Very well; now one more illustration, and then for the application: We will suppose the third man met by an officer. He has bought a new suit of clothes, washed and shaved himself, and procured a situation, where he proposes to go to work and earn an honest living. We will imagine his reply when asked for evidence that he is pardoned. 'Why, sir, you see I have turned over a new leaf. I have put on new clothes, I have formed honest associations, and purpose to be a new man.' Not a word as to his pardon, and no presentation of that as the ground of his liberty. The inexorable

officer would at once reply: "Sir, your turning over a new leaf is all very well, but that cannot deliver you from the sentence of the law. If you have no pardon from the governor to show, you are my prisoner.' You see the folly of this third man's talking about his new leaf, as you saw the folly of the first man's talking about his bad feelings, and the second about his good feelings, instead of simply showing their pardon and relying only upon it.

"Now for the application: I have read to you the testimony of God's word (Gal. 3:10; Rom. 3:19; John 3:18, and other passages), that having broken God's law you are condemned by the law, and under the penalty of sin. You admit this testimony as true, and confess yourself a sinner before God, and are anxious to be saved. I have read to you the testimony of God's word (John 3:14-17; Isa. 53; Acts 10:36-43) as to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to be the Saviour of lost sinners by dying on the cross for their sins (1 Pet. 2:24), and ascending in newness of life to the presence of God as their justification (Rom. 4:25). You say you believe this testimony. I now point you to the pardon from God to you, on the ground of Christ's death, as summed up in Gal. 3:13: 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' Now, please read that over; read it again, and again. Do you believe that message?"

"Yes, sir; I do."

"Very well; are you redeemed?"

"No. I don't feel—"

"Hold up—what did you say about that pardoned man who talked about his feelings, instead of showing his pardon?"

"O, I see, I see; it's all in the document, of course. How stupid I have been! Christ hath redeemed me; I have never believed the word." And a happy smile broke over the inquirer as he looked at the word.

"Well, are you redeemed?"

"Yes, I am."

"How do you know you are? Supposing the detective meets you? Supposing the memory of past sins comes up?"

"I know it by believing the word. I accept Christ as my Saviour. I have His word that He has

redeemed me. I pull out the document."

"That is right, my friend. God has given you light. Make much of the document. Rest only upon that as the ground of assurance. Now, one word as to the life you are to live as a saved, a redeemed man. Redeemed means bought—what did Christ pay for you?"

"His own life."

"Peter says we are redeemed (bought) not with silver or gold as corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ. Well, if Jesus bought you, whom do you belong to?"

"To Jesus."

"Are you willing to have it so, to be His property, to have Him to put His name upon you, and you own yourself as His disciple, and to live henceforth to please Him, as your Lord and Master?"

"I am."

"Well, let us tell him so."

And we knelt in prayer and the Saviour rejoiced over another blood-bought soul, saved by grace.

D. W. WHITTLE,
In **Messiah's Herald**.

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Brother Whittle's illustration is good: We would that all might realize that their justification is based not on their feelings, nor on good resolutions, but upon the *ransom*, purchased by the precious blood of Christ.

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Death is the great prison-house. Sin is its bolts and bars. Our *ransom*—*pardon*—opens those bolts and bars, thus setting us at liberty to go forth, and the loving voice of Him who redeemed us calls us to come forth and become his Bride. Oh! what love! Some of (us) the prisoners "have an ear to hear," and have accepted gladly the call to become joint-heirs with him in the coming kingdom. Others are so degraded by prison life that they are "blind and cannot see afar off." Sin hath blinded their eyes, and some are so deaf that they have no "ear to hear" the message of liberty

and ransom.

But what—how many of those prisoners were ransomed—pardoned? Is it only those who now have the hearing ear and unclouded vision? If so, Jesus' death will affect but very *few*. But no, the ransom was given for *all the prisoners*, every child of Adam—for those more degraded as well as for those yet possessed of sensibilities;

"For all my Lord was crucified;
For all the world my Saviour died."

We thank God that he is showing us a little of his boundless love, and the value of Jesus' death, as being great enough to ransom all from the great prison-house of death. He came to "bind up the broken-hearted, to *proclaim* liberty to the captives and opening of prison doors to them that are bound." This was the substance of Jesus' preaching, and it is proper, as the theme of all the church, which is his body, during this Gospel Age (or "acceptable year").

But the Millennial reign will not be a *proclamation*, but a performance of the things *now proclaimed*. The great *prison-house*—death—is to be destroyed, and the blind and deaf shall all be brought to know of their redemption through his blood—that Jesus Christ (by the grace of God) tasted death for *every man*—to be testified in *due* time."

For the sharing with our Lord as his Bride, in this great work of blessing and liberating those who were our fellow prisoners, we are *called*. When this "*church*," "little flock," "Bride," is perfected, at the resurrection (of which they will constitute the "first" or chief) "*then* shall be brought to pass the saying which is written" by the Prophet Isaiah 25:6-8. He will destroy the covering of death spread over all people and the veil of ignorance spread over all nations. He will swallow up *death* victoriously. Then the prisoners will all come forth out of the pit (tomb)—"Then the blind eyes shall be opened and the deaf ears shall be unstopped." (Isa. 35:5.)—[EDITOR.]

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