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JANUARY

Faith in Which Jesus?

You are righteous, LORD, and your laws are right. The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy.

—PSALM 119:137–138

To manipulate the Scriptures so as to make them excuse us, compliment us and console us is to do despite to the written Word and to reject the Living Word. To believe savingly in Jesus Christ is to believe all He has said about Himself and all that the prophets and apostles have said about Him. Let us beware that the Jesus we “accept” is not one we have created out of the dust of our imagination and formed after our own likeness.

True faith commits us to obedience. “We have received grace and apostleship,” says Paul, “for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name” (Rom. 1:5). That dreamy, sentimental faith which ignores the judgments of God against us and listens to the affirmations of the soul is as deadly as cyanide.

That faith which passively accepts all the pleasant texts of the Scriptures while it overlooks or rejects the stern warnings and commandments of those same Scriptures is not the faith of which Christ and His apostles spoke. OGM062

Loving and gracious Savior, I repent of the ways in which I have believed the truth about You selectively. Grant that I would believe everything the Scriptures reveal about You so that I would know You fully and honor You with my whole life. Amen.

JANUARY 2

True Christian Equals Practicing Christian

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed,
we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not
built by human hands.

—2 CORINTHIANS 5:1

The supreme purpose of the Christian religion is to make men like God in order that they may act like God. In Christ the verbs *to be* and *to do* follow each other in that order.

True religion leads to moral action. The only true Christian is the practicing Christian.

Such a one is in very reality an incarnation of Christ as Christ is the incarnation of God; not in the same degree and fullness of perfection, for there is nothing in the moral universe equal to that awful mystery of godliness which joined God and man in eternal union in the person of the Man Christ Jesus; but as the fullness of the God-head was and is in Christ, so Christ is in the nature of the one who believes in Him in the manner prescribed in the Scriptures. OGM063

*Lord Jesus, You are the way to true life. Grant by Your Spirit that I
would practice what You have taught in the Scriptures. Amen.*

Fruit, Not Trees

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

—MATTHEW 12:33

Rightly understood, faith is not a substitute for moral conduct but a means toward it. The tree does not serve in lieu of fruit but as an agent by which fruit is secured. Fruit, not trees, is the end God has in mind in yonder orchard; so Christlike conduct is the end of Christian faith.

To oppose faith to works is to make the fruit the enemy to the tree; yet that is exactly what we have managed to do. And the consequences have been disastrous.

A miscalculation in laying the foundation of a building will throw the whole superstructure out of plumb, and the error that gave us faith as a substitute for action instead of faith in action has raised up in our day unsymmetrical and ugly temples of which we may well be ashamed and for which we shall surely give a strict account in the day when Christ judges the secrets of our hearts. OGM065

*Lord Jesus, You know all my thoughts, intentions, and ambitions.
Empower me this day to put my faith into action, that I may bear
much fruit and You may be glorified. Amen.*

Word Made Flesh—Happily

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.
We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son,
who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

—JOHN 1:14

Redemption is not a heavy work for God. God didn't find Himself in a fix and have to rush off somewhere and try to get "foreign policy" straightened out with the archangels. God did what He did joyfully. He made the heaven and the earth joyfully. That's why the flowers look up and smile, and the birds sing and the sun shines, and the sky is blue and rivers trickle down to the sea. God made the creation and He loved what He did!

He took pleasure in Himself, in His own perfection and in the perfection of His work. And when it comes to redemption, I repeat that this was not a heavy task laid upon God by moral necessity. God wanted to do this. There was no moral necessity upon God to redeem mankind. He didn't have to send His Son Jesus Christ to die for mankind. He sent Him, but at the same time Jesus did it voluntarily. If God was willing, it was the happy willingness of God.

*Thank You, Father, that because Jesus became human, I can
fellowship with You once again. Amen.*

God—Acting Like God

The one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

—JOHN 1:18

When Jesus walked and taught in Galilee 2,000 years ago, many asked, “Who is that Man?”

The Bible’s answer is clear: That Man walking in Galilee was God, acting like God! It was God, limited deliberately, having crossed the wide, mysterious gulf between God and not God, between God and creature. No man had seen God at any time.

In John 1:18, the English translators have said, “The only begotten Son . . . hath declared him.” Other versions skirt around it, doing everything to try to say what the Holy Spirit said, but when we have used up our words and synonyms, we still have not said all that God revealed when He said, “Nobody has ever looked at God, but when Jesus Christ came He showed us what God is like” (paraphrase of John 1:18).

He has revealed Him—He has shown us what God is like!

He has declared Him! He has set Him forth! He has revealed Him!

He is in the Father’s bosom. It is stated in present, perpetual tense, the language of continuation. Therefore, when Jesus hung on the cross, He did not leave the bosom of the Father! MWT247

Lord Jesus, that You are the Son of God is the bedrock of our faith. Thank You for revealing what God is like during Your brief sojourn on earth. Amen.

Christ Unchanging

He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

—PHILIPPIANS 2:7

Because change is everywhere around us at all times on this earth and among human beings, it is difficult for us to grasp the eternal and unchanging nature and person of Jesus Christ.

Nothing about our Lord Jesus Christ has changed down to this very hour. His love has not changed. His compassionate understanding of us has not changed. His interest in us and His purposes for us have not changed.

He is Jesus Christ, our Lord. He is the very same Jesus. Even though He has been raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, and made Head over all things to the Church, His love for us remains unchanged.

It is hard for us to accept the majestic simplicity of this constant, wonder-working Jesus. We are used to getting things changed so that they are always bigger and better!

He is Jesus, easier to approach than the humblest friend you ever had! He is the sun that shines upon us, He is the star of our night. He is the giver of our life and the rock of our hope. He is our safety and our future. He is our righteousness, our sanctification, our inheritance.

You will find that He is all of this in that instant that you move your heart towards Him in faith! This is the journey to Jesus that must be made in the depths of the heart and being. This is a journey where feet do not count! EWT208

Lord Christ, how amazing that You do not change! I trust in Your unfailing love and compassion this day. Amen.

God and the Individual

Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count
against them.

—ROMANS 4:8

When the eternal Son of God became the Son of Man and walked on this earth, He always called individuals to His side. Jesus did not come into the world to deal with statistics!

He deals with individuals and that is why the Christian message is and always has been: “God loves the world! He loves the masses and throngs only because they are made up of individuals. He loves every individual person in the world!”

In the great humanistic tide of our day, the individual is no longer the concern. We are pressed to think of the human race in a lump. We are schooled to think of the human race in terms of statistics. In many nations, the state is made to be everything and the individual means nothing at all.

Into the very face and strength of this kind of humanism comes the Christian evangel, the good news of salvation, wondrously alight with the assurance for all who will listen:

“You are an individual and you matter to God! His concern is not for genes and species but for the individuals He has created!” MWT 359

Father God, Your Word says that You knew each one of us before we were born (see Jer. 1:5), You personally knit us together in our mother's womb (see Ps. 139:13), and You planned each day of our life (see Ps. 139:16). I praise You, Lord! My only response to this can be to live every day for Your glory. Amen.

We Must Have Kindness

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

— HEBREWS 1:3

Jesus is God. And Jesus is the kindest man ever to live on this earth. His kindness is something we must have. It must be a reflection, a lingering flavor, like an old vase that once held beautiful flowers. Though the vase is broken, the scent of the roses hangs round the vase. So mankind, fallen like a broken vase, dashed to the pavement and splintered into a million pieces, yet has something we call kindness.

God is not revolted by our wretchedness. He has no despite of anything that He has made, nor does He disdain the service in the simplest office that to our body belongeth. The Lord will be your Nurse, your Caretaker, your Helper, and He's not revolted by anything about you. He wills that you joy along with Him. The everlasting marvel and the high, overpassing love of God, the irresistible love of God, out of His goodness sees us perfect even though we are not perfect. And He wants us to be glad in Him. AOG052-053

Lord, You know the secrets of my heart, yet You love me unconditionally, even when I am unkind. I confess my sins to You, Lord. Forgive me when I fall and make me more like You. Amen.

JANUARY 9

Infinite Mercy

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,
made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in
transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

—EPHESIANS 2:4–5

When Jesus died on the cross the mercy of God did not become any greater. It could not become any greater, for it was already infinite. We get the odd notion that God is showing mercy because Jesus died. No—Jesus died because God is showing mercy. It was the mercy of God that gave us Calvary, not Calvary that gave us mercy. If God had not been merciful, there would have been no incarnation, no babe in the manger, no man on a cross, and no open tomb.

The intercession of Christ at the right hand of God does not increase the mercy of God toward His people. If God were not already merciful, there would be no intercession of Christ at the right hand of God. And if God is merciful at all, then He is infinitely merciful. It is impossible for the mediatorship of Jesus at the right hand of the Father to make the mercy of God any more than it is now. AOG082-083

*Lord, show me what it means to be merciful and how to extend
to others the mercy You have shown me. Amen.*

JANUARY 10

All the Grace You Need

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our
time of need.

—HEBREWS 4:16

Jesus was saying to us, "You went away in Adam, but you're coming back in Christ. And when you come back you'll find the Father hasn't changed. He's the same Father that He was when you all went out, every man to his own way. But when you come back in Jesus Christ you'll find Him exactly the same as you left Him—unchanged." And the Father ran and threw His arms around him and welcomed him and put a robe and a ring on him and said, "This my son was dead, and is alive again" (Luke 15:24). This is the grace of God. Isn't it worth believing in, preaching, teaching, singing about while the world stands?

If you're out of the grace of God, do you know where the grace is? Turn your eyes upon Jesus, and there's the grace of God flowing free for you—all the grace you need. If you set your teeth against Him, the grace of God might as well not exist for you. And Christ might as well not have died. But if you yield to Him and come home, then all the overwhelming, incomprehensible plentitude of goodness and kindness in the great illimitable reaches of God's nature are on your side. Even justice is on the side of the returning sinner: "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9). All the infinite attributes of God rejoice together when a man believes in the grace of God and returns home. AOG115

Lord, I confess that I am a sinner—but one who has been saved by Your grace. I look to You, Jesus, for everything I need. Amen.

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