

42 - Ignorance Demonstrates His Ignorance

I saw, then, in my dream, that HOPEFUL looked back and saw IGNORANCE, whom they had left behind, coming after. "Look," said he to CHRISTIAN, "how far yonder youngster loiters behind."

Chr. Aye, aye, I see him; he cares not for our company.

Hope. But I trow it would not have hurt him had he kept pace with us hitherto.

Chr. That's true; but I warrant you he thinks otherwise.

Hope. "That I think he doth; but, however, let us tarry for him." So they did.

Chr. Then CHRISTIAN said to him, "Come away, man; why do you stay so behind?"

Ign. I take my pleasure in walking alone, even more a great deal than in company, unless I like it the better.

Chr. Then said CHRISTIAN to HOPEFUL (but softly), "Did I not tell you he cared not for our company? but however," said he, "come up and let us talk away the time in this solitary place." Then directing his speech to IGNORANCE, he said, "Come, how do you? how stands it between God and your soul now?"

Ign. I hope well; for I am always full of good motions, that come into my mind to comfort me as I walk.

Chr. What good motions? Pray tell us.

Ign. Why, I think of God and heaven.

Chr. So do the devils and damned souls.

Ign. But I think of them, and desire them.

Chr. So do many that are never like to come there; the soul of the sluggard desires, and hath nothing (#Pr 13:4).

Ign. But I think of them, and leave all for them.

Chr. That I doubt, for leaving of all is a hard matter; yea, a harder matter than many are aware of. But why, or by what, art thou persuaded that thou hast left all for God and heaven?

Ign. My heart tells me so.

Chr. The wise man says, "He that trusts his own heart is a fool" (#Pr 28:26).

Ign. This is spoken of an evil heart; but mine is a good one.

Chr. But how dost thou prove that?

Ign. It comforts me in the hopes of heaven.

Chr. That may be through its deceitfulness; for a man's heart may minister comfort to him in the hopes of that thing for which he yet has no ground to hope.

Ign. But my heart and life agree together; and therefore my hope is well grounded.

Chr. Who told thee that thy heart and life agree together?

Ign. My heart tells me so.

Chr. "Ask my fellow if I be a thief." Thy heart tells thee so! Except the Word of God bears witness in this matter, other testimony is of no value.

Ign. But is it not a good heart that has good thoughts? and is not a good life one that is according to God's commandments?

Chr. Yes, that is a good heart that hath good thoughts; and that is a good life that is according to God's commandments: but it is one thing indeed to have these, and another thing only to think so.

Ign. Pray, what count you good thoughts, and a life according to God's commandments?

Chr. There are good thoughts of divers kinds: some respecting ourselves, some God, some Christ, and some other things.

Ign. What be good thoughts respecting ourselves?

Chr. Such as agree with the Word of God.

Ign. When do our thoughts of ourselves agree with the Word of God?

Chr. When we pass the same judgment upon ourselves which the Word passes. To explain myself: the Word of God saith of persons in a natural condition, "There is none righteous, there is none that doth good." It saith also, "That every imagination of the heart of man is only evil, and that continually" (#Ro 3:9-18,23 Ge 6:5). And again, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Now then, when we think thus of ourselves, having sense thereof, then are our thoughts good ones, because they are according to the Word of God.

Ign. I will never believe that my heart is thus bad.

Chr. Therefore thou never hadst one good thought concerning thyself in thy life. But let me go on. As the Word passes a judgment upon our heart, so it passes a judgment upon our ways: and when our thoughts of our hearts and ways agree with the judgment which the Word gives of both, then are both good, because agreeing thereto.

Ign. Make out your meaning.

Chr. Why, the Word of God saith, that man's ways are crooked ways; not good, but perverse. It saith, they are naturally out of the good way, that they have not known it (#Ps 125:5 Pr 2:15 Ro 3:9-18). Now, when a man thus thinks of his ways—I say, when he doth sensibly and with heart humiliation thus think, then hath he good thoughts of his own ways because his thoughts now agree with the judgment of the Word of God.

Ign. What are good thoughts concerning God?

Chr. Even (as I have said concerning ourselves) when our thoughts of God do agree with what the Word saith of him; and that is when we think of his being and attributes as the Word hath taught, of which I cannot now discourse at large. But to speak of him with reference to us: then we have right thoughts of God when we think that he knows us better than we know ourselves, and can see sin in us when and where we can see none in ourselves; when we think he knows our inmost thoughts, and that our heart with all its depths is always open unto his eyes; also, when we think that all our righteousness stinks in his nostrils, and that therefore he cannot abide to see us stand before him in any confidence even of all our best performances.

Ign. Do you think that I am such a fool as to think God can see no further than I? or that I would come to God in the best of my performances?

Chr. Why, how dost thou think in this matter?

Ign. Why, to be short, I think I must believe in Christ for justification.

Chr. How think thou must believe in Christ, when thou seest not thy need of him! Thou neither seest thy original nor actual infirmities; but hast such an opinion of thyself and of what thou doest, as plainly renders thee to be one that did never see a necessity of Christ's personal righteousness to justify thee before God. How then dost thou say, "I believe in Christ?"

Ign. I believe well enough for all that.

Chr. How dost thou believe?

Ign. I believe that Christ died for sinners; and that I shall be justified before God from the curse, through his gracious acceptance of my obedience to his law; or thus, Christ makes my duties that are religious acceptable to his Father by virtue of his merits, and so shall I be justified.

Chr. Let me give an answer to this confession of thy faith:

1. Thou believest with a fantastical faith; for this faith is nowhere described in the Word.
2. Thou believest with a false faith; because it taketh justification from the personal righteousness of Christ, and applies it to thy own.

3. This faith makes not Christ a justifier of thy person, but of thy actions; and of thy person for thy actions' sake, which is false.

4. Therefore this faith is deceitful, even such as will leave thee under wrath in the day of God Almighty; for true justifying faith puts the soul (as sensible of its lost condition by the law) upon flying for refuge unto Christ's righteousness—which righteousness of his is not an act of grace by which he makes for justification thy obedience accepted with God; but his personal obedience to the law in doing and suffering for us what that required at our hands. This righteousness, I say, true faith accepts; under the skirt of which, the soul being shrouded, and by it presented as spotless before God, it is accepted, and acquitted from condemnation.

Ign. What! would you have us trust to what Christ in his own person has done without us? This conceit would loosen the reins of our lust, and tolerate us to live as we list; for what matter how we live, if we may be justified by Christ's personal righteousness from all, when we believe it?

Chr. IGNORANCE is thy name; and as thy name is, so art thou: even this thy answer demonstrateth what I say. Ignorant thou art of what justifying righteousness is; and as ignorant how to secure thy soul, through the faith of it, from the heavy wrath of God. Yea, thou also art ignorant of the true effects of saving faith in this righteousness of Christ: which is, to bow and win over the heart to God in Christ, to love his name, his Word, ways, and people; and not as thou ignorantly imaginest.

Hope. Ask him if ever he had Christ revealed to him from heaven.

Ign. What! you are a man for revelations! I do believe that what both you and all the rest of you say about that matter is but the fruit of distracted brains.

Hope. Why, man, Christ is so hid in God from the natural apprehensions of the flesh, that he cannot by any man be savingly known, unless God the Father reveals him to them.

Ign. That is your faith, but not mine: yet mine, I doubt not, is as good as yours, though I have not in my head so many whimsies as you.

Chr. Give me leave to put in a word. You ought not so slightly to speak of this matter; for this I will boldly affirm (even as my good companion hath done), that no man can know Jesus Christ but by the revelation of the Father; yea, and faith too, by which the soul lays hold upon Christ (if it be right), must be wrought by the exceeding greatness of his mighty power; (#Mt 11:27 1Co 12:3 Eph 1:18,19) the working of which faith, I perceive, poor IGNORANCE, thou art ignorant of. Be awakened, then, see thine own wretchedness, and fly to the Lord Jesus; and by his righteousness, which is the righteousness of God (for He himself is God), thou shalt be delivered from condemnation.

Ign. You go so fast, I cannot keep pace with you. Do you go on before; I must stay awhile behind.

Then they said:

"Well, IGNORANCE, Wilt thou yet foolish be,
To slight good counsel ten times given thee?
And if thou yet refuse it, thou shalt know

Ere long the evil of thy doing so.
Remember, man, in time; stoop, do no fear:
Good counsel taken well, saves; therefore hear
But if thou yet shalt slight it, thou wilt be
The loser, IGNORANCE, I'll warrant thee."

Then CHRISTIAN addressed himself thus to his fellow:

Chr. Well, come, my good HOPEFUL; I perceive that thou and I must walk by ourselves again.

Pr 13:4 Pr 28:26 Ro 3:9-18,23 Ge 6:5 Ps 125:5 Pr 2:15 Ro 3:9-18 Mt 11:27 1Co 12:3 Eph 1:18,19

"The soul of a lazy *man* desires, and *has* nothing; But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." (Pr 13:4 NKJV)

"He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered." (Pr 28:26 NKJV)

"9 What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. 10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." 13 "Their throat *is* an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps *is* under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet *are* swift to shed blood; 16 Destruction and misery *are* in their ways; 17 And the way of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Ro 3:9-18 NKJV)

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Ro 3:23 NKJV)

"Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually." (Ge 6:5 NKJV)

"As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, The LORD shall lead them away With the workers of iniquity. Peace *be* upon Israel!" (Ps 125:5 NKJV)

"Whose ways *are* crooked, And *who are* devious in their paths;" (Pr 2:15 NKJV)

"9 What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. 10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." 13 "Their throat *is* an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps *is* under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet *are* swift to shed blood; 16 Destruction and misery *are* in their ways; 17 And the way of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Ro 3:9-18 NKJV)

"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*." (Mt 11:27 NKJV)

"Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." (1Co 12:3 NKJV)

“¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power” (Eph 1:18-19 NKJV)