

“HERE IS WISDOM...”

The above phrase comes from Revelation 13:18, and reminds us of the need to be sound in understanding what God’s word, the source of all wisdom, teaches. Below are quotations on a number of important subjects, selected for their scriptural wisdom and great spiritual profit – Ed.

The Old Paths

When modern scoffers at “old paths” (Jeremiah 6:16) ... have had their say, there remain some stern facts which can never be explained and some questions which can only receive one answer. I ask boldly, What extensive good has ever been done in the world, except by the theology of the “old paths”? And I confidently challenge a reply because I know that none can ever be given. I affirm unhesitatingly that there never has been any spread of the Gospel, any real change in a society, any successful evangelistic work excepting by the old-fashioned distinct doctrines of the early Christians and the Reformers. I invite any opponent of dogmatic theology to name a single instance of a country, or town, or people which has ever been blessed by merely telling men that “Christ was a great moral teacher; that they must love one another, that they must be true and just and unselfish and generous and brotherly and high souled” and the like. No! No! Not one single victory can such teaching show us. The victories of Christianity, wherever they have been won, have been won by distinct doctrinal theology; by telling men of Christ’s victorious death and sacrifice; by showing them Christ’s substitution on the cross and His precious blood; by teaching them justification by faith and bidding them believe on a crucified Saviour; by preaching ruin by sin, redemption by Christ and regeneration by the spirit. This, this is the only teaching which for (twenty) centuries God has honoured with success.

J.C. Ryle

Faith

It sets time past in present view,
Brings distant prospects home,
Of things a thousand years ago,
Or thousand years to come.

Isaac Watts

Believers’ sins on the Day of Judgment

But there is a difficult question proposed by some, namely, whether the sins of God’s people shall be published in the great day; though it is certain they shall not be alleged against them to their condemnation? This is one of the secret things which belong to God, which He has not so fully or clearly revealed to us in his word; so that we can say little more about it than what is matter of conjecture.

Some have thought that the sins of the godly, though forgiven, shall be made manifest, that so the glory of that grace which has pardoned them may appear more illustrious, and their obligation to God further enhanced. They also think that the justice of the proceedings of that day requires it; since it is presumed and known by the whole world that they were prone to sin as well as others, that, before conversion, they were as great sinners as any, and that, after it, their sins had a peculiar aggravation. Why, then, they ask, should not their sins be made public, as a glory due to the justice and holiness of God, as being infinitely opposite to all sin? This they farther suppose to be necessary, that the impartiality of divine justice may appear.

Moreover, if God, by recording the sins of his saints in scripture, has perpetuated the knowledge of them, and if it is to their honour that the sins there mentioned were repented of, as well as forgiven, why may it not be supposed that the sins of believers shall be made known

in the great day? Besides, that they shall be made known seems agreeable to those scriptures which state that every word and every action shall be brought into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

On the other hand, it is supposed by others, that though the making known of sin which is subdued and forgiven, tends to the advancement of divine grace; yet it is sufficient to answer this end, as far as God designs it shall be answered, that the sins which have been subdued and forgiven, should be known to those who committed them, who, in consequence of having received pardon, have matter of praise to God. Again, the expressions of scripture whereby forgiveness of sin is set forth, are such as seem to argue that those sins which were forgiven shall not be made manifest. Thus they are said to be "blotted out," "covered," "subdued," "cast into the depths of the sea" and "remembered no more," Besides, Christ's being a Judge does not divest him of the character of an Advocate, whose part is rather to conceal the crimes of those whose cause He pleads, than to divulge them.

We may add, that the law which requires duty, and forbids the contrary sins, is not the rule by which they who are in Christ are to be proceeded against, for if it were, they could not stand in judgment; but they are dealt with according to the tenor of the gospel, which forgives and covers all sins. Furthermore, it is argued that the public declaring of all their sins before the whole world, notwithstanding their interest in forgiving grace, would fill them with such shame as is hardly consistent with a state of perfect blessedness.

Lastly, the principal argument insisted on, is that our Saviour, in Matthew 25, in which He gives a particular account of the proceedings of that day, makes no mention of the sins, but only commends the graces, of his saints. Such arguments as these are alleged to prove that it is probable the sins of the saints shall not be exposed to public view on the great day. But after all that has been said, it is safest for us not to be too peremptory in determining this matter, lest, by pretending to be wise beyond what is clearly revealed in scripture, we betray our own folly and too bold presumption, or assert that which is not right of this glorious Judge.

Dr. Ridgeley, Comm on the Larger Catechism.

Worship

Worship is a wonderful thing. It is very difficult to explain what it is. It is better experienced than explained. It is really like that wonderful incense under the Levitical dispensation. There was never any substitute to be made for it. That is the fault of much present-day religion: it is trying to imitate these things. But it was "compound after the art of the apothecary." There were all kinds of precious spices and they were all skilfully blended together and they made this beautiful, fragrant incense which ascended to heaven in the Old Testament sanctuary. Of course, it was a figure of true, spiritual worship in the gospel, in the New Testament. So what is there in true worship? "Go worship at Immanuel's feet." There will be so many things: humility, repentance, humble confession, faith, thanksgiving, gratitude, love, the tender fear of God, hope. Really, it is a mingling together of all these graces of the Spirit, and of course it flows and it ascends heavenwards.

B.A. Ramsbottom,

Acceptance

Father, to my heart appear
Pleased and smiling in Thy Son;
Conscious of Thy presence near,
Bowed and humble at Thy throne.
Then I in Thy sight shall stay,
Always fear, and always pray.

Unknown