

PROVERBS 16

MERCY AND TRUTH

Cast your cares upon the Lord (verse 3)

“Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.”

No moral rules can effectively discipline an unsettled mind, which is a great canker to Christian peace. Faith is the only principle of solid establishment. Herein was our original happiness and security; independence was the destruction of our well-being. And the return to this humble simplicity is the blessing of the Gospel! “In all thy ways acknowledge him” – that is the rule of true peace. Have our fretting spirits ever tried this true remedy? To have a sanctuary to flee to; to have a God upon Whom to roll our cares; to lean on His wisdom and rest on His faithfulness – here is a chamber of quietness in the most distracting anxieties! Commit all your works to Him! Seek to Him for strength and guidance in all. Look to Him for success in all. Roll upon Him the great work of your soul’s salvation. Be satisfied with His management of your concerns. The active energy of faith at the throne of grace will establish your thoughts in the peace of God, and it will keep your soul in fortified security; for your burden is now cast upon One Who is better able to bear it. The mind is now easy; the thoughts are composed, quietly waiting for the outcome of all things – knowing that all is for your good and that the glory of your God shall be brought to pass!

Mercy and truth (verse 6)

“By mercy and truth iniquity is purged.”

No object can be more dull and meaningless than the stained-glass window of an ancient church, as long as you stand outside and look toward the dark interior; but when you stand inside the edifice, and look through that window upon the light of heaven – then the still, sweet, solemn forms that lie in the glass burst into life and loveliness! The beauty was all pictured in the mind and made by the hand of the ancient artist whose bones now lie in the surrounding churchyard; but the beauty lies hidden until the two requisites come together – a seeing eye on the inside, and a shining light outside. We often meet a verse on the page of the Old Testament Scriptures that is very much like those ancient works of art. The beauty of holiness is in it, being put into it by the Holy Spirit from the beginning; and yet its meaning was not fully known until the Sun of Righteousness arose. And then the children of God, being no longer kept in the outer court of the Temple, entered through the torn veil; and from the Holy of Holies, they have looked through the ancient record upon an illumined heaven! Many hidden beauties burst into view upon the pages of the Bible, when Faith’s open eye looks through it and sees the face of Jesus. And it is one of these texts that is now before us: “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged.” There is more in it than what would have met the reader’s eye in a time before Christ came to this world in human flesh.

This line of the Scriptures becomes thoroughly transparent, only when we hold it up between us and Christ crucified! The subject is the expiation of sin. The term is the one which is employed in connection with the bloody animal sacrifices. It teaches us that sin is purged by the sacrifice of a Substitute. The two clauses of the verse tell us how the guilt of sin is forgiven, and how the power of sin is subdued. The first of them speaks of the pardon which comes down from God to man; and the second, of the obedience which – then and therefore – rises up from man to God. Solomon unites these two elements of a sinner’s deliverance, in the same order that his father experienced them: “I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments” (Ps. 119:166). It is when iniquity is purged by free grace, that men practically depart from evil. How, then, is iniquity purged? By mercy and truth!



These same two things are repeatedly proclaimed by the Apostle John as the grand distinguishing fruit of the Savior’s incarnation (John 1:14, 17). “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ!” The law gives one of these, and the Gospel gives the other; but only in Christ crucified are both united! The law from Sinai proclaims Truth without Mercy, and the unrenewed heart desires Mercy without Truth. The former would result in the perdition of men, and the latter in the dishonor of God. Truth alone would honor God’s law, but destroy transgressors; mercy alone would shield the transgressors, but trample upon God’s holy law. If there were only truth, earth would no longer be a place of hope; and if there were only mercy, heaven would no longer be a place of holiness. Apart from the Gospel of Christ, both mercy and truth cannot co-exist. But they meet in the Mediator! In Christ, the fire meets the water without drying it up; and the water meets the fire without quenching it out. Truth has its way now, and all the wrath for sin falls upon Him who bears it; and mercy also has its way now, and all the love of God is poured out upon those who are united with His beloved Son. Iniquity is punished in the Substitute sacrificed, and so it is purged from the consciences of those who are redeemed. “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus!” The blood of our Redeemer cleanses us from all sin. This is the Gospel! There is no salvation in any other! The Scriptures testify of Christ from beginning to end. We shall never discover the meaning of “mercy and truth” until we look to Jesus. Our iniquities shall never be purged until we “behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” All the power lies in the great fact that Jesus died as the Just for the unjust; and all salvation comes through this simple act: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!”

Lord, we thank You that there is now no condemnation to us who have been redeemed in Christ Jesus, for His blood has washed us clean from all our sins! Amen.