LIVING IN THE HOPE OF GLORY

A NEW TRANSLATION OF A SPIRITUAL CLASSIC

ADOLPHE MONOD

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MEASURELESS WORD, MEASURELESS GOD

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God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21

My dear friends, beloved brothers and sisters, I am so happy and grateful to be able to receive with you the body and blood of our Savior—that flesh which is “real food” and that blood which is “real drink” (John 6:55) for those who receive them in faith by the Holy Spirit.

There is one characteristic of Scripture that would, by itself, be sufficient to identify it as the Word of God: everything in it is ideal. There is nothing in Scripture but the absolute and the perfect. It never dreams of calling us to a certain measure of holiness by a certain measure of faith. All
measure is contrary to the instinct of the Bible because it is contrary to God.

The ideal of Scripture is not at all like that of poets, who take the things of this world in order to raise them to the third heaven. Scripture does just the opposite. In it the visible things are only types of the invisible, which alone are real, and it considers all things from God’s point of view. This statement struck me this morning as I was reflecting before the Lord on what I could say to you about communion and about the cross of Jesus Christ, in which alone we find remission of sins.

**Ideal Sin**

Everywhere Scripture presents us with ideal sin. There is not one of us who has any idea of the horror and crime of sin before God. We have always lived in an atmosphere so saturated with sin, on this earth that drinks iniquity like water and eats it like bread, that we no longer know how to discern the sin that engulfs us from every side.

Here, in a few words, is my experience. We find in the Bible this statement, “At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another” (Titus 3:3). For a long time it was impossible for me to agree with that statement, that seemed to me to be clearly marked by exaggeration. I confess that even after God, in his grace, had turned my heart to him on the day that he had set from time eternal, I was for a long while still unable to accept it completely. What is more, I confess that ever since, and even today, I cannot comprehend it in its fullness. Yet I am convinced that it is perfectly true and that
if I have not really grasped it in my experience, the fault is entirely mine.

It is just here that I have understood the necessity of a witness existing before, outside of, and above us. I accept that statement from Titus 3:3 as coming from God because I find it in his Word, and I beseech him to finish revealing its meaning to me by his Spirit. By God’s grace I have come—not year by year, things don’t go that fast, but from one interval of several years to another—to see this doctrine more clearly and to sense its truth more forcefully in my heart. I am convinced that when the veil of this flesh has fallen, I will recognize that this is the most faithful painting and the portrait with the greatest likeness that was ever drawn of my heart—and by this I mean my natural heart.

Let us ask God to reveal to us our sinful state, yet without pressing him too hard, because he knows full well that if he made us grow in that knowledge faster than in the knowledge of his mercy we would fall into despair.

**Ideal Pardon**

But pardon is also depicted to us everywhere in Scripture as ideal. If only part of our sins were pardoned; if out of a thousand sins or a million sins (if our sins could be counted) only one was left that was not dealt with, then that pardon would be useless to us. But our pardon is complete.

The passage that was cited a moment ago (2 Cor. 5:21) is one of my favorites. Jesus Christ did not simply make atonement for some sins, he made atonement for sin itself. He was not considered to be a sinner, he was made to be sin; and, mystery of mysteries, the full curse of God was gathered together on that innocent, holy head. Likewise, we are not
simply made righteous in him, we are made to be *righteousness*

itself, in such a way that when God looks at us in Jesus Christ
he sees us as his own beloved Son and finds in us everything
that could attract his gaze and his kindness.

We who believe have been given by God to Jesus Christ
as the recompense for his sacrifice. He can no more break his
word to us than to Jesus Christ, and all of his perfection is so
thoroughly committed in this relationship that this gift of his
infinite mercy becomes like a right due to us by virtue of our
perfect righteousness in Jesus Christ.

Even the terms used in Scripture to show us the nature
of sin before God, also show us how he has blotted out our
sins. He has “put all my sins behind [his] back” (Isa. 38:17) as
if he were afraid of seeing them again; he “will hurl all our
iniquities into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19); he has
“swept away [our] offenses like a cloud, [our] sins like the
morning mist” (Isa. 44:22). Here we see what it is for God to
forget sin. The Lord is shown to us as making an effort to
forget, or rather not to forget but to eradicate.

**Ideal Sanctification**

Finally, Scripture is ideal in what it says to us about
*sanctification*. We have no idea what Scripture demands of us
and the degree of holiness to which we can and must attain. What fullness there is in this verse: “May God himself,
the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May
your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23). And in
order to prove to us that this is not simply a wish, the apostle
immediately adds, “The one who calls you is faithful and he
will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24). It is no more possible for him to
refuse us this grace than it is for us to conceive of him breaking his word.

And how can we arrive at this holiness? Consider the holy men the Bible gives us as examples. How were they great? It was not by their enlightenment or by their natural gifts but by their faith. Look at Saint James (James 5:16). In order to show us the power of faith and of prayer, he takes perhaps the most miraculous man in the Bible in the most miraculous of his miracles. He gives us the boldness of that prayer by Elijah as something completely natural and offers him as an example to the smallest, to the most humble, in order to show us what the fervent prayer (literally, the “energetic” prayer) of a righteous man can do.

A Needed Perspective

If we were able, each one of us, beginning today, to sense in our heart the enormity of our sin, the fullness of our pardon, and the power of the holiness to which we must attain, what a change in our life, what a healthy influence for the church itself!

Prayer

Oh, God! You who know all of the evil and suffering that sin has brought on our poor earth and on this poor humanity, you who see all that is being suffered at this very moment and that we could not stand to look at, we lift up to you all those who are afflicted so that you might pour out on them the treasures of your grace and consolation. We cannot name them all to you, but you yourself know their names.

We lift up to you the victims of war—so many families
deep in mourning and so many others who live in continual anxiety. We lift up to you those who are oppressed and persecuted for righteousness’ sake. We lift up to you the slaves; think of these thousands, these millions of slaves oppressed by men who profess your name, by servants of Christ who are not servants. We lift up to you the poor—ah, the poor!—the sick, the sick who are poor.

We lift up to you all those who know you, that you would sustain them and pour out on them your peace and your comfort. And as for those who don’t know you, we commend them to your grace so that you might reveal yourself to them, because if they do not possess you, their only other alternative is despair.

As for me who suffers a little, I confess Christ and his peace. I thank you for the joy that you have poured into my soul. You will call us, perhaps, to be separated for a little while, but what is that? We know that by your grace we will all one day be reunited close to you.

To read the talks in original chronological order, go to chapt. 8 on p. 59.