**“Holding the Truth in Unrighteousness” The Present Truth 7, 25.**

E. J. Waggoner

Romans 1:18.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” {PTUK December 3, 1891, p. 392.1}

God is love; yet “He reserveth wrath for His enemies.” The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of peace and love; but all who reject it will be “punished with everlasting destruction.” 2 Thessalonians 1:8. Not only so, but the gospel itself reveals not only the righteousness of God, but also the wrath of God against those who spurn that righteousness. Said Christ: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16:15, 16. The wrath of God, which is revealed against unrighteousness, is not a light thing. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” John 3:36. {PTUK December 3, 1891, p. 392.2}

God is “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” Sin is foreign to his nature, and cannot be tolerated. But the punishment meted out to the wicked will not be solely because of their personal sins, that is, not simply because they themselves are wicked, but because by their wickedness they have hindered others from being good. Sin is contagious. It is not only a blood disease, making corrupt every part of the individual in whom it has a place, but it affects all who come in contact with the one so diseased. Says the wise man: “One sinner destroyeth much good.” Ecclesiastes 9:18. {PTUK December 3, 1891, p. 392.3}

An erroneous opinion generally prevails in regard to the expression, “who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” It is usually regarded as applying to wicked men who have the true doctrines of the Bible, but do not practice them; but this is not the idea. The word here rendered “hold” means, primarily, to hold back, withhold, check, restrain, hold down. It implies more than simple possession; it conveys the idea of shutting up in prison, restraining the liberty, or crushing out. The Vulgate has *detineo*, to hold off, keep back, detain. The idea is that the unrighteousness of men prevents the spread of the truth. Wickedness hedges up the way of truth. {PTUK December 3, 1891, p. 392.4}

A good illustration of this is seen in the case of Jesus at Nazareth. When he first spoke to the people, their hearts responded, and they were forced to acknowledge the truth. But soon envy, jealousy, and evil passions assumed control, and drove out the good impressions that had been made. Then they began to say, “Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not His mother called Mary? and His sisters, are they not all with us?” Their thought was, “What can this man tell us? we knew Him when He was a boy.” And then the record says: “And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” Matthew 13:58. They might have received wonderful blessings, but they would not. They most effectually held, or shut up, the truth by their unrighteousness. {PTUK December 3, 1891, p. 392.5}

It is utterly impossible that a man should long possess the truth while pursuing an unrighteous course. Indeed, we may say that it is impossible that he should have the truth at all, while living in the commission of deliberate sin. For Christ is the truth, and the whole truth; whosoever has not Christ, has not the truth; and the man who lives an ungodly life has not Christ. It may be said that an ungodly man may possess a correct theory of truth. That is so, but a theory will not save him, neither will a mere theory advance the cause of truth. The truth which makes free is the truth as it is in Jesus. {PTUK December 3, 1891, p. 392.6}

The Word of God unhampered will grow and multiply. It will enlarge the one who has it. It must manifest itself. Said the prophet Jeremiah: “Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” Jeremiah 20:9. But if the prophet had persisted in his first intention, and had refused to speak, that word which was as a burning fire shut up in him, would soon have gone out. The word of God is like a fire; but if a fire is confined, and not given vent, it will soon go out. {PTUK December 3, 1891, p. 392.7}

“Therefore we ought to pay the more earnest heed to the words which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” Hebrews 2:1. The margin has it, “run out as leaking vessels.” This shows that it is a wrong view of Romans 1:18 which makes it teach that a man may possess the truth of God, and still be an ungodly man. He may have the truth, and may have been set free by it; but if he fails to give earnest heed to it, he will soon lose it all. The man who doesn’t give heed to the truth which he knows, will soon lose it. He may retain a mental conception of the theory of the truth, but he can no more be said to be holding the truth than a man who has an articulated skeleton can be said to be holding a man. {PTUK December 3, 1891, p. 392.8}

That the idea that we have presented is the one that was in the mind of the apostle, is still further evident from what follows, namely, that the heathen once knew God, but lost that knowledge because they did not act in harmony with it. And when the truth has once leaked out of the heart, that person is an agent, it may be unconsciously, in the hands of Satan, to prevent some other one from receiving it. For “no man liveth to himself.” E. J. W. {PTUK December 3, 1891, p. 392.9}

**“Unprofitable Servants” The Present Truth 7, 26.**

E. J. Waggoner

A very important lesson is conveyed by our Lord’s illustration in Luke 17:7-10. It is not among Catholics alone that it is considered possible to perform works of supererogation. There are very many who, by their actions at least, hold that they can place God under obligations to them. Love of approbation, and the overvaluing of one’s own deeds, are so universal that there are very few who do not at times have some traces of that disposition. With some the idea obtains that God keeps a debit and credit account, charging each individual with his evil deeds, and giving him credit for all his good deeds, and that if the good overbalance the evil, then God owes him a reward. With this idea, more or less clearly defined, most worldlings flatter themselves that their case will be all right at the last. {PTUK December 17, 1891, p. 408.1}

Many professors often imagine that God is under some obligation to them, and they manifest it in various ways. If they have given somewhat liberally to the cause of God, and have not been prospered as they think they should be, they withhold their gifts. They do not propose to work for the Lord unless they can receive at once large returns on the investment. Others find it difficult when times are hard to make as good a living for their families as they desire, and so they say, “We cannot afford to keep the Sabbath.” As much as to say, “If God does not furnish me with everything I want, He need not expect my services.” Still others look for their reward in appreciation of their work by their brethren. If their efforts are not estimated at their true value, they become discouraged, and refuse to work because they are not appreciated. {PTUK December 17, 1891, p. 408.2}

Now against all feeling of this kind, our Lord utters a rebuke. Summing up the case, he says: “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.” The truth is that the obligation is upon the side of man. The fact that God created us and preserves us alive, places man under obligation to give his whole service to God. Jeremiah says, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed.” Every moment of man’s life places him under greater obligation to God than he can ever hope to fulfil. And as this mercy is extended to all, it is not alone the professed Christian who owes service to God. Sinners are under as much obligation to God as though they had made a profession to serve him. But if we repent, and obey the commandments of God in every particular, how does the case stand then? We are still unprofitable servants. God is none the richer for our service. There is a vast amount of sin that we have committed in the past, and as we can do no more than our duty from day to day, we are still largely in debt. Were it not that Christ has been set forth “for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God,” the best of men would fail to obtain heaven. {PTUK December 17, 1891, p. 408.3}

And so after all that has been done, eternal life must be “the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” A proper appreciation of this would serve to keep us humble, and prevent many mistakes made on account of our self-sufficiency. Let us be careful lest we become lifted up because of the faith that we have, and so lose the grace of God which is promised to the humble. The more real faith we have in Christ the more will we acknowledge our entire dependence upon Him, and our own utter weakness. Let us heed these words of the apostle: “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” Romans 12:3. E. J. W. {PTUK December 17, 1891, p. 408.4}