

THE TWO WORKS OF GRACE

Excerpted from the book, *The Widow of Zarephath—A Church in the Making*

by

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(1888-1959)

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“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from **all sin**” (1 John 1:7).

The Two Works of Grace

“No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44). No soul comes to God simply of his own volition; he must be drawn by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts men of sin in answer to the prayers of those who have themselves been saved. Thus we see the importance and the privilege of unceasing prayer on the part of every Christian.

When sinners cry for release from the burden of guilt, the Holy Spirit leads them to the foot of the cross. The Scriptures lay down very clearly the conditions under which men may be saved: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them

shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

Among the evangelists of this day are some who stress the idea of believing, and declare there is nothing that the individual himself may do. But the first command is Repent and be converted, and the Bible says, “Come unto me.” Salvation is not forced upon anyone; he has to make a personal decision, but no one can save himself. The actual work of salvation is done through the mediation of the Son with the Father, when all the conditions have been met.

A simple decision to serve the Lord is very seldom coupled with the spirit of repentance with faith sufficient to bring the individual into the justified experience.

“Religious conviction is not spiritual experience.” We cannot form hard and fast rules in these matters, but the tendency to try to eliminate some of the steps in heart preparation is often a tragic mistake. When a seeker feels that he has nothing to do and yet realizes that he has not obtained the peace for which he sought, he may be tempted to feel there is nothing in salvation, when in fact he should be definitely seeking the Lord.

Then there are those who refuse to confess their sins. They do not like to acknowledge their wrong doing to themselves or to God, to say nothing of seeking forgiveness from those who are involved in their wrong doing. An unforgiving spirit can be destructive to all good intentions until it has been acknowledged and repented of. People often say, “I have confessed my sins to God. It is not necessary to acknowledge them to anyone else,” when actually they are evading the issue.

We have no sympathy for the established forms of confession as conducted by some ‘organizations, yet there are times when a seeker, for his own good and that of the community, should make acknowledgment to an authorized person in the Church, of the sins he has committed.

All such preparation does not save the soul, but it is necessary to spiritual well being, and oftentimes if acknowledgments are not made before the heart is transformed, must be done afterward. In any case, the individual must yield to Christ in humility with no personal claim and in full repentance for the sins of the past.

We have known people who should have been trusting the blood, who remained for days and even weeks without obtaining forgiveness. They were lacking in faith or perhaps trusting in themselves and their own self-righteousness. This is likely to be true especially of those persons who have never engaged in outbreking sins such as the world looks upon as especially vile. Other people will, in a moment, catch the vision of the crucified Savior, and trusting in His blood lay hold on the victory.

There is a tendency among some people to feel that once they have been converted there is no more they can do. It is as if they considered salvation a commodity, perhaps wrapped in white tissue and tied with blue ribbons, to be laid away as a treasure. The parable of the talents very definitely dispels this error.

When a person has found forgiveness for his sins, that is, has been born from above, brought into communion with God, he just begins to live. Like the newborn babe, he must have protection from the powers of darkness. He must feed on the Word of God. He must learn to resist temptation and to find strength in the joy of the Lord. Though he must do all he can to help others, the new-born soul should realize he is not ready to go out as an evangelist or a pastor; he will need training in spiritual things; he must grow in grace and by virtue of having endured hardness “as a good soldier” be fitted for the warfare of life.

One phase of the business of the Church is to guide new converts into

channels that will give them the protection and direction necessary to prepare them for effective service. Just as a child must be taught to obey, so the convert must be taught to obey the Holy Spirit. Many people say that they want to be useful, yet are unwilling to be told what they should do. The scripture says, “Obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb.13:17). Submission is one of the first and most essential of Christian graces.

Not long after a person experiences the new birth he will discover that there is a tempter; that he is not living in heaven. He will also discover that there is something within him which rebels against the will of God. He may pass through experiences which reveal jealousy, hatred, or any other element of inbred sin. He may be perplexed whether or not he has actually committed a transgression and may waver between periods of joy and faith, and those of great spiritual depression. This conflict is occasioned by the presence in the human heart of that “man of sin” which we speak of as the carnal nature.

When Adam committed his transgression he imposed on the whole race the burden of ‘original sin’. With it came the curse, not only upon man but upon all the world, animal and vegetable. There is much discussion among professing Christians, even among ministers and religious leaders, as to why man is so beset by the tendency to evil. They know that people may be forgiven for their sins, but cannot understand why this bent toward evil. They fail, or perhaps refuse, to recognize the carnal nature, inbred depravity. The real difficulty is that, whatever their claim, they have either not been converted or have not remained in the justified state long enough to learn the true nature of carnality and how it works.

Inbred sin is subtle and delusive, leading people to self-deception.

The nature of carnality is seldom known or understood until the light of the Holy Spirit reveals its exceeding sinfulness. People do not realize that the root of every kind of evil is in the heart. Every unsaved person who follows his own bent will develop or feed his carnal nature, little realizing the danger he is in. The way people dress, what they eat and drink; what they rest their eyes upon, the amusements in which they indulge, the company they keep, the luxuries they seek, even the cultural attainments to which they aspire, these and many other kinds of indulgence may develop the sinful nature until it is so strong and so deeply entrenched, it is much more difficult to obtain salvation, or if it is obtained, the struggle against old habits continues in a sharp battle that hinders spiritual progress.

So great is the sinful propensity that when humankind is not influenced by the Scriptures and by the doctrines and moral principles established therein, whole nations are plunged into darkness. Cruelty, rapine, and licentiousness prevail.

Tribes of the ocean islands without the Gospel have descended completely to barbarism. When Christianity was introduced, such tribes learned to be kind, gentle, and cultured. Only the Word of God through the instrumentality of a Church in which the Holy Spirit is working, a Church fired with zeal for the salvation of souls, can change the downward trend of mankind.

There are those who obtain salvation, but under the pressure of carnality or of temptation do not keep in the will of God, thus losing the joy out of their souls, and coming again under condemnation. Such persons do not always recognize the fact that they have backslidden, and so continue to make a profession. Under the operation of the Holy Spirit they may again be brought under conviction and begin to seek the Lord. Many such suppose that the blessing

they receive is the second work of grace and profess to be sanctified, when in fact they have been only reclaimed. The first work of grace is an important and ennobling experience. As John Wesley said, "Even babes in Christ are so far perfect as not to commit sin." Justification is far above the standard of a sinning religion. When a person commits what he knows to be a sin, he is a sinner, and should acknowledge his wrong and seek the Lord until communion has been restored.

There is another class of people who declare that when a person has been born from above he cannot lose the experience. Christ used the figure of speech, ye must be born from above, to describe the mystery of salvation because it fits more perfectly all phases of the experience. Actually the new birth indicates a spiritual miracle in which the soul and spirit are brought into communion with God. If that communion is broken, the person is a backslider and must have spiritual life renewed before he can make further progress in the Christian way. This indicates that those people who declare that a soul who has been born from above can never lose it are in error, for it is evident that communion with God *can* be and often has been broken; yet can be restored through the work of the Holy Spirit.

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Inspiring story of faith and courage—of Christian pioneering, told by one of the pioneers. Human interest. . . . Exciting autobiographical sketches, new church history! And much more.

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