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HIGHWAY OF OUR GOD

PART I: ENTERING THE HIGHWAY

CHAPTER FOUR: How Christ Transcends the Law

I WANT to show how Christ transcends the law. He does so, among other things, by giving power over sin. I believe He can do a great deal more for His people than this, but we will stop here.

We have all been slaves of sin. How is it, if there is no deliverance from this dreadful plague and scourge of God's people, that the Holy Ghost sets every real child of God struggling after it? Whatever may be a man's theory in his creed, you get him on his knees and he will begin to pray to God to save him from sin. Sin is the abominable thing which he hates and longs to be delivered from, and the universal experience of God's people is that the Spirit urges them to seek to be saved from it.

If I have been under the power of sin so as to become its complete slave, and Jesus Christ comes and pardons me for the past and delivers me from the guilt and condemnation which came upon me in consequence of the past, what do I want? I want something besides pardon. I want power to stand, or I shall be down again the next minute.

What God does for us through Jesus Christ outside of us is one thing, and what He does in us by Jesus Christ is another thing; but the two are simultaneous, or one so immediately succeeds the other that we hardly discern the interval. Now, I say, I want power to enable me to meet that temptation which is coming on me tomorrow, as it came on me yesterday; and if Jesus Christ pardons me and leaves me under the reigning power of my old appetites, what has He done for me? I shall be down in the mud, and tomorrow night I shall be as condemned as ever. I want power. I want regeneration. As the Holy Spirit has put it, I want the renewing of my mind.

This is precisely where Jesus Christ transcends the law. The law could not renew the spirit of my mind. It could only show me what a guilty rebel I was. It could not put a better spirit in me. It could not extract the venom, but only show it to me, and make me writhe on account of it. But Jesus Christ comes and gives me power.

How does He give it to me? He unites me to Himself. He delivers me from the condemning power of



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the law when He pardons me, and does not leave me there, but unites me to Himself. Then I attain power to bring forth fruit unto God. It is by the union of my soul with Him. I cannot explain it. God Himself cannot explain it. While we cannot explain it, yet we know it. As Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' The mystery is too great to be explained, but there is the beautiful illustration; united to Christ I have power to conquer, to trample under foot those things which heretofore have been my master, and by virtue of Him I retain the power, and in no other way.

What a delusion there is on the subject of Christian knowledge. If knowledge could save people, what a wonderful world we should have today. Knowledge is as powerless as ignorance. A man is not a whit nearer God, or more like Christ, because he has his head crammed with God's word. In fact, some I know who have been best acquainted with the word, have been the greatest slaves of sin.

God is raising up thousands of witnesses to this fact, that it is not in knowledge but in union with Him. The little child in intellect and intelligence who has the real, vital union with Jesus, has more power than the most cultivated theologian can have without Christ. The things of God can only be understood by those who have the Spirit of God. The world by wisdom knows not God any more now than it did in Paul's days. The things of the Spirit are only spiritually comprehended. Hence this beautiful union cannot be explained; I only know it is spoken of all through the Bible as knowing God.

'Abide in Me, and I in you,' said Jesus. 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.' You know what the branch is when it is broken off. It retains the form of a branch, and for a while the beauty and the greenness of a branch, but it is broken off. It can never bear fruit, because the communication is cut between itself and the vine, and there is no sap in its fiber.

You can be like a branch. You can get so much scriptural knowledge that you can look just like a real Christian. You can get many of the feelings and sentiments, as well as a great many of the aspirations and desires, of a Christian. You can be so like a branch that nobody but Jesus Christ may know you are not in that true Vine, and yet you have never been grafted (Rom. 11:17, R.V.) on to the tree. Hence you have no power, and down you go when the temptation comes. What weary years of strife



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some professing Christians have through trying to perform the functions of living men when they have never been spiritually made alive.

I made up my mind to know God when I was fifteen years of age. I had had the strivings of God's Spirit all my life, since I was about two years old. All through my childhood I was graciously sheltered by a watchful mother from outward sin and, in fact, brought up as a Christian. When I came to be between fifteen and sixteen and, as I believe, was thoroughly converted, the great temptation of Satan to me was this: 'You must not expect such a change as you read of in books. You have been half a Christian all your life. You always feared God. You must content yourself with this.' I was frightened at it. I said, 'No! no! My heart is as bad as other people's, and if I have not sinned outwardly I have inwardly.' I cried to God to show me the evil of my heart, and said, 'I will never rest until I am as thoroughly and truly changed, and know it, as any thief or any great outward sinner.' I went on seeking God in this way for six weeks, often till two o'clock in the morning. I told the Lord I would never give up, if I died in the search, until I found God; and I did find Him, as every soul does who comes to Him in that way.

All can have this union. Christ, who is no respecter of persons, bought it for us. He need not have come if we could have known God by the law. If that old covenant had been perfect, there would have been no room for a second. It brought us not into the full realization and enjoyment of God, but the new covenant does. It cleanses the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, and God is henceforth revealed to His people, and they walk with Him.

All through the New Testament, and indeed the Bible, no truth is taught with greater force and frequency than this, that without a vital union of the soul with Christ all ceremonies, creeds, beliefs, professions, church ordinances, are sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, and all who trust in them will be deceived. This is the very essence of the gospel. Christ came on purpose for us to have union with Himself. What is the result of this union? 'That we should bring forth fruit unto God.' Jesus Christ recognizes the fact that we are still in the body; still in the world; and that we are open to the attacks of Satan. He has foreseen and has provided for the temptations which come to us through our natural appetites and instincts and desires, as they came to Him.

It matters not how intensely excited any physical appetite may be – that is not sin. The more you suffer through the excitement of the physical appetite, of whatever kind it may be, the more Jesus Christ sympathizes with you, for He 'was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' If you



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endure temptation, He will sympathize with you more than with the man who does not have to endure and resist. If you resist as He did; if you say, 'Get thee behind me, Satan' you sin not. What was Eve's sin? Unlawful self-gratification. The devil might have tempted her until now, if she had lived so long; but if she had steadily resisted Him she would not have brought sin into the world.

Under the law you see that it is sin, and you struggle against it, but you have no power to resist and down you go. United to Christ, you see that it is sin, you have power to resist, and the devil runs away. That is the difference.

The devil comes with direct, subtle spiritual influence, with his old insinuation, as he came to Eve, and says, 'Hath God said this, or that?' He tries to inject into the believer's soul doubts as to God's goodness and veracity as he used to do under the law, and under the law the convicted sinner's soul used to swell with rebellion.

Satan still comes and tries to excite ill-feelings and chargings of God foolishly in the soul, but by virtue of this union with Christ, who came not to do His own will but his Father's, and who spoke only the things that His Father bade Him, the believer says, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' And the devil is gone.

When he is foiled at all these points he tries higher ground. 'Really, you are a wonderful Christian. You have had special grace, for surely very few people can have resisted the amount of temptation that you have. You must be one of God's specially favoured ones. Now cast yourself down. It is written, "He shall give His angels charge concerning thee."' He comes as an angel of light. But Christ is hard by, and He says, 'Be not ignorant of Satan's devices. Behold, I am thy salvation. Trust, and be not afraid.' And so the soul refuses to cast itself into unnecessary troubles, and is content to abide in and walk with the Lord. That is how He gives us the victory. He shows us Satan's devices, and gives us power.