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THE THRONE OF GRACE.

(HEBREWS 4 V. 16)

How commonplace, and often meaningless does language become in the everyday of life? Have we ever paused to consider the meaning of this phrase? John Newton was obviously arrested by it when he wrote:

"Behold the throne of grace, The promise calls us near;
There Jesus shows a smiling face, and waits to answer prayer.
That rich atoning blood, Which sprinkled round we see,
Provides for those who come to God, an all-prevailing plea".

Surely sinful man could never behold a spot more verdant or warm than this, never could be found a resting place more sacred or more sweet. "BEHOLD IT" says Newton - it is a "THRONE OF GRACE". Yes, here is dispensed all the blessings of Sovereign Grace - pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification; here too is supplied grace itself, - grace to guide, to keep, to support, to comfort. Here sits the God of Grace, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin". EX 34.V.6-7.

Here too have queued, the sons of men right through the centuries, the poor, the friendless, the bereaved, the broken in heart, the weary, the guilty, the heavy laden, and none who have come to this throne in sincerity have ever been turned away.

The Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, Mediator and High Priest is present here, His atoning blood is ever within view, His glorified wounds are eternally obvious. His compassion and understanding of the sinner is ever the same, and He takes the feeble breathings of men's hearts and clothes them in language which is perfect and presents them to God. The Holy Spirit too is present at this throne "The Spirit of Grace", breathing in the soul, revealing to us our needs, putting petition into words, yes and even making intercession for the saints according to the will of God. "BEHOLD THE THRONE OF GRACE" - "DRAW NEAR" says the scripture - you are welcome, come with your infirmity, come with your wounded spirit, come in all your need, come though unworthy, come though in a poor state of mind, even with a hard heart, draw near; Our Heavenly Father is here, Our Advocate is ever present, The Holy Spirit is always in attendance.

The wonder of it, that God should ever have created such a throne as this, accessible to men and women of this poor fallen planet, a mercy seat around which may gather the sinful, burdened, helpless multitudes of earth, and where they can find comfort, consolation, and peace. But greater still must be the wonder that we are so reluctant to approach this throne. How cold and barren our lives so oftentimes are, that we have no inclination to "draw near" for communion and prayer. This employment of prayer is the most spiritual thing which can possibly engage the mind and heart. It is a sacred act of the soul which brings it into contact with a Holy God. At the throne of grace God and the creature meet, and in this act there is blending, there is communion, - Holy communion, it goes far beyond request and intercession, one great writer of the last century said "True prayer is the breathing of the life of God in the soul of man". Is not this a perfect definition? For it is the Holy Spirit dwelling and breathing within us, the new nature pouring out its vital breath into the ear of God from whence it came.

Breathing is not a spasmodic thing, it is continuous, so also should be communion. Prayer for the Christian who is really growing in grace becomes more of an attitude than an act, (although the formal act of prayer will always have its place). Life is lived in the very atmosphere of the throne, our dependence is upon Him, our eyes are ever toward Him, our confidence is always in God. It becomes instinct to just turn to Him for help, we simply look to Him for guidance, we rest in His infinite wisdom, ordering, and providence, we rely on His strength and power. This was the level of communion enjoyed by the Psalmist when he wrote - "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber or sleep. The Lord is thy keeper, The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night, The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth even for evermore". PS. 121.

This is looking to, leaning upon, and acknowledging our God in all things, living in His presence, always before His throne in thought, This is real communion - "Dwelling in the secret place of the most High, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty". PS 91.V.1. Let us seek the sunshine and warmth of

this environment, the shadow of His throne, knowing its character, which for us His children will NEVER be altered, it is a throne of GRACE, the mercy seat. It is our privilege to draw near when we are at our worst, when we are in life's dark shadows, when faith is weak, as well as when our step is light.

Remember the throne is near at hand, indeed ever with us, it entails no pilgrimage; waking or sleeping, going out or coming in, in public or private, in closet or in sanctuary, God is there. In the moments of great joy, in moments of emergency. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry". PS. 34-V.15.

Under the shadow of Thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure,
Sufficient is Thine arm above,
And our defence is sure.

Isaac Watts

W.H.M.

Sov'reign Ruler of the skies,
Ever gracious ever wise!
All my times are in Thy hand,
All events at Thy command.

His decree, who formed the earth,
Fixed my first and second birth;
Parents, native place and time,
All appointed were, by Him.

He that formed me in the womb,
He shall guide me to the tomb;
All my times shall ever be
Ordered by His wise decree.

Times of sickness, times of health,
Times of penury and wealth,
Times of trial and of grief,
Times of triumph and relief.

Plagues and death around me fly,
Till He bids I cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit.

JOHN RYLAND.

DOCTRINAL PREACHING -

THE NEED OF THE HOUR

By BISHOP J.C. RYLE (19th Century)

The explanation of this boneless, nerveless, jelly-fish condition of soul (that we see today) is not difficult to find. To begin with, the heart of man is naturally in the dark about religion - has no intuitive sense of truth - and really NEEDS instruction and illumination. Besides this, the natural heart in most men hates exertion in religion, and cordially dislikes patient, painstaking enquiry. Above all, the natural heart generally likes the praise of others, shrinks from collision, and loves to be thought charitable and liberal. The whole result is that a kind of broad religious "agnosticism" just suits an immense number of people, and specially suits young persons. They are content to shovel aside all disputed points as rubbish, and if you charge them with indecision, they will tell you: "I do not pretend to understand controversy; I decline to examine controverted points. I daresay it is all the same in the long run". Who does not know that such people swarm and abound everywhere?

Now I do beseech all who read this paper to beware of this undecided state of mind in religion. It is a pestilence that walketh in darkness, and a destruction that killeth in noonday. It is a lazy, idle frame of soul' which, doubtless, saves men the trouble of thought and investigation, but it is a frame of soul for which there is no warrant in the Bible ... For your own soul's sake dare to make up your mind what you believe, and dare to have positive distinct views of truth and error. Never, never be afraid to hold decided doctrinal opinions¹ and let no fear of man, and no morbid dread of being thought party spirited, narrow, or controversial, make you rest contented with a bloodless, boneless, tasteless, colourless, lukewarm, undogmatic Christianity.

Mark what I say: If you want to do good in these times, you must throw aside indecision, and take up a distinct, sharply-cut, doctrinal religion. If you believe little, those to whom you try to do good will believe nothing. The victories of Christianity, wherever they have been won, have been won by distinct doctrinal theology; by telling men roundly of Christ's vicarious death and sacrifice; by showing them Christ's substitution on the cross, and His precious blood; by

teaching them justification by faith, and bidding them believe on a crucified Saviour; by preaching ruin by sin, redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Spirit; by lifting up the brazen serpent; by telling men to look and live - to believe, repent, and be converted. This - this is the only teaching which for eighteen centuries God has honoured with success, and is honouring at the present day both at home and abroad. Let the clever advocates of a broad and undogmatic theology - the preachers of the Gospel of earnestness, and sincerity and cold morality - let them, I say, show us at this day any English village or parish, city or town or district, which has been evangelized without "dogma" by their principles. They cannot do it, and they never will. Christianity without distinct doctrine is a powerless thing. It may be beautiful to some minds, but it is childless and barren. There is no getting over facts. The good that is done in the earth may be comparatively small. Evil may abound, and ignorant impatience may murmur and cry out that Christianity has failed. But, depend on it, if you want to "do good" and shake the world, we must fight with the old apostolic weapons, and stick to dogma. No dogma, no fruits! No positive Evangelical doctrine, no evangelization!

Mark once more what I say. The men who have done most for the Church in England, and made the deepest mark on their day and generation, have always been men of most decided and distinct doctrinal views. It is the bold, decided, outspoken man, like Capel Molyneux, or our grand old Protestant champion Hugh McNeile, who makes a deep impression, and set people thinking, and "turns the world upside down". It was "dogma" in the apostolic ages which emptied the heathen temples and shook Greece and Rome. It was "dogma" which awoke Christendom from its slumbers at the time of the Reformation and spoiled the Pope of one third of his subjects. It was "dogma" which over a hundred years ago revived the Church in England in the days of Whitefield, Wesley, Venn, and Romaine, and blew up our dying Christianity into a burning flame ... It is doctrine - doctrine, clear, ringing doctrine - which, like the rams' horns at Jericho, casts down the oppositions of the devil and sin. Let us cling to decided doctrinal views, whatever some may please to say in these times, and we shall do well for ourselves, well for others, well for the Church in England, and well for Christ's cause in the world.

This generation hath gradually, and almost imperceptibly, become to a great extent a godless generation. One of the diseases of the present generation of mankind, is their secret but deep-seated godlessness, by which they have so far departed from the knowledge of God. Science has discovered to us second causes; and hence, many have too much forgotten the first Great Cause, the author of all; they have been able to pry so far into secrets, that the great axiom of the existence of a God has been too much neglected. Even among professing Christians, while there is a great amount of religion there is too little godliness, there is much external formalism but too little inward acknowledgement of God, too little living with God and relying upon God. Hence arises the sad fact that when you enter many of our places of worship you will certainly hear the name of God mentioned, but except in the benediction, you would scarcely know there was a Trinity. In many places dedicated to Jehovah, the name of Jesus is too often kept in the background; The Holy Spirit is almost entirely neglected, and very little is said concerning his sacred work, yes even religious men have become to a large degree godless in this age. We sadly require more preaching regarding God, more preaching of those things which look not so much at the creature to be saved, as at God the Great One to be extolled.

My firm conviction is that in proportion as we have more regard for the sacred Godhead, the wondrous Trinity in Unity, shall we see a greater display of God's power, and a more glorious manifestation of His might in our churches. May God send us a Christ-exalting, Spirit-loving ministry - men who shall proclaim God the Holy Ghost in all His offices, and who shall extol God the Saviour as the author and finisher of our faith, not neglecting God the Father of His people, who, before all worlds, elected us in Christ His Son, justified us through His righteousness, and will inevitably preserve us and gather us together in one in the consummation of all things at the last great day.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & INFORMATION

Looking back over the past quarter we have great cause for thanksgiving. How one has realized the presence of the Lord and the help and power of the Holy Spirit in the various services. What messages have been brought to us from the Scriptures by God's servants. What a privileged people we are, but how great is our responsibility. The Annual Convention when Dr Peter Masters was with us was particularly encouraging. At the time of going to print we have held three "Drive-in" Church services, we cannot but rejoice for the opportunity and privilege of such a witness, may it be used of God for His glory.

We look forward to the visits of preachers from farther afield during the summer months, and pray God's blessing upon them and their ministry as they come to us.

In September Mr George Ashdown of "The Protestant Alliance" will be with us for one evening to speak of the work of his society. Sunday 21st Sept will ... bring us to the close of our River-side services ... This concluding service is to be taken by our good friend Mr A. Bush. So as looking back we "Praise Him for all that is past" let us indeed be prayerful as we "Trust Him for all that's to come".

It is God's will that I should cast
On Him my care each day;
He also bids me not to cast
My confidence away.
But oh! I am so stupid, that
When taken unawares,
I cast away my confidence,
And carry all my cares.