

MAN'S HATRED AND WAR AGAINST GOD'S GRACE

“What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,” Rom. 9:22-23.

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Man's hatred and war against God's grace: Grace explained; the child of God is but a receiver of God's gift of grace. This article is the Holy Spirit's explicit explanation of Jehovah's marvelous gift of grace, God's pure, sovereign, free, unconditional grace alone in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ. Satan hates the Bible doctrine of Grace and has been in a furious, raging war, since the beginning of time, to destroy God's most precious of gifts, Grace. The child of God is but a vessel of mercy that is in receipt of such glorious grace. John 1:12.

The Devil knowing of his inability to destroy the grace of God during the dark ages has ever since sought through all the ages to mix, amalgamate and pollute the pure grace of God with his own inventions and that of man-made, self-motivated, fleshly work. It is the purpose of this article to show that those who read here may see more clearly how that as the recipients of Grace, one is made fit and acceptable to a righteous and holy God. We who believe are but receivers, vessels of mercy in receipt of such grace!

“I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” 2 Cor. 11:3.

God's child is but a “vessel of mercy”. The lesson of self-examination, a lesson that must be learned before anyone can be saved. And the first thing we observe here is that, as vessels of mercy it is distinctly said that they are made of the same lump as the vessels of wrath. The same piece of clay from which the vessel of wrath is fashioned may be used by God to also make a vessel of mercy. Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters! You, who have hope of Heaven hereafter and a foretaste of it even now, look back to the hole of the pit from where you were dug, to the miry clay from where you were drawn! There was nothing in you by nature better than that which is found in any other man! You did lie in the impure mass of fallen creature ship, and if God has made you a vessel of mercy, it was not because there was anything in you that could merit esteem! There was no fitness, no natural adaptation in you to become what you are. You are a miracle of His love and of His distinguishing Grace! Had He left you to yourself, you had been as base and vile as others in your life; you had been as despairing, and as Christ less as others in your death; you would have been as surely damned in eternity as the man who has descended into the pit of Hell, red with the blood of many a murdered one!

Remember, you were in the loins of Adam, in the loins which begat a Judas! You are a son of the same mother Eve, who conceived and brought into the world, Cain the murderer, and of Demas who forsook the Lord, and of Judas who sold Him for 30 pieces of silver. You know, too, in your own experience, that your temper is as evil, your disposition as vile, and your tendency as hellish as that of any man who has perished upon the gallows! If there is a difference in you, the difference is of God's Grace, and not of nature. This very morning you have had in your own

soul a proof that you are taken from the old block, and are but a shred from the leprous rag of fallen humanity!

My dear Reader, have you learned this Truth of God in your souls? I know there are some who will not believe that you are depraved. You cannot be brought to think that you are as fallen as the worst of men; you set yourselves up with pride, pretending to believe that there is something in you better than is to be found in the criminal or the profligate. I give you but little hope that you are a child of God if you have never learned this Truth of God! I find that God's child, here, is of the same lump as the chief of sinners, and if you are of a different lump, it argues that you are not one of the chosen people of God. All God's people must learn, as surely as ever Grace teaches them, that they are vile. Christians may differ in a thousand doctrines, but they never differ in this one point. We all believe, and we are all compelled to confess, that our nature is vile from its original, evil, only evil and that continually! If there is any good in any of us, we all acknowledge it is the work of Divine Grace, and not the fruit of creature strength, or an emanation from our depraved hearts. I pray God that you may learn this lesson, and if you have learned it, let it not discourage you, but rather give you hope! As you look upon yourselves and say, "I see that I am of the old stock," lift up your eyes to the God of All Grace, and cry, "O Great Potter! Though I am of the old clay, yet fashion me by Your Grace, and make me a vessel of mercy prepared for glory."

Further, it appears both from the text and the context that these vessels of mercy were as much as any other portion of the clay, entirely in the Potter's hands. Had the Potter willed to leave that mass of clay alone, and let it revolve upon the wheel untouched by His gracious hands, or surrendered to the tools of Satan and his craft, if, I say, the Great Potter had left you or me, who are vessels of mercy to ourselves we should have been vessels of wrath most surely! Jehovah might have done this if He had willed to do so and there would have been no power in us to fit ourselves for Heaven. Hell's thistles grow self-sown, but God's wheat needs a Husbandman. Vessels of mercy fit themselves for destruction, but God's Grace, alone can prepare a soul for glory. There is no reason in the world why any man should be saved apart from the Sovereign and distinguishing Grace of God. If the Lord had permitted the whole human race to perish, He would have been infinitely just, and throughout eternity the angels would have hymned Him in songs of adoration. If He had chosen to spare a few of mankind, the sparing of but a few would have been an act of surprising mercy and mercy and judgment would have constituted the two elements of the eternal song! Inasmuch however, as He has taken so much of the clay, and has been pleased to make innumerable vessels of mercy as the stars of Heaven, unto His name be all the glory forever and ever! Take heed that when you think of the number of the redeemed, you do not mar the idea that God is still a Sovereign. Had He saved but one, you would have said it was an instance of absolute Sovereignty, though He has saved tens of thousands, the Sovereignty is just as absolute as it was before. Had the Lord left you to become all that your evil nature and Satan could have made you, you could not have murmured. If He had permitted you to go on in your drunkenness without sending the Gospel to you; if He had allowed you to reject that Gospel as you would have done unless He had compelled you to receive it, you could not have impugned His Justice, even though you might have murmured at it. You have been made what you are, not as the result of any compulsion of merit demanding a debt from the Lord, nor by any effort of your own, you are what you are as the effect of the Sovereign discriminating love of God the Father in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Now let me ask my reader again, have you learned this Truth of God? Have you learned how entirely you lie in God's hands? Have you ever been brought, my Reader, to believe that if saved, it must be His will that saves you, though if lost it is your will that damns you? Have you ever been stripped so naked, so thoroughly naked, that you have said, "I have no claim upon God. If He saves me, it must be mercy, pure mercy, unmingled mercy"? Oh, if you have never been brought here, I tremble for you! I pray the Lord to bring you to this spot, for it is the very threshold of the door of Divine Grace. And when a man is brought here, he is not far from the Kingdom of God! Be it so with each of us, that we may acknowledge the Sovereignty and then admire Grace in the Sovereignty.

My text speaks of God's chosen ones as being "vessels." Now as we all know, a vessel is nothing but a receiver. A vessel is not a fountain it is not a creator of the water but a container and holder of that which is poured into it. Such are the redeemed of God. They are not fountains by nature, out of whom there springs up anything that is good. They are simply receivers and receivers only! At one time they are full of themselves, but God's Grace empties them and then as empty vessels they are set in the way of God's goodness, God fills them to the brim with His loving kindness, and so are they proved to be the vessels of His mercy. Sinner! Remember all that God asks of you in order to your salvation is that you would be a receiver and this He gives you even the power to receive! You may receive from Him who gives all; He asks you not to do anything but to hold out your empty hand and take all you need. He does not ask you to come with your mouth full as one that is fat and filled with bread but to open wide your empty mouth and He will fill it with His salvation. He does not bid you store your granaries and become rich, He bids you simply confess your poverty, and open the doors of your empty chambers, that He may pour you out a blessing such as you shall scarcely find room to receive! The chosen of God, to repeat my text, are vessels and vessels, only! They may, as vessels, afterwards give out to others, but they can only give out what God has put in them. They may work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, but they cannot work it out unless God works in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure! They may run over with gratitude, but it is only because God has filled them with Grace, they may stream forth with holiness, it is only because the Lord keeps the supply overflowing. They are receivers and only receivers!

And now let me ask, have you ever learned this Truth, my Reader? Have you come to live as a receiver at the hands of God? Have you stood at Mercy's gate as a ragged beggar crying for His bread? Have you ever been compelled to say "Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Your Cross I cling"? In God's name I assure you, if you have never become a vessel of mercy, if you have never yet been willing to take from God instead of giving of your own doings to Him, if you are not willing to be a recipient of His gratuitous goodness, you are a total stranger to everything like the Gospel of Christ! The Romanist who brings his prayers, the formalist who brings his ceremonies, the hypocrite who brings his profession, all these men have mistaken the Gospel! The Gospel is a scheme not of giving to God, but of taking from God. It is not of bringing something to the Eternal Jehovah, but it is taking from His fullness, drinking from His well, receiving from His storehouse. You have not yet begun to spell out salvation unless you have learned, first of all, that you can do nothing and be nothing, except God makes you something and enables you to do something in His cause.

But furthermore and lastly upon this first head, the children of God are called vessels, but they have this added by way of distinction, they are "vessels of mercy." In order that they may be vessels of mercy, it is certainly necessary that they should be sinful, and that they should be miserable. Pity may be given to the miserable, but mercy must be bestowed upon the sinful! For a judge to talk of mercy to those who never had offended, would be to insult them; and for the philanthropist to offer pity to the man who knows no sorrow, would be but to mock him! The only qualifications that a man can have for being a vessel of mercy are the qualifications of being sinful and of being sorrowful, two qualifications which I doubt not, many of you now possess, although because you have them, you think that you never can be a child of God. O rejoice in this thought, that in order to be filled with Grace, the qualification is emptiness! In order to be clothed with righteousness, the indispensable qualification is nakedness! In order to be washed in Jesus' blood, all that is needed of you is that you should feel your need of that washing! The redeemed of God are not vessels of merit, but vessels of mercy! They are sinful men and women who have felt their sin, and have mourned over their iniquity, and have hence become sorrowful and miserable. Then it is that God shows to them that they are vessels of mercy. If I could wander through your homes here and read each heart, I should find some, I doubt not, who have come here saying, "I am the chief of sinners; I feel that if all the world were saved, there is no room for me, for there is not one good trait in my character. My sin is so aggravated; I have heard the Gospel so often and yet I have rejected it! Conscience has attired me so many times, and yet I would not listen to its admonitions. I am sure, I am certain that I am in the most hopeless plight, and I am fearfully miserable upon this account. Oh, that there were mercy to be had in Heaven, and that God would have pity upon such a one as I am!" Soul, there is comfort for you in this text! Have I not told you, and do you not believe it, that the vessel must be empty before it can be filled and you are empty! There is hope, then, that God will save you! The vessel must be black with sin before it can be washed with mercy. And you are black. There is hope, then, that you shall be cleansed. A vessel must be filled with misery before it can be filled with mercy you are filled with misery and full of sorrow. Oh, be of good cheer! Bring this vessel of yours, full of misery though it is, and empty it all at the foot of the Cross, and I tell you, Sinner, my words are true, He will fill your vessel with the richest mercy that ever He gave to the brightest of His saints, or to the boldest of His Apostles!

What a glad and joyous hour it is, when God, for the first time, fills the vessel with His mercy! My soul cannot help going back to the hour in my own experience, when the first flood of mercy brimmed this poor empty vessel filled to bursting with wormwood and gall had that vessel been for many and many a day. Often had it seemed as if the vessel must be shivered with the workings of inward sorrow? At last the hour had come, Jehovah said, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." These eyes, by God's Grace, looked! This heart believed, and in a moment that vessel emptied of self. And emptied of misery, I was plunged into the sea of mercy and fully submerged! I thought I should have a little hope at first, and then a stronger confidence, but no, my sun arose in the fullness of His strength! The stream came not by slow degrees, but in an instant was the vessel covered, swallowed up and lost in joy and love! The gladness of that hour, I can remember, but I cannot tell. Then I knew my sins forgiven! I could dance for mirth! Then I knew my name was inscribed in the Lamb's fair Book of Life, and nothing that earth could have afforded could give a drop of joy that was comparable to the bliss of that hour! Oh, may it be so with some of you this morning! Men, Brothers and Sisters, Fathers, Mothers and Children may it be so with you! Turn, I beseech you, your tearful eyes to

Jesus hanging on the Cross, and it shall be so NOW! Come bring your empty vessels, for the fountain flows! Break not your pitcher with despair, but come and fill it with the hands of faith. There is room for you here at the marriage feast, you shivering beggar clothed with the rags of sin! Come, the voice of Mercy bids you. The arms of Jesus are outstretched to woo you! You are not rejected; Mercy's door is not shut, come and welcome! It is the 11th hour, the 12th hour, though it has struck on earth, has not struck in Heaven, there is time! Your noon-time of mercy is not passed! The hour of Divine Grace still lasts, and even now you may read your name as a vessel of mercy fully prepared unto eternal glory!