

The Lord's Day Morning

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“What God Thinks of Us”

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This world is certainly in a state of turmoil and contradictions. Men have been fighting and dying for peace and yet the very nations who won the war are, or, at least, seem unable to make even small concessions of land or moneys to maintain that peace. We have fought for the right of men to work when, where, and how they please and yet we find groups of men banded together to say to their fellow men that they cannot work unless they pay loyalty to other men and are willing to meet certain conditions laid down by other men. We have fourth that all mankind might have a decent way of life and yet we find some large business concerns which would enslave certain groups and let them live on half rations, improperly clothed and without the necessary food for more than a bare subsistence. These things are an enigma to most thinking people.

But there are others which are just as far beyond understanding about which little is said or I am afraid thought of. We have spent billions of dollars and given thousands of lives of our finest men to preserve freedom of worship. Yet I find myself asking these days, “Why did we want it when so few people really seem to care?” When less than half of the people of the United States belong to any church and fewer by far darken the doors of our churches. Church after church cannot find enough people who will give up their Sunday nights to attend worship service that many have abandoned any attempt to even have an evening service. I say it all appears queer and strange to me.

But I must admit that the strangest thing in America to me today is that there are thousands and I suppose millions of people who believe in God or at least say they believe in God. They believe He is a great Creator of the universe, that pretend to pass judgment upon this God. They say what they think God should be and what God should do. Sometimes you wonder who is the judge of the world – God or man – and often one must wonder who is on the trial. To hear some theologians and philosophers speak today you would think that the most important thing in the universe is what does man think of God. It seems more than strange to me that we mortal men should think that it is the most essential thing in the world for man to determine what he is going to think of God. I know this is important – but it is far more important for us to ask what does God think of me! Men are trying to judge God and will condemn Him in their minds or reject Him in their hearts and with a sense of greatness and pride feel they have disposed of God. But my, how puny that all seems to me! We cannot dispose of God and after all our judgment of God really does not matter for after all the essential thing is what does God think of me!

I know that men do not like to think of this. I am sure in my own mind that most men would like to put God out of their minds. But that is difficult to do. One cannot walk out into the night and see the moon and stars without thinking of the Creator. One cannot see the beauty of the rainbow without being reminded that God deluged the earth with water at one time and that yonder is His covenant that it will not be deluged again. One cannot stand in a hospital corridor for long

without seeing a doctor come out of a room shaking his head and talk with a family and see quick tears come to their eyes without realizing that the life of man is in far greater hands than those of a mere mortal. One cannot stand beside the grave of a loved one without the realization of an afterlife when one must stand before a just and righteous judge and give an account for the manner in which he has spent his life. So I say the world has gotten all things at least an essential thing all twisted and distorted when man passes judgment of what he thinks of God instead of being far more concerned about what God thinks of him.

But what does God think of us after all? What would He have to say to you and to me today about our lives? Well, I am sure of one thing – He would say to most of us is that we are sinners. But what would He mean when He said we were sinners? He would mean that we were rebels against His will – that we were traitors to His cause and that we were aliens to His household. Yes, I know that we would like, too, to dismiss this thought from our minds. But this we are unable to do. I am sure that none of us is able to do this even those whom most of us would consider the worst of men. We all try at times, I am sure, to pooh-pooh this thing we call sin, but it is always raising its head up before us. First we encounter stubborn, inward reluctance which forbids us to look at our lives as we find them day after day and have an easy confidence about our conduct.

There was a fabled mirror chased with silver which, thrust into the hand of youth, showed not the bright cheek and the flashing eye and smooth silk-like skin, but rather showed these things molded and decayed by death. No one desired to look again into that mirror and who can blame them? But when we look at our lives we do not find them pure and white and clean, but we find them blighted and blackened and marred. None of us cares to take a look often, but circumstances force us to do so and then it is that we are made conscious that no matter what men may think of us we know God pronounces upon us that we are sinners. I say we must face this fact and admit its truthfulness.

But what about this sin of ours? What will be the outcome of it? When it is finished what will it do to us? We know the answer – we know that it will debauch us. That it will rob us of any beauty of character – that it will weaken our wills – that it will break our fellowship with God. We know that the Bible is true when it says “The wages of sin is death.” “The soul that sinneth it shall die;” that “sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.”

Yet here again we of today would set ourselves above God and would say what He should be and what He should do. We hear much preaching and probably read more which tells us that God will not condemn sin. That none shall be lost who do the best they can and that those of us who believe otherwise have a misconception of God and are unreasonable and foolish. But wait – what sort of God do we have? Surely He must be a just God and could any just God say to man, “You go on and live your life of sin and selfishness and rebellion against Me and I will simply ignore it all and forget it?” Could a judge – a human judge – do that? I sat one day in a federal court room and saw a judge try a case. The man before him had, in many ways, been a fine man, but he had stolen money from the bank where he was employed. It was brought out what a fine mother he had and how she had been a leader in many worthwhile things in the city where they lived. It was even hinted that she had been on more than one occasion of great assistance to the judge and his mother. Finally, after the case was turned over to the judge, he turned his head

sidewise and I studied him closely and carefully as he sat there upon the desk and thought. You could see agony written on his face and a struggle going on within his soul. My heart went out to him and I wondered what he would say. Finally, he turned back to the court and with deep feeling said, "I am in a most difficult position. I have known this man for years. His mother who is still living was one of the dearest friends my own dear mother ever had and his mother was almost a mother to me at times. Every human emotion I can think of says to me, for the sake of this man's mother, and my own mother and because of your friendship, let him go." But he hastened to add, "I am a judge of the United States government and many other such cases may come before me and I cannot try this case as an isolated incident. I must consider it not in the light of memories and friendship, but I am sitting here as a judge and I cannot afford to set a precedent I cannot follow."

And turning to the defendant, he said, "It grieves me to do this, but I must pronounce sentence upon you. You have violated the laws of your land and I must sentence you to a term in the federal penitentiary." My, how my heart went out to him! But I felt in my mind and in my heart he was right in spite of the fact that the sentenced man was more than a mere acquaintance of mine. Yet there are those today who tell us that a just God can say to sinful man, "You go on in your sin and I will pay you no heed and exact no penalty."

Or let me use an illustration which looks at the matter from a little different angle. We all believe that God could not be God unless He was holy. None would argue about that and yet men would have us believe that a holy God could pass over lightly the iniquity of sinful man. To do so God would have to either cease to be holy or the whole moral structure of the universe would come tumbling down to be a heap of ruin all about us. God cannot pass over sin lightly and still be holy.

Or again can God be sovereign and allow traitors in His kingdom and not punish them, but condone their rebellion? How long could an earthly sovereign continue to be a sovereign and not put down rebellion and punish traitors? So God, to preserve His sovereignty, cannot allow rebellious sinners to live in His kingdom on the same basis as if they were loyal and obedient subjects.

But after all, I am afraid I have resorted to too many proofs because you and I know that in our best moments, those moments when we are most truthful with ourselves, I say we know that sin does matter to God. It matters to us – we hate it because of what it does to others and we know that a just and holy God cannot tolerate it and pass it over as though it did not exist.

So I say we must admit when we ask that important question, "What does God think of me? What judgment does He pass upon me?" that He thinks we are sinners and that being sinners He cannot say it does not matter.

But let me say to you that God loves us. Here is the good news of the Gospel. God loves us. But you say how strange that is that God loves us. We are sinners. Unholy, unrighteous, and traitors and yet He loves us? That is just what I do mean. And that is the most glorious truth any man could ever utter. But you could say, if you feel as I do, "But I cannot believe it. I must have some proof of that. I do not believe He can simply pass over my sin and not exact a penalty and if He

loves me, how could He permit me to be forever separated from Him and spend eternity in hell?" He does love you and I can prove it to you, at least I hope and pray I can prove it to you.

He is most desirous that you be forgiven for your sin, but He knows, too, that a penalty must be paid. So before the world ever came into being He determined that He Himself would pay the penalty for your sin. So, in the fullness of time, He sent His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to pay the penalty for sin. He suffered untold agony. He shed His blood on that cross in order that the penalty for sin might be paid. God did not ask you to pay it because He knew you could not. He did not ask some other human being to pay it for you because that would have been equally impossible. He did not send an angel to earth to do because that, too, would have been futile. He came Himself and took His place upon the accursed tree and died there that man might be forgiven his sin and set free from its power.

Here then is the proof of the love of God. So we ask, "What does God think of us?" The answer is clear and plain.

First, He thinks I am a sinner who has violated His commands and rebelled against His will. He hates all that I do, but oh, how He loves me! He loves me so much that He suffered for my sins and died for them.

In a few moments, those of us here in the sanctuary will remove the cover from the communion table and we will partake of some broken pieces of bread and some poured out wine and what does it mean? It means that we are saying to the world that we know God thinks we are sinners and that we think so, too. But we are saying that we believe God loves us and saves us from our sins and that these elements speak of His broken body, broken for us and His shed blood, shed for us.

So will you this morning accept Christ's sacrifice for your sin? The most important thing in the world for you and me is not what do we think of God, but what does God think of us.

He thinks you are worthy of being saved and He will save you if you will accept Him as Savior and acknowledge Him as such.