

THE ROAD TO PEACE

A young man somewhere in Europe was heard to preach the gospel of redeeming love to a bookseller so clearly and so earnestly that he (the bookseller) followed him out and asked him how and where he had learned it so fully and so plainly. "I learned it," answered the young man "just in the very last place in the world where you would have expected me to have heard it." And then he told his story.

He really had no religion at all. Accordingly, he spent his time in pleasing himself and became so notoriously wicked that none among his wicked companions would have dared to have sinned so boldly as he, yet, strange to say, it was this extraordinary wickedness which was used of God to awaken his conscience.

It struck him one day, it may be true after all that there is an eternal punishment for sinners. He had heard of the judgment and the lake of fire, and he thought, **"If anyone is ever to be there, it must be myself, for I have never seen or heard of anyone who has sinned as I have. "He was still quite young and had delighted in his sinful life, but this thought so terrified him he suddenly gave up his sinful companions and gave himself up to despair.**

He thought of how sinners might be saved by entering a monastery and doing penance, and a faint hope arose within him that by those means it might just be

possible to escape eternal punishment and have in exchange, perhaps, some thousands of years in purgatory, but to gain favour with God, it would be necessary to do more penance than anyone had ever done before.

He heard of the LaTrappe Monastery in Sicily, which was said to have rules more severe than any other in the world. The monks got up at a quarter to two or even midnight, for services in the chapel and after a frugal meal they went forth to work hard in the fields, there to endure heat and cold and storms, and never to change their clothes to suit the weather. They slept on hard Knotted ropes which were called a bed.

There were many other hardships undertaken, but when the young man heard of such a monastery, he was filled with joy and determined to go at once and offer himself to the monks. He was so poor he determined to travel the hundreds of miles on foot.

He found himself at last across the Straits of Messina and a little more walking brought him to the cold convent with its gloomy walls. He was very tired and worn out by the time he stood at the postern gate and rang the bell. The gate was slowly opened by an old monk who seemed scarcely able to move. The old man asked him what he wanted. "I want to be saved." was the reply. The old monk looked kindly at him and led him into a little room near the gate where they were alone together. "Now tell me what you mean," said the old man, "I should like to hear your history."

The young German told his sad story. He continued, **"I have been a far greater sinner than anyone I have ever heard of. I do not think it is possible that I**

could be saved. But anything that can be done I am willing to do it, if only I may escape eternal punishment, but it must be by spending the rest of my life in penance. And the harder it is the more I shall be thankful if I may do it. Only tell me what I am to do and I will do it gladly.”

If you will do what I tell you, “replied the old monk, “you will go back to Germany, for there has been One down here Who has done the whole work in your place before you came and He has finished it. He did it instead of you, so there is nothing left for you to do, it is all done.”

The young German knew not what to make of these words. “Who has done it?” he asked.

“Did you ever hear of the Lord Jesus Christ?” asked the man. “Yes of course I have heard of Him.”

“Do you know where He is now?” “Yes of course I know He is in heaven.”

“But tell me,” said the monk, “why is He in heaven?” “No,” said he “except that He was always in heaven.”

He was not always in heaven” said the old man, “He came here to do the work you want to do yourself. He came down here to bear the punishment of your sin. He is in heaven now because the work is done. If it were not so He would still be here, for He came down to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and if anything remained to be done He would still be here. He undertook to do the whole work and has gone back to heaven because HE has done it. Do you know that He said upon the cross **‘it is finished’** ?”

The young man asked, "What was finished?" The reply came, "It is the work you want to begin, and now if you want to add the crowning sin to your wicked life and do something worse than all you have done before, you may stay here and cast contempt upon the blessed, perfect work of the Son of God and take upon yourself to do what he only could do, and what he has done and finished. It would be as much as saying 'Christ has not done enough and I must add to the work He has declared to be finished.' "

"It may seem strange to you that I stay here, but I am very old and I can only walk to the gate. I cannot get away so I must stay here until the Lord calls me hence. But you can go and I entreat you to go back at once to your friends and tell them all what the Lord has done for you. You can stay here three days and I will tell you all that I can about the Lord Jesus and then you must go."

"And so," said the German, when he had finished his strange story, "I did remain there three days and the old man told me much more of the work of the Lord Jesus. He told me that God had sent forth His Son to be a mercy-seat and that through faith in His shed blood, there was full remission of sins. He told me not only what His sacrifice and death had done for me, but how that He had risen again to give me eternal life, and how that He had won for me a place in heaven above the angels, where He is waiting for me and all who believe in Him.

And so I came back to Germany and from that day until this I have told anyone who will listen, the blessed news of the perfect work of the Saviour.

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." John 19:30

“But this Man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God... For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Hebrews 10:12&14

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Acknowledgement: THE GOSPEL WITNESS No. 7

Published by Christian Book Room

P. O. Box 95413, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong, SAR of CHINA