

CHRISTIAN AND IGNORANCE

I then saw in my dream, that *Hopeful* looked back and saw *Ignorance*, whom they had left behind, coming after. Look, said he to *Christian*, how far yonder youngster loitereth behind?

2. **Chr.** Ay, ay, I see him; he careth not for our company.

3. **Hope.** But I trow it would not have hurt him, had he kept pace with us hitherto.

4. **Chr.** That's true, but I warrant you he thinketh otherwise.

5. **Hope.** That I think he doth; but however, let us tarry for him. So they did.

6. Then *Christian* said to him, Come away man, why do you stay so behind?

7. **Ignorance.** I take my pleasure in walking alone, even more a great deal than in company, unless I like it the better.

8. Then said *Christian* to *Hopeful*, (but softly) Did I not tell you he cared not for our company? But however, said he, come up, and let us talk away the time in this solitary place. Then directing his speech to *Ignorance*, he said, Come how do

you? How stands it between God and your soul now?

9. **Ignor.** I hope well, for I am always full of good motions, that come into my mind, to comfort me as I walk.¹

Ignorance's hope, and the ground of it.

10. **Chr.** What good motions? Pray tell us.

11. **Ignor.** Why, I think of GOD and heaven.

12. **Chr.** So do the devils and damned souls.

13. **Ignor.** But I think of them, and desire them.

14. **Chr.** So do many that are never like to come there. The soul of the sluggard desires, and hath nothing.

Prov. 13. 4

¹ Ignorance grounded his hope and comfort on his good thoughts, whilst he was totally destitute of the answer of a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The self-righteous legalist knows no happiness, but what arises from himself. The real Christian knows no happiness, but what flows from faith in Christ. The former raises all his expectations of salvation from his frames and feelings, from something done by him or wrought in him; whilst the latter grounds all his hopes of final felicity on what Christ has done and suffered, rejoicing only in him, and having no confidence in the flesh.

Young Ignorance's comes up again. Their talk.

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15. **Ignor.** But I think of them, and leave all for them.

16. **Chr.** That I doubt; for leaving of all is a hard matter; yea, a harder matter than many are aware of.² But why or by what, art thou persuaded that thou hast left all for GOD and heaven?

17. **Ignor.** My heart tells me so.

Prov. 28. 26

18. **Chr.** The wise man says, *He that trusts his own heart, is a fool.*

19. **Ignor.** This is spoken of an evil heart, but mine is a good one.

20. **Chr.** But how dost thou prove that?

21. **Ignor.** It comforts me in hopes of heaven.

22. **Chr.** That may be through its *deceitfulness*; for a man's heart may minister comfort to him in the

² *Unless a man forsake all, and follow me, says Christ, he cannot be my disciple. How ready are our hearts on hearing this to cry out, This is a hard saying, who can bear it? It is an easy thing to say, We have left all for Christ, but very few are found in the practice of self-denial, and patient bearing the cross of Christ; yet this is a test of a true disciple. The truly sincere will be most jealous over their own hearts; will be afraid of making any secret reserve, and be daily looking up to God for help and strength; praying with the Psalmist, Search me, O Lord, and try me, and examine the ground of my heart, &c.*

hopes of that thing for which he yet has no ground to hope.

23. **Ignor.** But my heart and life agree together, and therefore my hope is well grounded.

24. **Chr.** Who told thee that thy heart and life agree together?

25. **Ignor.** My heart tells me so.

26. **Chr.** *Ask my fellow, if I be a thief?* Thy heart tells thee so! Except the Word of GOD beareth witness in this matter, other testimony is of no value.

27. **Ignor.** But is it not a good heart that has good thoughts? And is not that a good life, that is according to God's commandments?

28. **Chr.** Yes, that is a good heart that hath good thoughts; and that is a good life that is according to God's commandments; but it is one thing indeed to have these, and another thing only to think so.

29. **Ignor.** Pray what count you good thoughts, and a life according to God's commandments?

30. **Chr.** There are good thoughts of divers kinds some respecting ourselves, some God, some Christ and some other things.

31. **Ignor.** What be good thoughts respecting our selves?

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What are
good thoughts.

32. **Chr.** Such as agree with the Word of God.

33. **Ignor.** When do our thoughts of ourselves agree with the Word of God?

34. **Chr.** When we pass the same judgment upon ourselves which the Word passes. To explain myself: The Word of God saith of persons in a natural condition, *There is none righteous, there is none that doth good*; it saith also, *that every imagination of the heart of a man is only evil, and that continually*; and again, *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*. Now then, when we think thus of ourselves, having *sense* thereof, then are our thoughts good ones, because according to the Word of God.

35. **Ignor.** I will never believe that my heart is thus bad.

36. **Chr.** Therefore thou never hadst one good thought concerning thyself in thy life.³ But let me go on. As the Word passeth a judgment upon our *hearts*, so it passeth a judgment upon our *ways*; and when our thoughts of our *hearts* and *ways* agree with the judgment which the Word giveth of both, then are both good, because agreeing thereto.

³ Mr. Bunyan well observes, we never begin to have a good thought till we think badly of ourselves, and have a true discovery of our utter ungodliness, as we are described in the Word of God.

37. **Ignor.** Make out your meaning.

38. **Chr.** Why, the Word of God saith, that man's ways are crooked ways, not good, but perverse. It saith, they are naturally out of the good way, that they have not known it. Now when a man thus thinketh of his ways, I say, when he doth sensibly, and with heart-humiliation thus think, then hath he good thoughts of his own ways, because his thoughts now agree with the judgment of the Word of God.

39. **Ignor.** What are good thoughts concerning God?

40. **Chr.** Even (as I have said concerning ourselves) when our thoughts of God do agree with what the Word saith of Him; and that is, when we think of His being and attributes as the Word hath taught; of which I cannot now discourse at large. But to speak of Him with reference to us, then we have right thoughts of God, when we think that He knows us better than we know ourselves, and can see sin in us when and where we can see none in ourselves: when we think He knows our inmost thoughts, and that our heart, with all its depths, is always open unto His eyes; also when we think that all our righteousness stinks in His nostrils, and that therefore He cannot abide to see us stand before Him in any confidence, even of all our best performances.

41. **Ignor.** Do you think that I am such a fool as to think God can

Psa.. 125. 5.
Prov. 2. 15.
Rom. 3.

Rom. 3.
Gen. 6. 5.

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see no further than I? Or, that I would come to God in the best of my performances?

42. **Chr.** Why, how dost thou think in this matter?

43. **Ignor.** Why, to be short, I think I must believe in Christ for justification.

44. **Chr.** How! Think thou must believe in Christ, when thou seest not thy need of Him! Thou neither seest thy original nor actual infirmities, but hast such an opinion of thyself, and of what thou dost, as plainly renders thee to be one that did never see a necessity of Christ's personal righteousness to justify thee before God. How then dost thou say, I believe in Christ?

The faith of Ignorance.

45. **Ignor.** I believe well enough for all that.

46. **Chr.** How dost thou believe?

47. **Ignor.** I believe that Christ died for sinners, and that I shall be justified before God from the curse, through His gracious acceptance of my obedience to His law. Or thus, Christ makes my duties, that are religious, acceptable to His Father by virtue of His merits, and so shall I be justified.⁴

⁴ The language of Ignorance exactly agrees with the fashionable divinity, which is retailed in most of our modern pulpits. They do not in words reject the Redeemer's

48. **Chr.** Let me give an answer to this confession of faith:

1. Thou believest with a *fantastical* faith; for this faith is nowhere described in the Word.

2. Thou believest with a *false* faith, because it taketh justification from the personal righteousness of Christ, and applies it to thy own.

3. This faith maketh not Christ a justifier of thy person, but of thy actions; and of thy person, for thy actions sake, which is false.

4. Therefore this faith is deceitful, even such as will leave thee under wrath in the day of God Almighty: for true *justifying faith* puts the soul (as sensible of its lost condition by the law) upon flying for refuge unto Christ's righteousness: (which righteousness of *His* is not an act of grace, by which He maketh, (for justification,) *thy* obedience accepted with God; but His personal obedience to the law, in doing and suffering for us what that requireth at our hands. This righteousness, I say, true faith accepteth; under the skirt of which, the soul being shrouded, and by it presented as spotless before God, it is accepted, and acquit from condemnation.

49. **Ignor.** What! would you have us trust to what Christ in his own person has done without us?

righteousness; but by the terms and conditions which they enjoin, in reality they make it of none effect.

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This conceit would loosen the reins of our lust, and tolerate us to live as we list: for, what matter how we live, if we may be justified by Christ's personal righteousness, from all, when we believe it.⁵

50. **Chr.** *Ignorance* is thy name; and as thy name is, so art thou; even this thy answer demonstrateth what I say. *Ignorant* thou art of what *justifying righteousness* is, and as ignorant how to secure thy soul through the faith of it from the heavy wrath of GOD. Yea, thou also art ignorant of the true effects of saving faith in this righteousness of Christ, which is to bow and win over the heart to God in Christ, to love His name, his Word, ways, and people, and not as thou ignorantly imaginest.

51. **Hope.** Ask him if ever he had Christ revealed to him from heaven?

52. **Ignor.** What! You are a man for revelations! I believe that

⁵ The doctrines of grace have in all ages been objected to, as opening a door to licentiousness. Let the apostle reply to this objection, "*The grace of God hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly.*" This grace being clearly manifested in the understanding, and cordially received into the heart, does not tolerate to live as we list, as Ignorance here supposed. Quite the reverse. It renders every duty of holiness, which would otherwise be irksome, yea, impracticable, both easy and pleasant.

what both you and all the rest of you say about that matter, is but the fruit of distracted brains.

53. **Hope.** Why man! Christ is so hid in God from the natural apprehensions of all flesh, that he cannot by any man be savingly known, unless God the Father reveals him to them.

54. **Ignor.** That is your faith, but not mine; yet mine, I doubt not, is as good as yours, though I have not in my head so many whimsies as you.

55. **Chr.** Give me leave to put in a word. You ought not so slightly to speak of this matter: for this I will boldly affirm, (even as my good companion hath done) that no man can know Jesus Christ but by the revelation of the Father; yea, and faith too, by which the soul layeth hold upon Christ, (if it be right) must be wrought by the exceeding greatness of his mighty power; the working of which faith, I perceive, poor *Ignorance*, thou art ignorant of. Be awakened then, see thine own wretchedness, and fly to the Lord Jesus; and by his righteousness, which is the righteousness of GOD, (for he himself is GOD) thou shalt be delivered from condemnation.

56. **Ignor.** You go so fast, I cannot keep pace with you. Do you go on before; I must stay a while behind.

57. Then they said,

He speaks reproachfully of what he knows not.

Matt. 11. 27

1 Cor. 12. 3.

Eph. 1. 18, 19.

The Talk broke up.

Ignorance
jangles
with them.

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*Well, Ignorance,
wilt thou yet foolish be
To slight good counsel,
ten times given thee?
And if thou yet refuse it,
thou shalt know,
E're long,
the evil of thy doing so.
Remember, man, in time;
stoop, do not fear;
Good counsel taken well saves;
therefore hear.*

*But if thou yet shalt slight it,
thou wilt be
The loser, Ignorance,
I'll warrant thee.*

58. Then *Christian* addressed himself thus to his fellow:—

59. **Chr.** Well, come my good *Hopeful*, I perceive that thou and I must walk by ourselves again. ✠

NOTES

For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Romans 10: 2, 4

*And what am I? My soul awake,
And an impartial survey take;
Does no dark sign, no ground of fear,
In practice or in heart appear?*

*What image does my spirit bear?
Is Jesus formed and living there?
Say, do his lineaments divine
In thought, and word, and action shine?*

*Searcher of hearts, O search me still;
The secrets of my soul reveal;
My fears remove; let me appear
To God and my own conscience clear.*
