

~Other Speakers G-L: Allan Halton:

I remember George Warnock frequently pointing out (in the little home gatherings I once was part of) that he'd never seen a painting of Peter walking on the water. It's always of Peter going under. "Why is it that artists never paint Peter walking on the water to go to Jesus?" George would ask. "Peter as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus actually walked on the water."

George also liked to remind us that "doubting Thomas," as history remembers him, was actually the one who said to the other disciples, "Let us go and die with Him" (Jn. 11.16).

There's something about the sin-stained human heart that likes to remember the fault or the failure, whether in others—or in ourselves. We can be very merciless on others, even more so on ourselves when we have failed... even attributing that lack of mercy to God.

But God does not have the same evil propensity. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the mediator of a New Covenant in which God says:

I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more (Heb. 8.12).

This must be why the New Covenant apostles who wrote our New Testament are themselves very forgetful when it comes to recording the sins and failures of others. Peter called Lot "that righteous man" (2 Pt. 2.8). But when I read the story of Lot I come away with a different opinion. Paul says Abraham "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God..." (Rom. 4.20). No mention whatever of his going down to Egypt, or that episode with Hagar. No mention of Sarah's doubting either.

Moses too. The writer of Hebrews says, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king..." (Heb. 11.27). But Moses telling his own story said, "Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh" (Ex. 2.15).

Yes, I realize that Peter's failures are recorded in the New Testament. But even this is to show us the wonderful love and mercy of the Lord in forgiving and restoring him.

"Love only waits to forgive and forget," the hymn writer said.

Also this from the prophet Isaiah:

I, even I, am He that blot out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins (Isa. 43.25).

It doesn't say, "I cannot remember thy sins," but, "I will not remember thy sins." God refuses to remember the sins and transgressions and failures of those who believe in Jesus, whom God made sin (or, a sin offering) for us.

That's how God sees things. He sees the sin offering of Christ, and therefore forgets our sins. That's the wonder and the grace of the New Covenant that causes God to put all our sins behind Him—behind His back (Isa. 38.17).

So, when our conscience insists on remembering things we wish we could forget, let's continue to look to the mediator of the New Covenant. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to vanquish all doubt, to purify the conscience by faith, and bring it to agree with what God accomplished in Christ at Calvary—the forgiveness of our sins, the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make this as real to us and in us as it was at Calvary. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to cause the water and the blood that flowed mingled down Jesus' side at Calvary to flow down over our conscience as well—convincing it of the truth!

Peter doubted, and began to sink. Jesus straightway reached out his hand and lifted him up. He failed badly at the cross as well—three times. Jesus again reached down and lifted him up—three times (Jn. 21.15-17). No wonder Peter became the kind of man who was always ready to reach out his own hand to strengthen his brethren (Lk. 22.32).

Thomas doubted... but this was one who did not go forgotten in a time of doubt. This was one whose will was true, one who had boldly set himself to die with Jesus. And so in a time of doubt the Lord Jesus gave him an opportunity to put his fingers into the nail prints in His hands and the hole in His side where the spear had pierced Him. The Holy Spirit can do the same for you and me, can make that just as real to us—that He who was delivered up to be crucified for our offences is living proof of our forgiveness and justification (Rom. 4.25).

How oft, O Lord, Thy face hath shone
On doubting souls whose wills were true!
Thou Christ of Cephas and of John,
Thou art the Christ of Thomas, too.

He loved Thee well, and calmly said,
“Come, let us go, and die with Him.”
Yet when Thine Easter news was spread,
Mid all its light his eyes were dim.

His brethren’s word he would not take
But craved to touch those hands of Thine:
The bruised reed Thou didst not break:
He saw, and hailed his Lord divine.

He saw Thee risen; at once he rose
To full belief’s unclouded height;
And still through his confession flows
To Christian souls Thy life and light.

O Saviour, make Thy presence known
To all who doubt Thy Word and Thee;
And teach them in that Word alone
To find the truth that sets them free.

And we who know how true Thou art,
And Thee as God and Lord adore,
Give us, we pray, a loyal heart,
To trust and love Thee more and more.

William Bright, 1824-1901