Chapter Nineteen

Hopeful’s Testimony of God’s Grace

Chr. “I want to ask you a question. What caused you to begin thinking about how you were doing spiritually?”

Hope. “Do you mean how I first became interested in my spiritual condition?”

Chr. “Yes, that is what I meant.”

Hope. “For a long time I was excited about material things that were on display and sold at our fair. I believe now that those things would have caused me to drown in eternal judgment and destruction if I had continued to seek them.”

Chr. “What things?”

Hope. “All the treasures and riches of the world. Also, I enjoyed rioting, reveling, drinking, swearing, lying, uncleanness, Sabbath-breaking, and other things that tended to destroy the soul. But finally, after hearing about and considering divine things, I discovered that the end result of these things is death. I heard about these things from you and also from the beloved Faithful, who was put to death in Vanity Fair for his faith and good living. I realized that the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience.”

Chr. “Did you immediately come under conviction for your sins?”

Hope. “No. I was not willing at first to acknowledge my sin or the damnation that follows after the sins are committed. Rather, when God’s Word began to convict me of my sin, I did everything I could to shut my eyes to the light.”

Chr. “What caused you to stay in your sins, that is, until the Holy Spirit began to work in your heart?”

Hope. “First, I was ignorant that it was God who was working in me. I never thought God began the conversion of a sinner by awakening him to his sin. Secondly, sin was very

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1 “What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:21-23).

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient” (Eph. 5:6).
enjoyable to my flesh, and I was reluctant to abandon it. Thirdly, I didn’t know how to leave my old friends. I thoroughly enjoyed their presence and the things they did. Fourthly, when I felt convicted about my sins, I was so troubled and frightened that I could not even bear to think about them.”

Chr. “Then it seems that sometimes you were able to put the matter out of your mind.”

Hope. “Yes. But then it would come into my mind again, and I would be as bad - even worse - than I had been before.”

Chr. “What was it that brought your sins to your mind again?”

Hope. “Many things, such as:

1. Meeting a good man in the street;
2. Hearing someone read from the Bible;
3. A headache;
4. Being told that some of my neighbors were sick;
5. Hearing the bell ring for those who were dead;
6. The thought of dying;
7. Hearing that someone died suddenly;
8. But especially, that I would quickly come to judgment.

Chr. “Was it easy for you to get away from the guilt of sin when you were confronted with these things?”

Hope. “No. Because those things had a strong grip on my conscience. If I thought about going back to my sin (though my mind was resistant to it), it would be double torment for me.”

Chr. “Then what did you do?”

Hope. “I thought I had better try to fix my life, or I was sure I would be damned.”

Chr. “Did you try to straighten up your life?”

Hope. “Yes. I not only turned from my sins, but also my sinful company, too. I began to get involved with religious exercises such as praying, reading, weeping for sin, speaking the truth to my neighbors, and so on. I did these things as well as others that are too numerous to talk about now.”

Chr. “Did you think you were all right then?”

Hope. “Yes, for a while. But finally my trouble came back to me in spite of all the things I was trying to do.”
Chr. “How did that happen, since you had changed?”

Hope. “There were several things that impacted me, especially such sayings as these: ‘All our righteous acts are like filthy rags.² No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law.³ ‘When you have done everything you were told to do, say, “We are unworthy servants.”’⁴ And there were many others also. From these words I began to reason with myself in this way: ‘If all my righteous acts are like filthy rags; if no man can be justified by the works of the Law; and if we have done everything and are still unprofitable servants, then it is foolish to think that anyone would get to heaven by obeying the Law.’ Furthermore, I thought this: ‘If a man goes in debt by $100 to the owner of a store and later purchases other items with cash, he could still be sued by the owner of the store if his old debt remains on the books.’”

Chr. “How did you apply this to yourself?”

Hope. “I thought to myself: ‘I have so many sins recorded in God’s book that I cannot pay off the debt by trying to change myself. Therefore, I ought to be thinking about how I can escape the judgment that I have brought on myself by my former transgressions.’”

Chr. “A very good application. Go on.”

Hope. “Another thing that troubles me is that if I look carefully at the things I do the very best, I still see sin, new sin, mixed in with the best of what I do. So now I am forced to conclude that, in spite of my previous view of myself and my accomplishments, I have committed enough sin in one good work to send me to hell, even if my former life had been faultless.”

Chr. “What did you do then?”

Hope. “I could not decide what to do until I spoke openly with Faithful. He and I were well acquainted. He told me that unless I could obtain the righteousness of a man that had never sinned, that neither my own, nor all the righteousness in the world could save me.”

Chr. “Did you think he spoke the truth?”

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² “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away” (Isa. 64:6).

³ “…know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified” (Gal. 2:16).

⁴ “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty’” (Lk. 17:10).
Hope. “I would have called him a fool for making the effort to convince me of this if he had spoken to me when I was happy and satisfied with my own ideas. But after I saw my own weakness and the sin that is part of my best performance, I was forced to agree with his opinion.”

Chr. “When he first mentioned it to you, did you think a man who never committed sin could possibly exist?”

Hope. “I must confess that his words at first sounded very strange. But after we talked further, I was convinced he was right.”

Chr. “Did you ask him who this man was and how you could be justified by him?”

Hope. “Yes. He told me it was the Lord Jesus who sits at the right hand of the Most High” (Heb. 10; Rom. 4; Col. 1; I Pet. 1). He said, ‘You must be justified by him by trusting in what he did when he lived on earth in a human body and in what he suffered when he hung on the tree.’ I asked him further, ‘How can that man’s righteousness be effective in justifying someone else before God?’ He told me, ‘He was the mighty God and did what he did, and died, not for himself, but for me. So his work is imputed to me if I believe on him.’”

Chr. “What did you do then?”

Hope. “I made objections about believing because I thought He was unwilling to save me.”

Chr. “What did Faithful say to you then?”

Hope. “He encouraged me to go to him and investigate. Then I said, ‘It would be presumptuous for me to go.’ But he said, ‘No, it is not. You are invited to come.’ Then he gave me a book that Jesus had given by inspiration in order to encourage me all the more to come. He said that every jot and tittle (even the smallest parts) stood firmer than heaven and earth. Then I asked him what I was to do when I came to him. He told me I was to humbly come to the Father in prayer and ask him with all my heart and soul to reveal Jesus to me. Then I asked him further, ‘How am I to make my requests to him?’ He said, ‘Go, and you will

5 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28).

6 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Mt. 24:35).

7 “Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker” (Ps. 95:6).

“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before” (Dan. 6:10).

“Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:12-13).
find him on a mercy-seat where he sits all year long to grant pardon and forgiveness to those who come.’ 8 I told him that I did not know what to say when I came. So he encouraged me to say something like this: ‘God be merciful to me a sinner and allow me to know and believe in Jesus Christ. I understand that if your Son had not been righteous, or if I did not have faith in his righteousness, I would be totally rejected. Lord, I have heard that you are a merciful God and have ordained that your Son Jesus Christ be the Savior of the world. I also know that you are willing to give him to me, a poor sinner (I am a poor sinner, indeed). Lord, take this opportunity and magnify your grace by saving me through your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.’”

**Chr.** “Did you do as you were told?”

**Hope.** “Yes; over and over and over.”

**Chr.** “Did the Father reveal the Son to you?”

**Hope.** “Not at first; nor even the second, third, fourth, or fifth time; nor at the sixth time either.”

**Chr.** “What did you do then?”

**Hope.** “I did not know what to do.”

**Chr.** “Did you have any thoughts tempting you to stop praying?”

**Hope.** “Yes. Hundreds of times.”

**Chr.** “What was the reason you did not?”

**Hope.** “I believed that what I had been told was true; namely, that without the righteousness of Christ, all the world could not save me. Therefore, I thought to myself that if I stopped praying, I would die; but I did not want to die except at the throne of grace. Then this came to

8 “There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites” (Ex. 25:22).

“The Lord said to Moses: ‘Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover’” (Lev. 16:2).

“When Moses entered the Tent of Meeting to speak with the Lord, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony. And he spoke with him” (Numbers 7:89).

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb. 4:16).
my mind: ‘Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.’ So I continued praying until the Father showed me his Son.”

Chr. “How was he revealed to you?”

Hope. “I did not see him with my physical eyes but with the eyes of my understanding. This is the way it was: One day I was very sad, sadder than at any other time in my life. This sadness came about because I had a fresh insight into the greatness and vileness of my sins. I had been looking for nothing but hell and the everlasting damnation of my soul. Suddenly, I saw the Lord Jesus looking down from heaven on me and saying, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.’

“But I replied, ‘Lord, I am a great, a very great sinner.’ And he answered, ‘My grace is sufficient for you.’ Then I said, ‘But Lord, what is believing?’ Then I realized from the saying, ‘He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty,’” that believing and coming were one; and that whoever came, that is, whoever pursued salvation through Christ in his heart and affections, truly believed in Christ. Then tears came to my eyes, and I asked, ‘But, Lord, may such a great sinner as I am be truly accepted and saved by you?’ And I heard him say, ‘Whoever comes to me I will never drive away.’ Then I said, ‘But how, Lord, should I think about you as I come to you, so that my faith may be placed in the right way upon you?’ Then he said, ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.’ He died for our sins and rose again for our justification.

9 “For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay” (Hab. 2:3).

10 “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength” (Eph. 1:18-19).

11 “He then brought them ought and asked, ‘Men, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household’” (Acts 16:30-31).

12 “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (II Cor. 12:9).

13 “Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty’” (Jn. 6:35).

14 “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away” (Jn. 6:37).

15 “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the worst” (I Tim. 1:15).

16 “Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4; see Rom. 4).

17 “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Rom. 4:25).
us and washed us from our sins by his own blood.\textsuperscript{18} He is the mediator between God and us.\textsuperscript{19} He always lives to intercede for us.\textsuperscript{20} I have gathered all these things: I must look for righteousness in his person and for the satisfaction of my sins by his blood. Also, I must acknowledge that what he did in obedience to his Father’s Law, and in submitting to the penalty that comes from violating that Law, was not for himself, but for anyone who will accept it for his salvation and be thankful. Now my heart was full of joy. My eyes were full of tears. And my emotions were overflowing with love for the name, people, and ways of Jesus Christ.”

**Chr.** “Truly this was a revelation of Christ to your soul. What effect did this have upon your spirit?”

**Hope.** “It forced me to see that the whole world, even with all of its righteousness, is in a state of condemnation. It made me see that God the Father, although he is just, can rightly justify the sinner who comes to him. It made me feel ashamed for the vileness of my former life and puzzled me because of my ignorance. Never before had thoughts come into my heart that so clearly showed me the beauty of Jesus Christ. It also made me long to live a holy life and to do something for the honor and glory of the name of the Lord Jesus. I even thought that if I had a thousand gallons of blood in my body, I would sacrifice it all for the sake of the Lord Jesus.”

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\textsuperscript{18} “…and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood…” (Rev. 1:5).

\textsuperscript{19} “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5).

\textsuperscript{20} “…but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:24-25).