Chapter Twenty

Ignorance

Then I saw in my dream that Hopeful looked back and saw Ignorance, whom they had left behind, coming towards them. “Look,” he said to Christian, “how far that young man lingers behind.”

Chr. “Yes, I see him. He does not care for our company.”

Hope. “I am inclined to believe that it would not have hurt him to have kept up with our pace.”

Chr. “That’s true. But I assure you that he thinks otherwise.”

Hope. “I agree that he does. But let us wait for him anyway.” So they did.

Chr. Then Christian said to him, “Come on. Why do you stay so far behind?”

Ign. “I enjoy walking alone more than being with others.”

Chr. Then Christian whispered to Hopeful, “Didn’t I tell you that he did not care to be with us? But he invited us to come along and pass the time talking in this solitary place.” Then, directing his comments to Ignorance, he said, “How are you? How is your relationship with God now?”

Ign. “I hope I am doing well. For I am always full of good intentions which come to my mind and comfort me as I walk.”

Chr. “What good intentions? Please tell us.”


Chr. “So do the demons and the souls of those who have gone to hell.”

Ign. “But I think about them and long for them.”

Chr. “So do many people who are not likely to go there. ‘The sluggard craves and gets nothing.’”

Ign. “But I think about them and have left all for them.”

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1 “The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied” (Prov. 13:4).
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**Chr.** “I doubt that, because leaving all is a very hard thing to do. It is harder than many are even aware of. Why are you convinced that you have left all for God and heaven?”

**Ign.** “My heart tells me so.”

**Chr.** “The wise man says, ‘He who trusts in himself is a fool.’”

**Ign.** “This passage speaks of an evil heart, but mine is a good one.”

**Chr.** “How can you prove that?”

**Ign.** “My heart tells me that I should have hope about going to heaven.”

**Chr.** “But you may have that because the heart is deceitful. A person’s heart can give him assurance to expect something even when there is no basis for the assurance.”

**Ign.** “But my heart and my life are in agreement. Therefore, my assurance is well founded.”

**Chr.** “Who told you that your heart and life are in agreement?”

**Ign.** “My heart tells me so.”

**Chr.** “Your heart tells you so! Would you ask yourself if you are a thief? Unless the Word of God bears witness in this matter, any other testimony is of no value.”

**Ign.** “Is it not a good heart that has good thoughts? And is it not a good life that lives according to God’s commandments?”

**Chr.** “Yes. It is a good heart that has good thoughts. And it is a good life that lives according to God’s commandments. But it is one thing to have these, and another thing to only think you have them.”

**Ign.** “Tell me. What do you consider to be good thoughts and a life lived according to God’s commandments?”

**Chr.** “There are different kinds of good thoughts: some about ourselves, some about God, some about Christ, and some about other things.”

**Ign.** “What are some good thoughts about ourselves?”

**Chr.** “Those which agree with the Word of God.”

**Ign.** “When do our thoughts about ourselves agree with the Word of God?”

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2 “He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe” (Prov. 28:26).
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Chr. “When we pass the same judgment on ourselves which the Word passes on us. Let me explain what I mean. The Word of God says this about people in their natural condition: ‘There is none righteous, there is none who does good.’3 It also says, ‘...that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.’4 And again, ‘...every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood.’5 Now then, when we think this way about ourselves, our thoughts are good because they are according to the Word of God.”

Ign. “I will never believe that my heart is bad.”

Chr. “Then you have never had one good thought about yourself in your whole life. But let me continue. Just as the Word passes a judgment on our heart, so it passes a judgment on our behavior. And when the thoughts about our hearts and our behavior agree with the judgment which the Word gives to both, then both are good because they agree with the Word.”

Ign. “Be clear about what you mean.”

Chr. “The Word of God says that a man’s ways are crooked ways - not good, but perverse. It says his ways are opposed to the good way and that they have not known the path of peace.6 Now when a man thinks this way about himself - that is, when he is sensible and humble about it - then he has good thoughts about his life, because his thoughts agree with the judgment of the Word of God.”

Ign. “What are good thoughts concerning God?”

Chr. “When our thoughts about God agree with what the Word says about him. That happens when we think about his being and attributes just like the Word teaches. I cannot go into more detail about that now. But to speak about him in reference to us: 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 innermost thoughts and that our heart with all of its depth is always open to his eyes; also, when we think that he abhors all

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3 “As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one’” (Rom. 3:10-12).

4 “The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time” (Gen. 6:5).

5 “The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: ‘Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done’” (Gen. 8:21).

6 “But those who turn to crooked ways the Lord will banish with the evildoers” (Ps. 125:5).

“Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men...whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways” (Prov. 2:12a, 15).

“...and the way of peace they do not know” (Rom. 3:17).
our righteousness and, therefore, cannot have us stand before him with any confidence even in our best performances.”

**Ign.** “Do you think that I am such a fool as to think that God cannot see further than I? Or, that I would come to God with the best of my performances?”

**Chr.** “What do you think about this?”

**Ign.** “To be brief, I think I must believe in Christ for my justification.”

**Chr.** “Why do you think you must believe in Christ when you do not see your need for him! You do not see your original nor actual sins. Rather, you have an opinion of yourself and of what you do that clearly indicates you never have seen the necessity of Christ’s personal righteousness to justify you before God. How then can you say, ‘I believe in Christ’?”

**Ign.** “I believe in all of that.”

**Chr.** “What do you believe?”

**Ign.** “I believe that Christ died for sinners and that I will be justified before God from the curse through his gracious acceptance of my obedience to his law. Christ makes my good works that are religious acceptable to his Father by virtue of what he has done. So, I will be justified.

**Chr.** “Let me answer this confession of your faith:

1. You believe with an imaginary faith. This faith is nowhere described in the Word.

2. You believe with a false faith. It takes justification away from the personal righteousness of Christ and makes it your own.

3. This faith does not make Christ a justifier of any person. It only justifies your actions and yourself for your actions’ sake. This is false.

4. Therefore, this faith is deceitful and will leave you under wrath in the day of God Almighty. True justifying faith causes the soul to fly to Christ’s righteousness for refuge because it is aware of its lost condition under the law. His righteousness is not an act of grace by which he justifies you before God on account of your obedience. Rather, it is his personal obedience to the law in living and suffering for us when we could not do it for ourselves. True faith accepts this righteousness only. When the soul is clothed by the skirt of his righteousness and presented as spotless before God, it is accepted and acquitted from condemnation.”

**Ign.** “What! Would you have us trust in what Christ has done without our being involved? This arrogance would unleash the reins of our lust and move us to live as we please. What difference does it make how we live, if we may be justified by Christ’s personal righteousness by faith?”
“Ignorance is your name. And as your name implies, so are you. Your answer demonstrates what I am saying. You are ignorant of what justifying righteousness is. And you are just as ignorant about how to protect your soul by faith from the wrath of God. You are also ignorant of the true fruits of saving faith in this righteousness of Christ, which are: to humble and win over the human heart to God through Christ, to love his name, his Word, ways, and people; but not as you imagine in your ignorance.”

Hope. “Ask him if he ever had Christ revealed to him from heaven.”

Ign. “What! You are a man for revelations! I do believe that what you and all the rest of you say about that matter is only the fruit of distracted brains.”

Hope. “Christ is so hidden in God and cannot be grasped by the flesh that he cannot be known as Savior by any man unless God the Father reveals him to them.”

Ign. “That is your faith, but not mine. Yet I do not doubt that mine is as good as yours, although I do not have as many whimsical ideas in my mind as you.”

Chr. “Let me speak for a moment. You should not speak so lightly about this matter. I will boldly affirm (just as my good companion has done) that no man can know Jesus Christ except by the revelation of the Father. Faith also, by which the soul lays hold of Christ, must be given by the exceeding greatness of his mighty power. I perceive, poor Ignorance, that you are ignorant of the working of this kind of faith. Wake up, then, see your own wretchedness and flee to the Lord Jesus Christ. By his righteousness, which is the righteousness of God (for he himself is God), you will be delivered from condemnation.”

Ign. “You go so fast that I cannot keep up with you. You go ahead; I must stay behind for a while.”

Then they said:

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

7 “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Mt. 11:27).

“Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (I Cor. 12:3).

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

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