

The King's Garden

The Present Truth – June 6, 1901

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THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

Behold the first flower of the year, cheering messenger of hope, brave little snow drop! The first to break its icy prison, to come forth out of the house of bondage, how full of promise are its pure blossoms, and what assurance it brings of all that are to follow it, till the earth shall again be full of the glory of the Lord, as it is seen in the flowers.

And in all this the pure snowdrop to a perfect picture of the first flower that blooms in the King's Garden. You know already what that Garden is, and that your own heart is a "small corner" in it. We have learned also what the seed is,—"the Word of God." And now we shall talk a little while about the first seed that God plants there, from which comes the first sweet flower as the pledge of all that are to follow it.

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

When Jesus was asked, "Which is the first commandment in the law?" He answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength."

So when God says to us, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," this is a promise that with all our heart, mind, strength, and soul, we shall love and serve Him only.

But when our whole heart to thus given up to God, when we hear and believe this word that He speaks to us, and so receive it as precious seed into our hearts, then the sweet flower of Holiness will spring up from it. Oh, how this will please the King as He walks in His Garden; for it will be a pledge to Him of all the other fair flowers that in time He will see growing there.

Holiness means simply, being whole. So when our whole heart, our whole being, is given to God, then we shall "worship the Lord in the beauty of Holiness."

But this can be only through the power of His own Word, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," for this is the seed of Holiness, and without it our heart gardens can no more bring forth the flowers of Holiness than the dust of the ground could bring forth snowdrops if no seed had ever been planted there. It is the Word of God that makes the flowers grow in the ground, and it is His Word that makes the flowers of His grace grow in our hearts.

THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE

The snowdrop is the first of earth's flowers to show us the mighty power of that Word, and its grace, and purity, and beauty. From the hard cold ground it springs, showing the power of God to bring life from the dead, to bring us "out of the house of bondage," in spite of every obstacle.

To show us the power of the seed that God plants in our hearts when He says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," He reminds us that He is the One who brings us "out of the house of bondage." Do you know what this house of bondage is?

Jesus died to "deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Sin is what brings the fear of death, so it is sin that brings us into the house of bondage, and at last imprisons us in the grave.

Do you know that each one of us must at last become like that which we love and worship? There is no God but One, for "all the gods of the nations are nothing." What then must all those become who worship anyone or anything but the one true God?—Nothing. And this is just what God says of them: "They followed vanity and became vain," which means. They followed nothing and they came to nothing.

"Whate'er thou lovest, man,
That, too, become thou must:
God, if thou lovest God;
Dust, if thou lovest dust."

God's Word tells us that the whole creation is in bondage, made "subject to vanity;" that is, it is all ready to vanish away, to disappear, and come to nothing. And all this is because man has chosen to have other gods beside the Lord. He has put himself under the power of Satan, which is "the power of death," the power to destroy, and to make things vanish away.

This is what it is to be in the house of bondage, "the bondage of corruption" it is called. And it is the power of Holiness that alone can, set us free,—the power of God which is able to make us whole again, and keep us so for ever. This is to be brought out of bondage into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

When the cold, dreary winter comes, earth's beauty fades and disappears. Its bright flowers, and the leaves that clothed the trees, where are they?—Vanished. Bound in the bosom of the earth, all its hopes lie buried, seemingly perished.

And thus it would be indeed and for ever, but for Him who has conquered death by overcoming sin. Because He "did no sin," it was not possible for the grave to hold Him in the "bondage of corruption."

So Jesus has the power to bring the whole creation out of "the house of bondage," "the bondage of corruption," and make everything whole again. And of the power of His Holiness, the pure snowdrop, the first flower to cast off the shackles of the tomb, is a sweet and fit emblem.

THE HOLY SEED

In the King's Garden everything beautiful vanished away because of sin. But Jesus Christ, the Word, was made flesh, and dwelt among us, that the holy seed might again be sown in the hearts of the children of men. Even when all things are dead, and the ground is hard and bare, the power of His holiness can loose the bonds and bring new, pure life from the dead.

God says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." And He tells us what it is that is to make this wondrous change. "Ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." That Word which drops gently upon our hearts like the snow and the rain to cleanse us, is also the seed which will take beautiful form in the pure, snowy blossoms of holiness that it brings forth.

To everyone of you, dear children, God is saying, "If thou wilt hearken unto Me, there shall no strange god be in thee, neither shall thou worship any strange god." In these words He shows us that all we have to do is to listen to His voice, when He says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," and then He will keep away every strange plant out of His garden, and root out all the weeds of sin, and everything that He has not planted Himself. Those things will all fade away, just as the fig tree withered at the Word of Christ.

The great ugly weed of self tries to fill up all the space in the garden, and it has such showy blossoms that we are sometimes deceived into thinking it is a very fine plant. But O, when we see "the Chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely," all our love for self will disappear, and this ugly weed will shrink and wither away as we say, "Not I, but Christ." And in its place the sweet innocent snowdrops,—pure worship of the one true God with all the heart and mind and soul and strength—shall fill the Garden with "the beauty of Holiness" for the pleasure of the King, and to show forth His praises.

"God shall be first in everything:
No other gods before Him;
Creator and Redeemer King,
'Tis pleasure to adore Him.

"First when with rosy morn I wake,
His power mine eyes unsealing;
First when His bounteous gifts I take,—
His Father's love revealing."