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THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

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[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I have been requested to address this congregation this afternoon, and I earnestly desire in doing so that I may be assisted by the spirit of light and truth, and that the same spirit may rest upon all the congregation, so that our assembling together may be profitable to us. I have no desire to ventilate any views or opinions of my own in reference to the plan of salvation and the dealings of God with mankind; but I have a desire to explain that which God has revealed, or so much of it as may be wisdom to declare this afternoon and as the Lord may give me utterance.

I will read a text of scripture which has been the foundation for a great many sermons among the various religious denominations—one which perhaps all people who profess to be Christians have heard at some time. I may, however, take an altogether different view in regard to the meaning of this passage of scripture from that which is entertained by many Christian preachers and which has been proclaimed to the people almost entirely throughout Christendom. It is found in the third chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, and the 16th verse:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Take that verse as it stands and it expresses the essence of modern Christian preaching. The burden of the preaching of most of the ministers of religion is that all people have to do to be saved is to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God and that He died for the redemption of mankind. Taking this verse as it stands, without comparison with other sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ, it would appear that this is true doctrine—that all that is necessary for the human family in order to obtain everlasting life is simply to believe in Jesus Christ. Now, there are various ideas in the religious world in reference to theology; but when you bring it down to the very essence of their teachings, it is comprehended in this verse. "Only believe," they say to the people, "and you shall be saved, and heaven is yours forever."

Now, when Jesus Christ uttered this saying that I have read to you, He did not intend to convey to the people that

all that was necessary for them to do in order to obtain eternal life was to believe in Him, in His atonement and in His divine mission. That idea is not in harmony with other sayings of our Savior's. For instance, in the same chapter from which I have read this verse, we find the following:

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.—v: 5.

This saying of Jesus Christ was in answer to a question from Nicodemus, a ruler among the Jews, who came to Him by night that he might learn of Him. He was afraid to go in the day time, for fear of the Jews. He would have been ridiculed and despised, for the religion of Jesus Christ was not very popular in those times, and so he went by night, and asked Jesus to explain to him some things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Jesus said:

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God!—v: 3.

This was a puzzle to Nicodemus. He could not comprehend it. So in explanation, after he had asked Jesus whether it was possible for a man to be born again the second time, the Savior replied:

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Compare these two texts,—the 16th and 5th verses—out of the same chapter, written by the same writer, expressing the sayings of Jesus Christ on the same occasion, and you will find that they will not harmonize, if the idea is correct that all that is necessary to be done is to believe in Jesus Christ. The Apostle James, in an epistle to the Saints, which you will find in the New Testament, wrote on the subject of faith and works, and he showed that faith without works is dead; that as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. He says:

A man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works, show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.—James 2, v. 18.

He showed also that the devils believe. "The devils also believe," said he, "and tremble." So that the idea that faith alone is all that is necessary must be a mistake. I view it as a fatal mistake. I believe it has done more harm in the world to preach that doctrine as viewed by modern divines than almost any error that has been promulgated; because if people come to the full belief that all they have need to do is to believe in Jesus Christ and in His atonement, and that there is nothing left for them to do themselves, they

may be lulled into a sleep which is the sleep of spiritual death. They will not do the works which are essential to salvation if they adopt the belief that works are not necessary on their part, and that Jesus has done it all; they will leave it to Him and go on their way in the broad road that leadeth unto destruction, which so many walk, while according to Jesus, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Now, what did Jesus mean when He said: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?" He meant that He was the way, the truth, and the life, just as He proclaimed on another occasion, "No man cometh to the Father, but by me." He also said:

My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me.

If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.—John viii: 15, 17.

Here is something else besides mere belief; the will of the Father is to be done; and if the people do the will of the Father, then they shall know concerning Christ's doctrine, whether it is of God or whether He spoke of Himself. So that when He said that people must believe in Him to have everlasting life, He meant that if they believed in Him they would believe in His commandments and would accept the ordinances that He instituted; they would receive the doctrine that God had given to Him to proclaim; they would learn to live as He said men must live—by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God; for said He, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." After His resurrection, when He sent His disciples into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature, He told them they were to go and "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." You will find that in the closing chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

There is something to be done, then, besides believing in Jesus Christ. If you believe in Jesus, you will do the things that He commands. That is the kind of faith that Jesus taught. That is the kind of faith that His Apostles taught. That is the kind of faith that is called a saving faith; for He that really believes in God the Father and in Jesus Christ, His Son, will accept and obey their commandments, and by that means they will obtain eternal life. Jesus said, when He was preaching to the multitude:

Not every man that saith unto me, Lo