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WHAT WILT THOU THAT I SHOULD DO ?

BY REV. WM. J. HOGE, D. D., OF VA.

“What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?”

A goodly word, indeed! What would not a soul, struggling in the depths and entanglements of sin, give once to hear it from his Lord? Let us admire,

I. The fulness of the grace. The tender love of Christ to lost souls is a great deep, without bottom and without shore. The wing of no angel can bear him so high that he can look over all its extent. The guilt of no sinner has been able to sound all its depth. The countless multitudes, who have been washed in its waters, have not diminished its abundance nor impaired its virtue.

Jesus puts no limit to His offers. Ask, it shall be given you. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.¹ In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.² All power is given unto Him in heaven and earth.³ He is the head of all the power.⁴ All things were created by Him and for Him.⁵ In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.⁶ His word can open heaven to the vilest sinner: yea, His smile can *make* a heaven in the saddest heart. He is Heir of all things,⁷ and, at the believing call of the meanest beggar, He will make the beggar a joint-heir with Him,⁸ to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away⁹—an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.¹⁰ When we are Christ's Christ is ours; and then all things are ours.¹¹ Well might the Apostle count all things loss for Christ.¹² Such loss is infinite gain. With the Lord Jesus Christ, afflictions

¹ Mat., vii. 7; John, xvi. 24; xiv. 13. ² Col., ii. 3.

³ Mat., xxviii. 18. ⁴ Col., ii. 10. ⁵ Col., i. 16.

⁶ Col., ii. 9. ⁷ Heb., i. 2. ⁸ Rom., viii. 17.

⁹ 1 Pet., i. 4. ¹⁰ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

¹¹ Cor., iii, 21-23. ¹² Phil., iii, 7.

are blessings, shame is honor, sickness is health, and death is life for evermore; out of weakness we are made strong,¹ in solitude we have the best company; our poverty turns to the true riches; our crosses to the sweetest comforts; nature gives way to grace, and grace issues in eternal glory.

II. Let us also admire the freeness of Christ's offers to lost sinners. The freeness of the offerings from the the fulness of the grace. "What wilt thou?" Choose for thyself. If thou dost not carry away a noble gift, it is thine own fault. I do not set bounds to thy desires. The treasure is infinite, and thou hast it all to choose from.

The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, and if we are, it is in ourselves.² The Lord's hand is not shortened, neither is His ear heavy; but our iniquities³—ah, there is the trouble! And no sin hides God's face sooner, or behind a darker cloud, than our unbelief. God's grace is always larger than man's desire, and freer than his faith.⁴ We continually need His exhortation to Israel, Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.⁵ One prayer should be ever on our lips, Lord, increase our faith!⁶ If this day our fleece is dry, it is not because there is no dew in heaven, nor because none fell last night.⁷ If we take little pitchers to the well, we shall carry little water away. Though the golden bowl be full of golden oil, the lamp will burn dim, if the golden pipe be narrow or choked.⁸ The ocean itself can pour but a scanty stream through a slender channel. And when sinners cry, I have no grace, it is because unbelief has shut up their bosoms. Or when the people of God cry, My leanness! my leanness!⁹ it is because their narrow faith suffers them only to taste where they might drink—only to snatch

Mic., ii. 7; 2 Cor., vi. 12. ² Heb., xi. 34. ³ Is., lix. i. 2.

⁴ Eph., ii. 20, ⁵ Ps. lxxxi. 10. ⁶ Luke, xviii. 5.

⁷ Judges, vi. 40. ⁸ Zech., iv. 2, 12. ⁹ Is., xxiv. 16.

crumbs with the dogs, while they might sit down with the children at the table, and feast on all the savory things with which Christ spreads His board.

“Whosoever” and “whatsoever” are two precious words often in the mouth of Christ. Whosoever will may come.¹ Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.² “Whosoever” is on the outside of the gate, and lets in all who choose. “Whatsoever” is on the inside, and gives those who enter the free range of all the region and treasury of grace. “Whosoever” makes salvation free, “Whatsoever” makes it full.

III. See how Christ’s grace condescends to every soul’s peculiar need. He will suit His granting to our asking. To every soul He says, “What wilt thou?”

It is marvellous and beautiful to observe how various are the voices of free grace. “I am thirsty,” says one. “Come to the waters,” she cries.³ “I am hungry,” says another. “Then eat ye that which is good,” she says, “and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”⁴ But I am poor, and have nothing to buy with.” “Come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.”⁵ “We are weary,” sigh the laborers in the sun-beaten fields. “Come unto me,” breathes her answer like a breeze from the waters, “and I will give you rest.”⁶ “Cast thy burden on the Lord and He will sustain thee,”⁷ she whispers to the pilgrim ready to faint on the highway. “Behold the Fountain,” she cries to the guilty, “the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.”⁸ To the lost she cries, “I am the Way:” to the ignorant, “I am the Truth;” to the dying, “I am the Life.”⁹ How large her welcome to the

¹ Rev. xxii. 17; John, vii. 37.

² John, xiv. 13.

³ Is., lv. 1.

⁴ Is., lv. 2.

⁵ Is., iv. 1.

⁶ Mat., xi. 28.

⁷ Ps. lv. 22.

⁸ Zech. xiii. 1.

⁹ John, xiv. 6.

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sinner, how soothing her consolations to the mourner, how inspiring her tones to him that is faint of heart! There is no disease for which she has not a remedy, no want for which she has not a supply; and every one who applies to her shall confess at length, "It is enough; I am blessed as if all the methods and riches of grace were for me alone!"

IV. This question teaches that, though Christ knows what we want and what He will do, He will have us express our wants.

Prayer is not giving information to God; *that* His Omniscience does not need:¹ nor does it change His will; *that* His Immutability cannot suffer.² It does not awaken His grace, for it is from everlasting; nor increase it, for it is infinite. But it opens a way for grace to flow according to its own eternal plan. It is faith's answer to Christ's question, "What wilt thou?" It lives only as grace quickens it, and speaks only as grace teaches it. There is no true prayer till God pours out His Holy Spirit—the Spirit of grace and supplications.³ He is first the Spirit of grace, implanting holy affections, and then the Spirit of supplications, turning these affections into earnest desires, which breathe from the heart in prayer, even as the same Spirit helpeth our infirmities.⁴ Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need!⁵

¹ Mat., vi. 8 ² James, i. 17. ³ Zech., xii. 10.

⁴ Rom., viii. 26. ⁵ Heb., iv. 16.

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