

That Faithful Saying

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1 Timothy 1

¹⁵ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

THIS was at that time “a saying.” What is a “saying”?—Here is the definition of the word:

“A saying is impersonal, current among the common people, deriving its authority from its manifest truth or good sense.”

At that time, then, it was current among the common people—of the Christians—that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” As a Christian was walking along the road, he would say, in faith:

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

As a Christian was working in the field, with a full heart he would say:

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

As a Christian was going about the house, or sewing, or cooking, or washing, or scrubbing, with joy she would say:

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

At first this “saying” derived its authority from its manifest truth and good sense, as manifested in the heart’s experience of every Christian; but at last God Himself put His endorsement on it as “a faithful saying [a saying full of faith], and

worthy of all acceptation,” and as such set it before the world forevermore.

Today, however, this is not a “saying;” it is not current among the common people of the Christians. Today when this Scripture is quoted, nine times out of ten it is as though it read:

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom *Paul* was chief.”

And then those who read it or quote it will soliloquize as to what a terrible wicked man Paul must have been; and then reason that:

“If such a bad, bad man as Paul, the chief of sinners, could be saved, surely I can be saved, who am not very much of a sinner.”

Thus this blessed saying is no longer a saying. This which God has declared to be a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, and which He set before the world for all time to be a saying among Christians, is not now a saying at all. That scripture does *not* say:

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom Paul is chief.”

It *does* say:

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

To read this saying, or to think of it, as though it read, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom *Paul was chief*,” is to destroy it as a saying. For an essential characteristic of a saying is that it “is impersonal.” And “impersonal” means “not relating to any particular person.” Therefore to make this saying apply particularly to Paul as the chief of sinners is to destroy it as a saying.

That which is impersonal applies to all persons alike. It is an essential property of a saying that it shall be impersonal. That “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom *I am chief*,” is a faithful saying. Therefore it applies not particularly to Paul, but to all Christians alike.

This is shown, also, by the fact that the Greek expression in this saying, is but another form of the expression of “me the sinner” (Alford), in the prayer of the publican in *Luke* 18:13, and conforms exactly to the words:

Philippians 2

³ Let each esteem others better than themselves.

It is literally impossible for any person to esteem another better than himself when he does not believe that the other *is* better than himself. And no person can believe that another is better than himself, without first believing that he himself *is worse* than the other.

But when a person finds out that he himself is the chief of sinners, it is then easy enough to esteem others better than himself. It is then, too, that he sees the force and the blessedness of that “faithful saying,” and to him it becomes:

“A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom *I am chief*.”

Perhaps you have not yet found out that you are the chief of sinners. If so, you are missing a most blessed part of Christian experience.

O, the days are coming back—yes, they are here now—when once more, as at the first, upon the authority of “its manifest truth and good sense,” and upon the authority of the word of God, it shall be “current among the common people” of the Christians that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

And so once more this will be a saying. It will be once more, as at the first, the faithful saying that God appointed it to be. For it is as true today as ever it was in the world that:

1 Timothy 1

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