

The Prints of the Nails

by J.W. McGarvey

The sermon explores the profound significance of Christ's suffering and the enduring impact of His sacrifice as symbolized by the prints of the nails in His hands.

Scripture: Matthew 18:20, John 20:27, 1 Corinthians 11:26, Hebrews 9:22, Revelation 19:12

Topics: "The Cross", "Communion"

Description

J.W. McGarvey preaches about the profound significance of the prints of the nails in Jesus' hands as a symbol of His enduring physical agony and ultimate sacrifice for our redemption. The hymn mentioned reflects on the deep gratitude and praise that will flow from our hearts in heaven as we recognize Jesus by the marks of His suffering. McGarvey emphasizes the importance of partaking in communion to remember and honor Jesus' suffering, uniting with believers worldwide in this sacred act of love and remembrance.

Transcript

There is a very beautiful and touching hymn the chorus of which terminates with the words, "I shall know Him by the prints of the nails in his hands." The author seems to have conceived that when she enters heaven she will see before her a great host of glorified beings, among whom she may not readily distinguish her Saviour. The thought seemingly arose from John's declaration that "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." But she imagined that he bears in heaven, as he did when he appeared to doubting Thomas, the prints of the nails in his hands. The conception, whether true to the reality or not, is a very touching one; for it supposes our exalted Redeemer to continue through all eternity wearing the mark of the keenest pain which he endured in the work of our redemption.

We are apt, in considering the crucifixion, to be shocked most severely at the thrusting of the Roman spear into the Saviour's heart, and the stream of mingled blood and water which gushed forth. But that cruel deed gave him no pain. His life was already extinct. We shudder, too, at the driving of the iron spikes through his hands and his feet; and no living person can adequately conceive the torture inflicted when the tender nerves of these extremities were thus lacerated. But this pain, though excruciating beyond all expression, endured only for a few awful moments.

It was when the cross was erected and put in its place that his most extreme and enduring torture began. His whole weight was suspended on the two spikes which had been driven through his hands; and this continued for six dreadful hours. Well, then, does the hymn-writer select the prints of the nails in his hands as the badge of his supremest physical agony. If that badge shall be kept visible before us in heaven, how

deep and constant will be the glow of gratitude in our hearts, and how constant and full the stream of praise that will flow from our lips!

I was present on a memorable occasion when the song referred to above was sung with a full heart by our sweetest singer of hymns at the [41] bedside of a woman who had been bedridden for nearly eight years with inflammatory rheumatism, but who was wonderfully cheerful and thankful amid all her sufferings. While hearing the song, the tears rolled down her cheeks in streams; and at the conclusion, as soon as she could command her voice, she said: "We cut up, and make a great to-do about our afflictions in this world; but what are all of our afflictions? They are only a bubble on the water to what our Saviour passed through. What a pity it is that we shall have to know him by the prints of the nails in his hands! But, thank God, he'll not have on that crown of thorns. He will have a crown with stars in it."

Yes, the prints of the nails in his hands will not be the only badge by which we shall know our Redeemer, no matter how many or how glorious the other great beings who shall make the heavens blaze with glory. We shall know him also by the starry crown upon his brow.

"The head that once was crowned with thorns,

Is crowned with glory now;

A royal diadem adorns the mighty victor's brow.

He's King of kings! Oh, hallelujah!

He's Lord of lords! Oh, praise his name!

The Lamb of God, who brought salvation,

Endured the cross with all its shame."

When we meet to remind one another of his dying love, and to show forth his death by the emblematic loaf and cup, let us never forget that, though we may be few and feeble, we are joining with a countless host to glorify him whose name is above every name and whose suffering endured for us is the chief glory of heaven. We are not alone. We are but adding our feeble hearts and voices to the noblest and sweetest anthem ever sung in heaven. We are honoring him who has made the solemn pledge, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

When Thomas saw the prints of the nails in the Lord's hands and feet, though the sight dispelled his doubts, and led him to exclaim, "My Lord, and my God," he did not realize as we do now the significance of those wounds. It required the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, which came upon him and his fellow-apostles later, to enable them to realize the meaning of the words spoken at the last Supper, "This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins." He only knew that the Lord had died and risen again, and had thus proved himself to be divine. He knew not as yet that he was to ascend to the highest heavens, and that the highest seat in heaven was to be his. He did not know as yet that his own eternal salvation, his own final and everlasting reunion with his Lord and Master, had been made possible by the blood which flowed from those wounds. He was [42] yet, therefore, to enter into a joy on earth of which he had never dreamed--the joy of loving and serving him by whose death he had been redeemed, the joy of dying for him at last.

All of this joy is ours, and it comes afresh into our lives with every returning day in which we meet around this table. If we have been deprived of this heavenly privilege in some days of the past, let us pray God that we shall never be again; and let us resolve that so far as in us lies we never shall be. The people who partake not of this heavenly feast except at long intervals, know not what they are losing out of life. While admitting that the disciples of the apostolic age, who were guided by inspiration, met every Lord's Day to break the loaf, they have been persuaded by specious reasonings to fear the effect of thus obeying the Lord. While we pity them, we shall not reproach them, but we shall set them an example, and hope for the good time to come when all lovers of the Lord, the world over, will unite in this happy service. For this we have many reasons to hope; and if the final coming of the Lord shall occur on the Lord's Day, and the living saints shall be caught up from the Lord's table to meet him in the air, how enviable their last hour on earth will be! [43]

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