

# The Last Penny

Second Series – Sermon Eighteen

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In the Last Penny, those who seek to live from the mind, heart, and life of Christ will rejoice in hearing this changeless truth. Our challenge is to make up our minds and exercise our wills to be righteous, or simply said, to give to all their due. **Righteousness is just fairness – from God to man, man to God, and man to man.** We must be as determined towards others as our Father is determined towards us, for us to pay our debt of love. Pay it no matter who is right or what is owed, for our Father will have His children like Him!

For those who seek to escape this debt of love, paying the last penny is a frightening demand. So, we seek ways through doctrines we imagine God might use to make us good without our need to become good. We aim to hold onto, as we all do, a bit of our selfish self and cover it somehow with a mask of legal righteousness to hide our lack of love. Heaven would be hell for us if we hold onto one hair or feather of unrighteousness and be out of tune and harmony with Their rhythms of Life!

## Outline

**Power of Story** - Light is not helpful shown in our eyes, but only shown on our path!

**Parable of Debt** – Deal today with what you owe, for there is no escaping their payment tomorrow.

**No Escape** – There is no heaven, no life, here or there, without the harmony of righteousness.

**Righteous as Fairness** – Those who live fairly, and no one else is righteous.

**The Parable's Lesson** – We must do what we can to pay the love that we owe!

**Your Duty – Your Debt** – You have no rights, but you do have a debt of love!

**The Final Prison** – Even the final prison is IN God not out. It is as all judgments, redemptive.

**Release** – Repentance, our change of mind and heart, is the light on the path Home.

**Home** – God is the refuge and home for all of us!

### **Matthew 5:26 RSV**

*"Truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny."*

**21 -26 MSG** - *"You're familiar with the command to the ancients, 'Do not murder.' I'm telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder. Carelessly call a brother 'idiot!' and you just might find yourself hauled into court. Thoughtlessly yell 'stupid!' at a sister and you are on the brink of hellfire. The simple moral fact is that words kill."*

*"This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God."*

*"Or say you're out on the street and an old enemy accosts you. Don't lose a minute. Make the first move; make things right with him. After all, if you leave the first move to him, knowing his track record, you're likely to end up in court, maybe even jail. If that happens, you won't get out without a stiff fine."*

### **Power of Story**

Parables are an excellent and helpful way to learn. Jesus often used them even though they are not easily grasped by the intellect alone. They are addressed more to our conscience than our intellect and our will more than our imaginations. Parables are forceful and direct but not always precise. They are not primarily to explain but challenge us to see ourselves in need of doing more and being more than we currently are!

The seemingly wise offer us their many and varied intellectual interpretations, while the childlike use them for lighting the path on their journey. **The most significant obstruction to understanding parables is to interpret them instead of doing them. Theologians have done more to hide the gospel of Christ than any of its adversaries!**

Jesus was not a philosopher. It was not for our understanding that He came but for our obedience. So it is in the seeing and doing in which we understand. The mere intellectual pursuit leads to stumbling and

foolishness. The parables and the gospel can only be understood by those who walk in them! Light is not helpful shown into our eyes, but only on our path!

Parables are only for the person's understanding who seeks to do what they see, those seeking understanding as a matter of Life itself. They open to those that live in the Truth, not just ascend to them intellectually. They can serve as glimpses to arouse our consciousness when we are on the verge of awakening. Our ignorance may feel like punishment, but all punishment is kindness leading us to repentance and the only contact we are capable of at that moment. **Because we are not ready to do, we cannot see. The parables are lanterns of truth that light the path of those who walk in them. And they blind the eyes of those who try to explain them!**

## Parable of Debt

There doesn't seem to be any special meaning in using the word judge other than the obvious. However, I believe I see what is meant by "agree on the way" and "the last penny." This parable is appealing to our common sense concerning the wrongs we have done towards others. Jesus is saying, deal today with what must be dealt with, for there is no escape from payment, avoid at least the prison of enforcement. It is useless to think you will escape the laws of Life and God.

To the honest person who wants to live in truth, the parables are a gift of grace. To dishonest people, they are a threat. Those who seek to live from the mind of Christ will rejoice in hearing this changeless Truth, as the Truth of their salvation, that makes their soul glad. Since God is fair and just to us in our weaknesses, there is room for us to grow.

To pay the last penny is a dread-filled judgment to those who live dishonestly, but life to them that are honest. Doers of the Truth find God's determination for full payment to bring Life and Peace **for they know their Father wants them to have His Life, clean, clear, and pure as the wind-driven snow. We know we cannot pay without Their help, which draws us closer and deeper into our relationship with Them!**

## No Escape

There is no escape from doing what is required of us. Righteousness is the only way to eternal Life, it is eternal Life, and anything else then is death.

**No, there is no escape, no heaven with a bit of hell in it. There is no plan to keep a little of the devil in our hearts or pockets. All of Satan must go, every hair and feather! Neither can we think we can be made good without being good.** God is good to all His animals, and He will not make us good beasts.

**There is no covering in a robe of imputed righteousness, the poorest of legal cobwebs spun by spiritual spiders.** To me, it is like an invention of well-meaning nothingness meant to soothe our insanity. Indeed it has proved to be a door of escape out of the worse imaginations for some. It is an old "doctrine," for St. John seems to point to it, "Little children, let no man lead you astray; he that doeth righteousness, is righteous even as He is righteous."

**Christ is our righteousness, not so we can escape punishment or escape being righteous, but as the creator of righteousness in us!** So that we, experiencing our will by receiving His Spirit, can resist as He

did against sin. So we can know what a lovely thing righteousness is and how ugly is unrighteousness. Jesus is our righteousness, and this righteousness is no fiction, no pretense, no imputation.

## **Righteousness as Fairness**

One hindrance from understanding the difference between righteousness and unrighteousness is the confusion surrounding what we are told about both that is not true. **Righteousness is just fairness – from God to man, man to God, and man to man. Righteousness is giving everyone their due – their large and loving due! He who lives fairly, and no one else, is righteous!**

Any system of thought which tries to persuade you that there is any salvation other than becoming righteous as Jesus is righteous is false. Any idea that a person can be made good, as a dog is good without his own will exercised in the making, is a lie. It is also a lie that a person can hide his sins under a robe of imputed righteousness. These systems are of the devil and not God, and thanks be to God, these errors will not injure the true of heart. The true-hearted will grow in truth, and as love casts out fear, so the truth will cast out lies.

## **The Parable's Lesson**

**I read, then, in this parable, that we had better make up our minds to be righteous, to be fair. We must do what we can to pay the love that we owe in all the contacts and relationships we have in this life. In all the matters of both word and deeds where one can demand of another. Or where one can complain that they have not received fair play from us. Take care of these matters before they get out of hand with those who have anything against you while you still can along life's way. If not now, it will be later under far more challenging circumstances than now. Putting off the inevitable is of no use. You must do it, and there are ways of compelling you ahead.**

(Me) *"In this situation, however, I am right!"* • (The Spirit says) *"If so, fine, in this situation. However, I have reason to doubt you are capable of judging rightly in your own affairs."*

*"Do you hate the person?"* • *"No, I do not."*

*"Do you dislike them?"* • *"I cannot say I like them."*

*"Do you love them as yourself?"* • *"Oh, come on! No one does that!"*

*"Then no one can be trusted when you think so intensely like that. That you are right and your neighbor is wrong, in affairs between you."* • *"But I'm not saying I am right and he is wrong. There may be some truth to his side. What I am saying is that I am right more than he."*

***"However, the question is not fundamentally about issues but a question of heart—one of relationship and action towards your neighbor. If you were, in your heart, loving towards him, you could do him no harm. Let the individual situations be as they are. You owe him something yet unpaid, as indeed he owes you something he has not paid."*** • *"I would lose my advantage if I agreed with that view."*

*"It would be so much the worse for him. So, it is up to you to be fair with him, whether he is fair or not." •  
"But you have to be kidding; being right is all that matters! I want nothing but my rights. Could anything be more important than that?"*

## **Your Duty – Your Debt**

I don't think you're right about this duty; **you have no rights, but a debt of love. It is a very small matter whether the person gives you your rights or not, but it is Life and death to you if you do not give him his!** Whether someone pays you what you consider to be his debt to you or not, you will be compelled by your Master to pay yours. Whether you owe a dollar and they owe a million, you must pay the dollar whether they pay the million or not. There is no business transaction involved here. **If owing you love, they give hate, and you owe them love yet unpaid, you still owe them. A love unpaid, a justice undone, praise withheld, or a judgment passed on you without fair play does not absolve you of your debt of love outstanding.** We are given a good while to pay, but a crisis will come. Come sooner than we expect for those of us not yet ready to pay. The situation whose demand is unyielding is followed by prison.

This same determination holds of every demand of God, and by refusing to pay, we make an adversary of God who will compel us to pay for our own sake alone! If you from your life say, "I will not," then God will see to it that you do! There is a prison, and we need to know that its doors do not open until complete satisfaction is given, the last penny is paid.

The central debt whose payment God demands is that which lies at the very root of our lives. Those we owe with all our mind, soul, and being. Those that create adversaries by separation and division that prevent us from doing the Father's will and agreeing with our brothers and sisters on our debt of love. Every relationship we have, both with God and our neighbor, must be wholeheartedly acknowledged and met in love's reality, followed by paying every debt. However small the debt may be, if any obligation could really be small, we must pay as we continue on life's journey together.

**If we acknowledge our debt and are willing to pay, but find we are inadequate to meet the price, then God will tax the universe so that we can have the resources we need. If we accept this as the will of God, then the whole power and wealth of our Father will be ours and the last penny easily paid. On the other hand, if we refuse to acknowledge the debt and refuse to pay it, then alas, the prison!**

God, in our darkness, can make us thirst for the light. For we, when we were in the light, sought nothing but darkness. The cells of our darkness may differ in degree, but they are the same in that the door does not open without payment. There is no day, no light, except the will of God. We will not be allowed to roam the day forever without the light being taken from us so we can know what darkness is. When the darkness is complete, when we have spent the light by slaying it, then we will know darkness.

## **The Final Prison**

I have seen something of the final prison from afar. Seen the innermost cell of the universe's debtors and will try to reveal what I believe it to be.

**The prison is the vast darkness outside the city's gates of which God is the light, where silence is as deafening as the darkness is blinding. For here, the time of signs has passed. All of our senses had**

**their signs, and we ignored and misused them. And now the signs are gone, and there are no live senses through which to be awakened!**

We awaken from our final struggle of death in absolute loneliness, a loneliness of which we never knew in life. Not a hint, nor a shadow of anything outside our consciousness reaches us. All is dark and silent, no motion at all, not even a gentle breath of wind! No dream of change or scent, nothing of others or God anywhere. God's presence so removed from us that we are only conscious of their isolation.

When in the live world, the prisoner was one who only cared for himself. Now he is in a prison created of his own selfish separation. In life, he would not believe in a God he could not see, and now he doubts if there is such a thing as the human face. Soon his misery will birth imaginations of a thousand shapes of woe. Fears he cannot rule, direct, or distinguish from reality. A whole world full of miserable dreams and contradictions. The liveliest human imagination could not represent a world without the shadow of the presence of God. The one in prison could not understand God or himself in a world in which God withdraws.

The most frightening idea that could occur to a man is to have an existence with which God has nothing to do. However, this could not be, for we are beings who have a divine cause. Without this causation, we could not be! **Therefore, it is always in and not out of God that we live and have our being.** But suppose that a person so left to themselves, and utterly alone, would be glad for any contact no matter how small.

In this state, his worst enemy, if he were just aware of him, he would be ready to worship. For his misery would not be only the absence of others but the continuous presence of himself. This condition of being without contact with others would be a horror!

For us individually, whose idea and being comes from God and whose image we were made, we are now too broken and fallen to be good company for anyone. For Life is in participation with the lovely creatures God has made all around us. And in the Divine giving of Themselves, saving us from the frenzy of our loneliness. This loneliness is the isolation created by self, self, self! The man who thinks only of himself must eventually go mad if God does not interfere.

## **Release**

Can there be a way out of this misery? Can the one who could not believe in God when they were in God's beautiful world that testified of Them and surrounded them believe, when they are shut up in the prison of their own making, alone and weary in their all-and-nothing? They would, for a time, try to believe that their condition was nothing, a mere dream of the setting sun, a vision of their own imagination. However, in time they would wish the dream was no more! This wish would be their first spark of hope.

Self-loathing would begin and grow from the loss of our participation in our familiar sins, our lack of repentance, and knowing we have no vision of change for the better. Where this self-loathing might go no one could know, in its essential and original misery in uncompromising self-disgust! Only then, if we are capable of self-disgust, is there room for hope. It only takes a pinch of dirt in the crack of a rock for a pine to grow. But, even more, there must be hope while there is existence. For where there is existence, there God must be, for God is good, always good!

**But oh, the distance from the light! So that such a one is at the farthest point of life's nothingness, but no, not the farthest! For the one is nearer heaven when they begin to reap what they have sown for their doings in deepest hell. They may be for the first time in a condition to receive their first glimpse of life as an unspeakable beauty.** They received grace's endless gifts of sun, air, earth, sea, and the human face divine and taken it for granted as naturally theirs all their years in the world because nothing prevented them. Now, the slightest thinning of darkness would be received as the glow of a descending angel, a messenger of God. They were not yet ready to think of God, for it takes a long time to think about God. But hope, not yet recognized as hope, would be dawning in their hearts, and the thinning darkness would be received as a cave of light, a refuge from their selfish self of which they used to be so proud!

A person at this moment may find it impossible to think of themselves so unpleasantly. But all they have to do is let things go, and it will become the real, right, and natural way to think of themselves. All I am saying is indeed imaginary, but our imaginations mirror truth. I suspect this is where all prophecies have always come. And I am dealing here with the same light and darkness the Lord dealt with himself, as well as Paul, John, Peter, and Jude. So ask yourself if the faintest dawn of even physical light would not be welcomed as a refuge from the darkness of a justly hated self!

**And this light would grow and grow, bridging the distance through repentance. For it is repentance that first touches the heart of God. And in this twilight, the repentant, through struggling and weakness, may feel another beside them drawing near their dreary self.** Perhaps God will bring one near who they wronged, hated, or injured. The one they would be most ashamed to meet, this one would come as a refuge from himself – oh, how welcome they would be!

In this, I might imagine a thousand steps up and out of the darkness. One always a little nearer the light, for they cannot come out until they have paid the last penny! Repentance, once begun, will grow more and more rapidly! When the Father once gets a willing hold, if but with one finger, and touches the one's true self, as swift as possible, He will draw them from darkness into Light.

## Home

**The truth for this pitiful and self-ruined soul is that it was made to be a child of God, a partaker in the divine nature, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. Therefore, out of the abyss into which they cast themselves. Because they refused to be an heir of God, they must rise and be raised to the heart of God their Father, the one and only God of the human race. For God is the refuge and home of each and every one of us!** They must set out and go as the prodigal, or the last glimmer of humanity will die in them.

Whoever would have Life must flee the slavery of the world and become a child, no, a son or daughter, of God! There is no halfway house of rest where ungodliness can be played with, nor is it a house of finality. I have no idea how many are cast into such a prison as I have endeavored to imagine. **There can be no deliverance for the human soul, whether in this prison or not, but in paying the last penny of love. The love expressed in becoming lowly, penitent, and self-refusing.** And through these, receiving our sonship and learning to cry, Father!

## CLIFFNOTES WITH ORIGINAL MACDONALD QUOTES

### **Power of Story**

The greatest obscuration of the words of the Lord, as of all true teachers, comes from those who give themselves to interpret rather than do them. Theologians have done more to hide the gospel of Christ than any of its adversaries.

Because they would not do them; they should have but parables—lanterns of the truth, clear to those who will walk in their light, dark to those who will not. The former are content to have the light cast upon their way; the latter will have it in their eyes, and cannot: if they had, it would but blind them.

### **Parable of Debt**

God is determined upon such payment, is determined to have his children clean, clear, pure as very snow; is determined that not only shall they with his help make up for whatever wrong they have done, but at length be incapable, by eternal choice of good, under any temptation, of doing the thing that is not divine, the thing God would not do.

### **No Escape**

No, there is no escape. There is no heaven with a little of hell in it—no plan to retain this or that of the devil in our hearts or our pockets. Out Satan must go, every hair and feather! Neither shalt thou think to be delivered from the necessity of being good by being made good.

There is no clothing in a robe of imputed righteousness, that poorest of legal cobwebs spun by spiritual spiders.

Christ is our righteousness, not that we should escape punishment, still less escape being righteous, but as the live potent creator of righteousness in us.

### **Righteous as Fairness**

Righteousness is just fairness—from God to man, from man to God and to man; it is giving every one his due—his large mighty due. He is righteous, and no one else, who does this.

### **The Parable's Lesson**

I read, then, in this parable, that a man had better make up his mind to be righteous, to be fair, to do what he can to pay what he owes, in any and all the relations of life—all the matters, in a word, wherein one man may demand of another, or complain that he has not received fair play. Arrange your matters with those who have anything against you, while you are yet together and things have not gone too far to be arranged; you will have to do it, and that under less easy circumstances than now. Putting off is of no use. You must. The thing has to be done; there are means of compelling you.



However, this is not fundamentally a question of issues, but a question of heart. A question of relationship and action towards your neighbor. If you were in yourself all good with him, you could do him no harm. Let the individual situations be as they are. You owe him something that you have not paid, as surely as he owes you something he has not paid.

### **Your Duty – Your Debt**

Your duties—your debts. You are all wrong about the thing. It is a very small matter to you whether the man give you your rights or not; it is life or death to you whether or not you give him his.

If, owing you love, he gives you hate, you, owing him love, have yet to pay it. A love unpaid you, a justice undone you, a praise withheld from you, a judgment passed on you without judgment, will not absolve you of the debt of a love unpaid,

If the man acknowledge, and would pay if he could but cannot, the universe will be taxed to help him rather than he should continue unable. If the man accepts the will of God, he is the child of the Father, the whole power and wealth of the Father is for him, and the uttermost farthing will easily be paid. If the man denies the debt, or acknowledging does nothing towards paying it, then—at last—the prison!

### **The Final Prison**

It is the vast outside; the ghastly dark beyond the gates of the city of which God is the light—where the evil dogs go ranging, silent as the dark, for there is no sound any more than sight. The time of signs is over. Every sense has its signs, and they were all misused: there is no sense, no sign more—nothing now by means of which to believe.

It is always in, and never out of God, that we can live and do.

### **Release**

But alas, the distance from the light! Such a soul is at the farthest verge of life's negation!—no, not the farthest! a man is nearer heaven when in deepest hell than just ere he begins to reap the reward of his doings—for he is in a condition to receive the smallest show of the life that is, as a boon unspeakable.

And the light would grow and grow across the awful gulf between the soul and its haven—its repentance—for repentance is the first pressure of the bosom of God; and in the twilight, struggling and faint, the man would feel, faint as the twilight, another thought beside his, another thinking Something nigh his dreary self

### **Home**

For that for which the forlorn, self-ruined wretch was made, was to be a child of God, a partaker of the divine nature, an heir of God and joint heir with Christ. Out of the abyss into which he cast himself, refusing to be the heir of God, he must rise and be raised. To the heart of God, the one and only goal of the human race—the refuge and home of all and each

There is no half-way house of rest, where ungodliness may be dallied with, nor prove quite fatal. Be they few or many cast into such prison as I have endeavoured to imagine, there can be no deliverance for human soul, whether in that prison or out of it, but in paying the last farthing, in becoming lowly, penitent, self-refusing