



Reflections

January 2014 - *I'm Asking for Nothing but My Rights*

In C.S. Lewis's fictional book, *The Great Divorce*, two former work acquaintances meet in the after-life. One is now a ghost who resides in hell, the other, a murderer is now a Solid Person who lives in heaven. Listen in as the ghost cries foul,

"What I'd like to understand," said the Ghost, "is what you're here for, as pleased as Punch, you, a bloody murderer, while I've been walking the streets down there and living in a place like a pigstye all these years... personally, I'd have thought you and I ought to be the other way round. That's my personal opinion... Look at me, now," said the Ghost, slapping its chest (but the slap made no noise). "I gone straight all my life. I don't say I was a religious man and I don't say I had no faults, far from it. But I done my best all my life, see? I done my best by everyone, that's the sort of chap I was. I never asked for anything that wasn't mine by rights. If I wanted a drink I paid for it and if I took my wages I done my job, see? That's the sort I was and I don't care who knows it... You may think you can put me down because you're dressed up like that (which you weren't when you worked under me) and I'm only a poor man. But I got to have my rights same as you, see?"

"Oh no. It's not so bad as that. I haven't got my rights, or I should not be here. You will not get yours either. You'll get something far better. Never fear..."

"What do you keep arguing for?... I only want my rights. I'm not asking for anybody's bleeding charity."

"Then do. At once. Ask for the Bleeding Charity. Everything is here for the asking and nothing can be bought..."

"I don't want charity. I'm a decent man and if I had my rights I'd have been here long ago and you can tell them I said so."

The other shook his head. "You can never do it like that," he said... "And it isn't exactly true, you know..."

"What isn't true?" asked the Ghost sulkily.

"You weren't a decent man and you didn't do your best. We none of us were and none of us did... all the men who worked under you felt the same. You made it hard for us, you know. And you made it hard for your wife too and for your children."

"You mind your own business, young man," said the Ghost. "None of your lip, see? Because I'm not taking any impudence from you about my private affairs."

"There are no private affairs," said the other...

"I'd rather be damned than go along with you. I came here to get my rights, see? Not to go snivelling along on charity tied to your apron-strings... I'll go home. I didn't come to be treated like a dog. I'll go home. That's what I'll do. Damn and blast the whole pack of you ..."¹

Like the ghost, in comparison to others, we tend to think that we're pretty good and decent and deserve better. Yet in reality, we're all quite sinful and corrupt. By God's grace, however, there is a way to hand over your true rights—rights to the consequences of sin—and receive the gift of eternal life through Christ.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:11 (NIV)

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*. New York: MacMillan, 1946, pp. 32-36.

