

# CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 2

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*A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 2, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

127 Chapters

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## Christian Truth Volume 2

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## The Address to Philadelphia

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In Rev. 3, in the address to Philadelphia, it is, "I have set before thee an opened door" (N. Trans.). The spirit of the world, and especially in religious arrangement, goes to shut the door against God; hence the need of the opened door, He having "right of way" to every soul - "My sheep hear My voice." In verse 11 it is not "Behold, I come quickly," but "I come quickly." We have the word "behold" elsewhere, a warning, or to call attention, which Philadelphia (seeing the state they were in) did not need, but they needed much the encouragement of "I come quickly."

The Philadelphian state and that of the poor widow who cast into the treasury her two last mites is somewhat analogous. This act of devotedness is found at the end of Jewish failure and ruin. There is this one that gives her all. Her gift, though little, draws forth the Lord's approval.

Philadelphia presents a phase of the Church found at the end of its history here. First love left in Ephesus ends in Laodicea spued out, or disowned as God's witness. The last four churches go on to gether to the end. Philadelphia and Laodicea are very opposite states. In Philadelphia, Christ is everything to them. In Laodicea, Christ is nothing to them; there is inside a big self-complacent "Land Christ outside. This shows how things are today.

I want to speak a little of the foundation of the hope of the Church; that is, the Lord's coming. In the writings of Luther and many other Christian writers, we find no mention of it. But in the last century it has been taught, and brought into great prominence. God has been at work to revive the hope which had been lost.

The widow (Luke 21:2) and Philadelphia occupy a somewhat similar position. The widow has at heart God's interests at that time. Her whole soul is bound up in the temple. She has before her what the temple is in God's unchanging thought for Israel's blessing. They made it "a house of merchandise." She had it before her according to faith's estimate of it - God being faithful - and she cast in all her living. This was under His eye. He saw the value of her act, and at such a moment of failure and ruin that shortly after this He says, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." "As some spake of the temple," etc. (v. 5), the Lord said it should all be thrown down. They were looking at the outward thing - the "goodly stones and gifts." Are we trying to keep up the outward thing? The temple, as the widow apprehended it in faith, was to stand. The inner state seen by the Lord in the widow, and the outward and visible thing seen by the disciples, were in great contrast. Philadelphia is something the same as the widow. The widow is seen at the end of Jewish apostasy and ruin - Philadelphia at the end of the Church's ruin.

Have we understood the total ruin the Church has become in man's responsibility? But God is active in grace above all the failure, and directs the hearts of His people to Christ who is all, and who is coming. "Hold that fast which thou hast." The encouragement for this is, "I come quickly." You will see the value of "that which thou hast" when you notice the state in which Philadelphia was found; that is, devotedness to Christ: "Thou... hast not denied My name." This marks attachment to Christ. "My patience" - it is association with Him in His patience in waiting.

Philadelphia thus did not need the word "behold." "I come quickly" expresses His heart's desire to have His people with Him, and "quickly" is as fresh and true today as ever.

"That which thou hast" - it is having Christ, and devotedness carrying one on against a Christrejecting world. What the widow had would be of little value before men, but of great value "in the sight of God and our Father" (1 Thess. 1:3). What she did would not be found put in a newspaper, or made much of in the world, but it drew forth His appreciation.

Let us see today what we have. Every bit of truth you have, have you got it so taught of God? We live in a day of intellectuality. Nothing so tends to destroy spirituality as that. We need to possess truth in spiritual power. May the Lord encourage us today by seeing His unchanging faithfulness.... They had a little strength - positive strength, though little. Let us take home the word "I come quickly," and "Hold fast," etc. The very fact of being told to hold fast shows the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil at work to rob me of it. He says, 'Hold Fast,' showing it can be done. The power is with Him.

W. J. C.

## The Age of Accountability and Eternal Welfare of Children

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-Would you give some information regarding the eternal welfare of children and all who die before the age of accountability? What place will they occupy in heaven?"

ANSWER: Millions of children have died in infancy, not because of their own sins but because of Adam's. They came into the world with a fallen nature, and were subject to death, for death is the common lot of man since the fall (Heb. 9:27).

The wicked dead will be raised to stand before the Great White Throne to be judged: it is important to notice that they will be "judged according to their works." Now it is evident that an infant could never be judged for his wicked works; nevertheless, as one born in sin he needed a Savior. This the Lord Jesus is for him by. His death on the cross, for He "came to save that which was lost." Compare Matt. 18:11 with Luke 19:10. In the former, children are the subject and it says to "save that which was lost." In the latter, where adults are considered, it says to "seek and to save that which was lost." Adults being sinners by practice as well as by nature had "turned every one to his own way" and had to be sought as well as saved.

The answer to your second question is that they will be raised from the dead at the first resurrection and have a heavenly portion along with all the heavenly saints; they will not, however, form a part of the bride of Christ, as, only\_ those sealed with the Holy Spirit on belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior become a part of the Church (see 1 Cor. 12:13 and Eph. 1:13). None of the Old Testament saints, nor any before the Day of Pentecost, will be a part of the Bride, but will be, as John the Baptist expressed it, the friends of the Bridegroom. They will have their own special place in those heavenly glories as trophies of the Savior's work of redemption. It has been suggested that perhaps these children will form one of the families in heaven as mentioned in Eph. 3:15 which should read, "Of whom every family in heaven and earth is named."

## All Is Vanity: Under the Sun

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In the sixth verse of the thirty ninth Psalm we have three great types of character as set forth in the vain show, vain disquietude, and heaping up. These types may sometimes be found combined, but very often they have a distinct development.

There are many whose whole life is one "vain show," whether in their personal character, their commercial position, their political or religious profession. There is nothing solid about them - nothing real - nothing true. The glitter is the most shallow gilding possible. There is nothing deep, nothing intrinsic. All is surface work - all the merest flash and smoke.

Then again we find another class whose life is one continued scene of vain disquietude. You will never find them at ease - never satisfied - never happy. There is always some terrible thing coming

- some catastrophe in the distance, the bare anticipation of which keeps them in a constant fever of anxiety. They are troubled about property, about friends, about trade, about children, about servants. Though placed in circumstances which thousands of their fellow creatures would deem most enviable, they seem to be in a perpetual fret. They harass themselves in reference to troubles that may never come, difficulties they may never encounter, sorrows they may never live to see. Instead of remembering the blessings of the past and rejoicing in the mercies of the present, they are anticipating the trials and sorrows of the future. In a word, "they are disquieted in vain."

Finally, you will meet another class, quite different from either of the preceding - keen, shrewd, industrious, money-making people - people who would live, where others would starve. There is not much "vain show" about them. They are too solid, and life is too practical a reality for anything of that sort. Neither can you say there is much disquietude about them. Theirs is an easy-going, quiet, plodding spirit, or an active, enterprising, speculating turn of mind. "He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them."

But reader, remember, on all three alike the Spirit has stamped "vanity." Yes, all, without any exception, "under the sun," has been pronounced by one who knew it by experience, and wrote it by inspiration, "vanity and vexation of spirit." Turn where you will, "under the sun," and you will not find aught on which the heart can rest. You must rise on the steady and vigorous pinion of faith to regions above the sun in order to find "a better and an enduring substance." The One who sits at the right hand of God has said, "I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: that I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." Pro. 8:20, 21. None but Jesus can give "substance" - none but He can "fill" - none but He can "satisfy." There is that in Christ's perfect work which meets the deepest need of conscience; and there is that in His glorious Person which can satisfy the most earnest longings of the heart. The one who has found Christ on the cross, and Christ on the throne, has found all he can possibly need for time or eternity.

Well, therefore, might the psalmist, having challenged his heart with the question, "What wait I for?" reply, "My hope is in Thee." No vain show, no vain disquietude, no heaping up for him. He had found an object in God worth waiting for; and therefore, turning away his eye from all beside, he says, "My hope is in Thee."

This, my beloved reader, is the only true, peaceful, and happy position. The soul that leans on, looks to, and waits for Jesus, will never be disappointed. Such a one possesses an exhaustless fund of present enjoyment in fellowship with Christ; while at the same time, he is cheered by "that blessed hope" that when this present scene, with all its vain show, its vain disquietude, and its vain resources shall have passed away, he shall be with Jesus where He is, to behold His glory, to bask in the light of His countenance, and to be conformed to His image forever.

May we then be much in the habit of challenging our earthbound, creature-seeking hearts, with the searching inquiry, "What wait I for?" Am I waiting for some change of circumstances, or "for the Son from heaven"? Can I look up to Jesus, and with a full and honest heart say, "Lord, my hope is in Thee"?

May our hearts be more thoroughly separated from this present evil world and all that pertains thereto, by the power of communion with those things that are unseen and eternal.

From various cares our hearts retire,  
Though deep and boundless their desire,  
We've now to please but One;  
Him before whom each knee shall bow -  
With Him is all our business now,  
And those that are His own.  
With these our happy lot is cast,  
Through the world's deserts rude and waste,  
Or through its gardens fair;  
Whether the storms of trouble sweep,  
Or all in dead supineness sleep,  
T'advance be all our care."

## The Answer Delayed Three Weeks

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Never say importunity is needed to move God. At your leisure read Dan. 10. For "three full weeks" Daniel was chastening his heart before God, and no answer getting no answer was given. At the end of that time the answer comes; and how? The angel tells him that as soon as ever he began to pray he was heard; but a certain transaction that was going on in heaven hindered the answer. He went on in importunity for three weeks, but as soon as ever he had prayed, he was heard. So you may have been praying for a long time, and getting no answer, but be sure the interval has been well employed- if not in heaven, in the chastening of your spirit.... There is no reluctance in God; but there may be reasons to delay the answer, and when it does come, it may be in a way you are little prepared for. Paul prayed three times, and the thorn was not taken away, but the answer came at last, and in a way he had not expected. The thorn was left until the day of his death, but he was given grace by which he could triumph in it.

## A Basic Sin: Self Pleasing

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There is one sin which leads men to the commission of all others - the desire to please themselves. If this has once been acted on, it constitutes that man a sinner, just as the breach of one law of the land stamps a man a criminal. We do not require him to run through the transgression of every law in the statute book in order to bring him in guilty. His having broken one is the evidence of his guilt; we need no further proof.

While acting then on this as a principle, we are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. There is no life, no love in us; as our Savior said to those by whom He was surrounded, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." Now this is the real fact, that there is no assimilation to God in man's natural state, but the contrary principle - hatred, enmity.

But this is the position of every individual of the human race until called out of the general mass by divine grace. He is sprung from Adam, associated with him in his

sin, as to its guilt not only of leaving God but of positively rejecting Him. That is the world he loves, belongs to, and forms a part of; and whether his transgressions are few or great, he is doomed to destruction if he continues so to the end.

Just as in the case of the flood: doubtless there was a wide difference in the amount of actual delinquencies among the sinful inhabitants of the world at that time; but none were saved but Noah. Many might even have bid fair to be saved, so as to be near the ark; but none were saved except such as were in the ark. So in Sodom: many had not so openly exhibited their enmity to God as others; and yet, in the general conflagration, Lot alone escaped; and why? Just because all the others, without distinction, were opposed to God - were quite opposite to Him in every principle, and consequently had come to that state of exclusion from God's presence.

If so, we are at present without God in the world; and to be forever without Him is perfect misery. And is not this really the present position of the world, though men are unconscious of it? There is a veil cast on futurity as it regards them. They are occupied in the pleasures, amusements, profits, and pursuits of a Christ rejecting world. But when the veil is raised, then will their position be disclosed. And whosoever is of Christ will have Christ's portion; they will enter on the enjoyment of that portion which by faith they now see is prepared for them.

By faith alone have we any of these exceeding great promises now. Now is the time for us to ascertain by faith our personal identification with Christ. Now are we to know our interest in Him.

## Behold the Bridegroom: Go Ye Out to Meet Him

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The early Christians not only accepted the doctrine of the Lord's coming as truth, but it was to them such a reality that they "went forth to meet the bridegroom." The Lord's return was their hope. It produced desires after the Lord Himself. They looked for the Savior. It was to them the "blessed hope." They felt it to be an eminently practical doctrine. They waited for God's Son from heaven. This was manifesting the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God; and will not this always be the case when the truth is held in the love of it?

But one of the most flagrant sins in Christendom, which Scripture has marked out, is the "evil servant" saying "in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming." It is not openly denying the doctrine, and joining the infidel in scoffing, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? but, while professedly holding the doctrine, to so let slip the hope as to indulge in fleshly lusts and worldly associations, because in heart such believe He is not coming for some time yet. It must then be a deeply important matter that we make no mistake as to the true state of our hearts, that we are day by day so taken up with Christ Himself in heaven, as to desire to see His face; that His coming again is such a hope to our souls that we are practically acting like those who, having heard the midnight cry, are going out to meet Him.

There are at least three points which appear to us to be involved in going forth to meet the Bridegroom: desire, purpose, and activity.

### DESIRE

The heart must be going up to Him whom having not seen we love. There must be the longing to see His face. This is something more than being in a sinless and happy place, more than having a crown of life and a harp of gold; it is even more than bridal attire, or the consciousness of being where there is no more sorrow nor death; yes, it is seeing Him as He is - being forever with the Lord, like the Lord, and near the Lord. Being now taken up with the Lord Himself as the commanding and satisfying object of our souls, and hope of our hearts, it becomes easy to

abstract our minds from other objects, and to detach ourselves from other associations in order to go forth to meet the Bridegroom.

This desire after Him, it seems to us, is more or less in every one who is born of God, though in some persons it is stifled or hindered by worldliness, carnality, and bad teaching. But there the desire is; for "we love Him, because He first loved us." Until we see His face, how can we be satisfied? How can the heart be perfectly at rest until we are before the object of its love? Then the climax of our souls' longing will be reached. The consummation of our desire will be realized. We shall wish for nothing more. Then we shall fully know the truth of our Savior's words which we now in part enjoy, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." John 6: 35. Unutterable blessedness! When we see His face it will be perfect satisfaction and fullness of joy. This will be when He comes. We shall be caught up to meet Him in the air. What a meeting! What glory we shall then enjoy! What love encircling us we shall then know! What

perfect delight to the longing, waiting soul!

## PURPOSE

Nothing is more to be dreaded among Christians than a pointless, purposeless kind of life. We may be sure it is not an occasional desire, a spasmodic impulse, or a desultory activity, but the steady pursuit of purpose that will mark those who go forth to meet the Bridegroom. It will stamp the springs and motives of our ways. It will give a heavenly complexion to all we do. When a man goes to meet a bosom friend, he steadily pursues his journey till they meet. He looks out on the way for his friend, but nothing stops his course; through rough and smooth, hill and dale, he perseveringly pursues his way. The fixed purpose of his heart is that nothing shall stop him till he meets the one he has gone forth to meet. And so with us; when the Lord is before us as the bright and blessed Object which, by grace, has made everything else seem poor, how can we but pursue our heavenward course, seek to please Him, to honor Him, to suffer for His sake, and go forth to meet Him?

In pursuing such a course there will be the denying of ungodliness and worldly lust; there may be the loss of friends and things of this life; the tongue of slander may be used against us, or the finger of scorn pointed at us; but when there is true purpose of heart cleaving to the Lord, we shall be unmoved by these things, we shall lay aside every impediment and overcome every obstacle which may stand in the way of our going forth to meet Him. When the Lord Himself has His rightful place in our hearts, we cannot but willingly pursue our purpose at all costs.

## ACTIVITY

The hope of our Lord's return is eminently practical. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." It cannot be otherwise. The moment it ceases to be practical, we have let slip the hope. It is the awakening, comforting, purifying, and separating hope which Scripture sets before us. The announcement, "Behold the bridegroom" is God's power for awakening slumbering souls. "Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps." Those who have heard the cry have been aroused. Few comparatively, perhaps, as yet have heard it, and even most of those are scarcely more than half awake. But those who are deaf to the midnight cry are slumbering still. How simple, and yet how very solemn! Who then are truly awake? Those who have been roused by the hope of the Bridegroom's coming, and have gone forth with trimmed lamps to meet Him. Be assured, dear Christian reader, we cannot sleep as do others when going forth to meet the Bridegroom. The gladdening cry draws forth the energies and springs of divine life in us into real earnestness and activity. We then so stretch out in the ways of faith and hope and loving attachment to our Lord Jesus, that those who are not really the Lord's cannot keep pace with us. This is strikingly solemn. The eyes of truly awakened souls are on the Lord Himself, for it is He such are going forth to meet. The feet run toward Him. The hands are stretched out to Him. The heart cries "Come," for it is the Lord from heaven whom such expect. They feel the ruggedness of the path, and sometimes taste the bitterness of outward circumstances, but they still go forward and onward to meet the Bridegroom.

On the other hand, those who merely hold the letter of Scripture, who have never bowed to the Son of God, whose hearts have not been touched with divine grace, have not known remission of sins, and therefore have not received the Holy Spirit - foolish virgins who have "no oil" - cannot

walk in the path of faith and hope; and alas! not only find that the faithful are detached from them, but discover when too late the fatal mistake of their lamps having gone out. Thus when the Lord's coming has real effect on souls it must practically separate them from heartless and powerless professors, and must also throw them into close and happy fellowship with others who are truly going forth to meet the Bridegroom. Thus this "blessed hope" will necessarily even now be connected with rendings and separations, as well as close and spiritual fellowship with those who are really hoping for His coming.

How comforting too is this blessed hope! When the Thessalonian believers were sorrowful because they saw their brethren in Christ die (fall asleep) instead of the Lord coming for them as they thought would be the case, the Apostle was inspired to instruct them that those who had died in Christ would come out of heaven with Christ when He comes to reign. He also tells them how they, as well as those who are alive when He comes, will get to heaven, in order to all come out together in the reign with Christ. He says,

"The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.

How this must have comforted the bereaved! What solid consolation it must have given them to know that, when the Lord comes, the departed saints and living ones will be all together, and everlastingly happy, without another cloud or sorrow, in the Lord's most blessed presence. How many a mother has had her sorrow turned into joy by this blessed truth, when called to follow to the grave the remains of her precious offspring; and what multitudes of widows have wiped the tear of bitter anguish from off their sorrowing faces at the thought of how soon, how very soon, it may be before they and their departed will meet the Lord in the air, and be forever with the Lord. Is it any marvel then that the

Apostle is instructed to enjoin those bereaved ones at Thessalonica not to sorrow as those who have no hope, but to be comforted - yea, to "comfort one another with these words"?

We cannot conceive anything that could more sweetly and powerfully comfort the bereaved heart, than this special revelation of the Lord through Paul, to assure such of His intense desire that they should have this comfort in their sorrow and bereavement during His absence. Can we find anywhere in the entire range of holy Scripture that which more touchingly brings home the Lord's warm desire for our consolation and sustainment during this time of tribulation and death? If the hope be bright in our souls, shall we not according to His loving desire be able to "comfort one another"? We gravely doubt whether any who have not the comfort of the Lord's coming themselves, will be able to "comfort one another with these words." We need to look plainly and unflinchingly into this very solemn matter, lest we be found trafficking in mere knowledge of doctrine, instead of comforting others "by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Clearly then it is a comforting hope.

The hope too is purifying. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." 1 John 3:3. As the Son from heaven is our bright and blessed hope, so is He the example for our walk. He is the standard of the daily purifying of those who go forth to meet Him. It needs

but a moment's reflection to see what separation, what entire consecration, this involves; nay more, it shows what the practical walk will be of those who really have this hope. It does not say, he ought to purify himself, but he does it: he "purifieth himself, even as He is pure." How intensely solemn this is! How decisive, how searching, how sweeping! How it admonishes us to quicken our steps in going forth to meet Him; to be alive, awake, in earnest, to run with patience looking off unto Jesus; and while looking for Him, find out the narrow path on earth of going forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. It is clear enough that those who step out in these divinely ordered ways of faith, and love, and hope, at all costs, must, however unwillingly, leave those far behind who linger in the world's excitement and advantages, instead of

openly warning souls against its impending doom. Loss in the worldling's account there must be, as well as suffering with a rejected Savior, if not for Him, if we really go forth to meet Him; hut

"How will recompense His smile The sufferings of this little while."

No doctrine can be more eminently practical. If service is the subject, Jesus said, "Occupy till I come." If caring for the need of others, "Whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." Is it the consciousness of being in an evil world, where the Lord is not, that disturbs us? "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Are any of us caring for the Lord's household? "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods." Is it a groaning, mortal body which hinders us from carrying out all the service we desire? "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." Are we growing drowsy and lukewarm? Then we are warned that it was an "evil servant" who said "in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming." Are we not pondering over the Scriptures, and delighting in them as we ought? He saith, "Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." Are we losing freshness and fervency in His holy service? Then He encourages us by saying, "Behold I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Is it death that any dear child of God dreads? It is by no means certain that we shall die; for "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," etc. We ask then, Can we imagine any truth to have a more practical bearing than the blessed hope of our Lord's coming?

The weighty and searching question, dear Christian reader, is, How far has the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ produced practical results in us? May the Lord enable us to deal honestly with ourselves as in His presence about this weighty matter! Has its purifying effect been so real in our consciences that we are separated from worldly companionships, and desire for worldly advancement, worldly possessions, worldly honors? Have the interests of Christ and the hope of seeing Him, detached us from other interests, other objects, and other hopes? Are we caring for our Lord's household?

How vast the contrast between the worldling's doom of darkness and judgment, and the Christian's hope of unfading light and glory! Oh, that these thoughts may produce deep and solemn exercise in souls, lest any be found in the dreadful wile of Satan of talking about the Lord's coming when, like Judas, the "pieces of silver" have really more charm than the "Lord Himself"; and Pilate's place of worldly honor and power is esteemed more highly than the rejected Son of God. Oh, how can any be going forth to meet the Bridegroom if, like Lot's wife, they are looking

behind?

## Calculation

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"I reckon," says Paul, like a grand mathematician, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." I have known, says he, every form of human suffering; at one time believers, even, forsook me, and no man stood by me. But I calculate, I reckon - I put all these trials into one scale, and were I to have an eternity of them, they were as nothing compared with that "eternal weight of glory" which I have in the other.

## Care

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Care is a wonderful thing for creeping in on a man. But the Apostle gives the antidote. He says, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Oh! it kills care outright, to have a thankful heart; for care - inordinate care - and gratitude cannot dwell together, cannot breathe together.

## Be Careful in Your Choice of Companions: Lessons From King Jehoshaphat

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How distinct and how serious is the difference between what is said of King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chron. 17, and 18. In the one it is said that he "strengthened himself against Israel," and in the beginning of the other it is stated that he "joined affinity with Ahab." This signifies a fall, and is not without its warning to ourselves. In chapter 20 Jehoshaphat is assailed by enemies. "The children of Ammon, and with them other besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle." The king is cast upon God -his language breathes a true spirit of dependence and real humility. He prays thus, "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee."

All this teaches us that we have greater reason to fear Satan as a flatterer than as an open foe. The serpent is subtle, the lion ferocious, and Satan is likened to both. He deceives, and he also seeks to devour. King Ahab did not come against Jehoshaphat as an enemy, but rather as a friend. It is here that we need to be on our guard.

Jehoshaphat was by no means comfortable, however liberal he was in offering to be one with Ahab in retaking Ramoth-Gilead. Who had ordered Ahab to undertake such a service? He was like certain prophets of whom we read, "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied." Jer. 2:3: 2 1. Jehoshaphat felt this.

Moreover, Ahab was for madly rushing into battle with the Syrians without asking counsel of God or of any one else. Now we come to a solemn matter for consideration. When men have made up their minds to do evil, like Ahab who sold himself to do evil, God in His judgment may allow them to be deceived. Our Lord said in His day, "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." Blindness from God is terrible indeed. Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel had four hundred prophets - they were numerous, but false - and the Lord permitted an evil spirit to deceive them all. "There came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the LORD said,... go out, and do even so. Chapter 18:20, 21.

One might have supposed that what was said by so many must be true, but this shows how we may be misled by the devil with a cloak of sanctity. The four hundred prophets prophesied before the deluded king and said, "Go up; for God will deliver it into the king's hand." This is, as I have said, very serious, and shows the need of prayer and acquaintance with the mind of God as revealed in His holy Word.

Poor Jehoshaphat! One cannot but pity him; he was in a false position from which it was not easy to escape. He was like the poor fly that gets entangled in the web of the spider. "Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might inquire of him?" said Jehoshaphat. Yes, there was one more - Micaiah, true, but persecuted. Ahab says, "But I hate him." He was hated because he

was faithful. Wicked men and women do not like to be told the truth; they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. But soon it was shown that this solitary and persecuted prophet was right, and the four hundred fawning prophets were wrong. Ahab went to battle (and Jehoshaphat with him), but not to prosper, as the false men had said he would. God did not deliver Ramoth-Gilead into his hand. On the contrary, a man drawing a bow at a venture sent the arrow unerringly through an opening in Ahab's armor and fatally wounded him, "and about the time of the sun going down he died."

Poor, but truehearted, Jehoshaphat cried out to the Lord; he knew where to look in danger and distress.

We cannot conceive Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, saying to another king outside of Israel, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee," etc., as he so blandly replied to Ahab. No! it is an easier matter to discern evil in its open form and character in the world, and thus unhesitatingly to shun it.

Was not Ahab a king of Israel? Could he not say, "Know ye not that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still?" Is it not our common enemy who has taken Ramoth-Gilead from us? It is here, we repeat, where discernment is needed, for while evil in its true and undisguised character is avoided, evil in its untrue character, so to speak, is often not avoided. Albeit Ahab was king of Israel, the people of the Lord, yet for all that he was a very wicked man indeed. It is recorded of him that he "did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him." 1 Kings 16:30, 31.

Who would suggest that it was a proper thing for Jehoshaphat to have fellowship with such a wicked man even if he were king of Israel, the favored people of God? Could anything be more shocking than to go on with wickedness because pursued by those who bear the Lord's name? Far be the thought!

But here it is, alas, that we are so often deceived. Look for a moment at another striking example of how the world in its open form was avoided, while in its disguised form it was fallen into.

The "man of God" (1 Kings 13) was proof against the offers of reward and refreshment of "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin," but proved vulnerable to the deception of the "old prophet in Bethel." Doubtless if Jeroboam had declared to the man of God that "an angel spake" to him, he would not have been believed; but he believed the prophet, and he an old one, and believed him to his ruin too. This is a serious matter, yet we need not be discouraged or afraid. If -

"Sin, Satan, death appear,

To harass and appall,

Yet since the gracious

Lord is near,

Backward they go and fall.  
Before, behind, around,  
They set their fierce array,  
To fight and force me from the ground  
Along life's narrow way.  
I meet them face to face,  
Through Jesus' conquest blest,  
March in the triumph of His grace  
Right onward to my rest."

No less a number than four hundred prophets had assured Ahab and Jehoshaphat that it was not only the Lord's mind that they should go to Ramoth-Gilead, but that He would deliver it into the king's hand; yet it is not to be wondered at that Jehoshaphat was dissatisfied with their flippant statement, for had not the Lord permitted a lying spirit to put the words into the mouths of these flattering prophets? if it be asked why the Lord put this lying spirit into their mouths, it must be answered by saying that it was done judicially, and has an analogy to the terrible statement respecting Ephraim, who was "joined to idols," and meant to go on with them at all costs. "Let him alone." Hos. 4:17. God could not go with Ahab in his undertakings, however commendable they might appear to be, even if Jehoshaphat would accompany him.

One is led to wonder why King Jehoshaphat did not use means to extricate himself from the mess he got himself into. Ah, herein lies a great cause for consideration, which is that the result of an evil alliance and position is to blind the eyes, and to enervate the spiritual energies of the soul. Look what a dragging it took to get Lot out of Sodom! Something of the seductive power of sin must have been known by the poet when he states-

"Vice is a monster of such hideous mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen;  
But seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.-

The bell in the tower which when struck alarmed the young birds, alarms them now no longer; they build their nest there; they are used to it. Oh, may our Lord preserve the reader and writer from becoming accustomed to evil! It would appear that there was an abundance of false prophets in Ahab's time, although, not long before, the faithful Elijah had caused four hundred and fifty to be put to death (1 Kings 18:40).

Besides these there were four hundred more "prophets of the groves" which did eat at Jezebel's table. It is ever so - more false than true. Four hundred false prophets to one. It is a striking disparity, and tells its own story. Yet, blessed be God! He has His precious piece of gold where there is so much brass. His faithful Micaiah, as distinguished from the faithless, flattering,

time-serving four hundred. Micaiah, of course, must suffer, but he has God with him, is in communion with Him, and it has been asked, "What can compensate for the loss of communion with God?" It might be said that the four hundred prophets all spoke the same thing; they were unanimous. They were, but it was a unanimity with Satan as its author. Their counsel was taken, but it was not the counsel God would have been pleased to give. "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of Me." Isa. 30:1.

Doubtless it often proves trying to be singular, but if faithfulness to God is the cause of being singular, may we have grace singular to be.

Ahab did not escape, notwithstanding his cleverness in disguising himself, for "a certain man drew a bow at a venture [in his simplicity] and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness:... and about the time of the sun going down he died." 2 Chron. 18:33, 34.

Through the mercy of the Lord, it is written of Jehoshaphat that he "returned to his house in peace," although not without rebuke, for "the son of Hanani... went out to meet him" and put this important question to the erring, if repentant, king, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD." 2 Chron. 19:2.

God had been very gracious to Jehoshaphat. He always is gracious; while rebuking the king, He did not forget that there were "good things" found in him. God in His holiness judges wrongdoing, but does not overlook any good in His people. It is said, "and by Him actions are weighed." 1 Sam. 2:3. God in His grace forgives, but then His ways in government must continue all the same.

Our readers may have heard of the little boy whose conduct so displeased his father that he said he would drive a nail into a post in the garden every time the child was naughty in the future. A considerable number of nails were driven in, alas! After a time, however, a difference became apparent in the boy's behavior; there were kind acts instead of cruel ones, obedient ways instead of disobedient ones, and the father promised to take a nail out of the post every time that he observed these altered and better actions.

Accordingly, one bright day the happy parent took his boy into the garden to see the last nail taken out of that tell-tale post. The boy was not so pleased as his father expected, and being questioned, he answered, "Father, you have taken away the nails, but you have left all the holes behind!" If the withdrawing of the nails told of the father's forgiveness, the holes showed where the nails had been. So was it with Jehoshaphat; he "returned to his house in peace," but wrath was upon him from before the Lord for being unequally yoked with the ungodly.

When King David exclaimed, "I have sinned," the confession was met with, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin" (2 Sam. 12:1; 3), but we know if grace puts away the sin, government must decree that the sword shall not depart from the house of David. Repentance to be effectual must be heartfelt, yes, and conscience-felt too; and then the fruits of repentance will be seen. Jehoshaphat was now not only desirous of being right with God Himself, but we observe that he was desirous of bringing back those he had led astray, for had he not said to ungodly Ahab, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war"? But now "he went out again through the people from Beersheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers. And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the

LORD, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you: take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts." 2 Chron. 19:4-7. This sounds wholesome. Jehoshaphat has learned a deep lesson; he now knows what a valuable thing is the fear of the Lord, and how serious a thing it is to act without the sense of that fear. We fear that a good deal of so-called repentance is very superficial and shallow. It is refreshing to read what the Apostle Paul says of the Corinthians: "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation,... In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." 2 Cor. 7:11.

Have any of our readers left their first love, or are they in danger of leaving it, or are they unequally yoked with unbelievers? Cry to the Lord, for only He can deliver. Jehoshaphat might have used on his restoration, and after having nearly lost his life through backsliding, the words of the Psalm: "Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder." Psa. 107:13, 14.

"Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder." Psalm 107:15, 16.

## A Certain Samaritan: the Lawyer of Luke 10

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The lawyer who comes to Jesus in Luke 10 is not the young ruler who comes to him in Matt. 19, though the inquiry that each of them put is much the same, and might lead to the conclusion that it was one and the same person, and one and the same occasion.

But further; I believe the state of mind which suggested this inquiry was very different in the two individuals.

The young ruler evidently had some anxiety of conscience which moved him to seek the counsel of so good a man as the Lord - as his religious thoughts told him He was. But the lawyer had no feelings of that kind at all. He was the mere advocate of the law, who would plead for it in the face of the doctrine and the way of Jesus.

The parable of the good Samaritan constitutes the answer which he receives-a parable which sets forth to perfection the love of one's neighbor, illustrating that great duty of the law.

The Samaritan stranger loves the poor waylaid man, we may say, as he loved himself. He could not have done more for himself in the like case than he did for that afflicted one. He spent his affections and his resources upon him; he gave him what his heart and what his hand could command. He had compassion on him, and bound up his wounds. He changes places with him becoming, as it were, poor that he might be rich, walking at his side while he sat him on his ass. And all this with unwearied, unchanging love; for he provided that all this care should be spent on him by others, yet at his own cost, till care was needed no more, and the healing was complete.

Was anything wanting? Nothing. This was indeed a picture of perfect love to one's neighbor; it was a love to him as to himself; it was doing for him all that he could have done for himself.

Well, says Jesus to the lawyer, "Go, and do thou likewise."

The lawyer had come as the advocate of the law, and he finds Jesus the still more blessed advocate of it. There was a greatness and self-devotedness in the principles of it which the lawyer had never conceived, but which Jesus Himself was ever practicing.

The lawyer had come under the vain thought that he could stand by the law; but he finds (surely he did) that this greatness and self-devotedness were far more that he could ever attain or measure.

But besides all this, we have comfort in this parable, for it sets forth the Son of God as a benefactor as well as an example.

Had the lawyer come as a brokenhearted sinner, he would have listened to a very different application of the parable than that-"Go, and do thou likewise." He would have been comforted by the assurance that what the good Samaritan was to the waylaid stranger, such was the Son of God to the poor, ruined, brokenhearted sinner. He would have heard that the Son of God when rich became poor, that by His poverty we might be made rich. He would have been told that we should never be left nor forsaken, but that our heavenly benefactor, like the Samaritan, would not

rest till He had perfected His mercy in our settled and enduring blessing.

Such would have been the application of the parable, had the lawyer come in the spirit of a contrite sinner.

And how precious to know that we are invited to be DEBTORS to the true Samaritan who journeyed from heaven, before we are to be imitators of Him. Well and right it is to be imitators of God as dear children, but better still to share by faith His grace and bountifulness. And though human thoughts would have it otherwise, more is He glorified by our being debtors to Him than imitators of Him.

## A Certain Samaritan and the Order of the Epistles

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As the "certain Samaritan" journeyed he found the poor man who had been going down from Jerusalem to Jericho in a pitiable plight beside the road. Without the action of the Samaritan the man would have died, but this stranger - picture of the Lord from heaven - came right where he was and mercifully met him in his dire need.

The Epistle to the Romans describes the condition to which sin had reduced man, and also shows that only mercy would meet his case. This mercy on a righteous basis is beautifully unfolded in this epistle.

But the Samaritan did not leave the rescued man to shift for himself; that would never do. He put him on his own beast and took him to the inn where he could be taken care of. And, before leaving him there, he made every provision at the inn for his keep until the day he would return.

The next epistle - the First Epistle to the Corinthians--brings us to the inn, the Church of God. There we find that every provision has been made for our sustenance while down here awaiting the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the "inn" is the Spirit of God, and every member is to function in his own place. The assembly on earth is the place for the care of the saints - rescued sinners. This epistle also gives full directions for the right ordering of the "inn."

Then all of the other epistles come in their places as the proper food and instructions for those at the "inn." No need can arise for which provision has not been made. All of the troubles and abuses that would come into the Church were anticipated and full directions written out.

May we appreciate the grace that met us in our need. May we value the "inn." May we be found gathered together in the assembly to receive the food prepared for us by the One who has gone away and is coming back.

## Christian Character

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The courage, patience, firmness, and zeal of a Christian are a perfectly distinct order of character from the courage, firmness, patience, and zeal of a natural man - self-confidence, self-glory, self-preservation, self-exaltation, are the essential principles of one; confidence in God, self-renunciation, subjection to God, glory to God, abasement of self, being essential principles of the other. So that the essential principles that formed the character of Paul as a natural man were destroyed through the cross, in order that his soul should imbibe the life of Christ, which was the principle that formed his character as a Christian - "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Though Christ was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. In any instance that we give up our own will, without sacrificing conscience, we are gainers. If but my dog exercises my patience, and makes me yield my will, he is a blessing to me. Christ never willed anything but what was good and holy; yet how often was His will thwarted - how often hindered in designs of good!

## A Christian in Political Power

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It is most significant that while the New Testament scriptures give ample directions for the behavior of the husband to the wife and the wife to the husband, of the children to the parent and the parent to the children, of the servant to the master and the master to the servant, and while they also lay down the conduct proper from a subject to the powers that be, they give no directions whatever as to the way of executing political trust.

A Christian under authority has ample directions how to act. A Christian wielding political power has no directions at all. Why this omission? True, Christians at the time when the New Testament was written, were not in a state to exercise political power; but if God had meant them to be placed in this position of responsibility, would He have withheld instructions as to the way in which they were to fill it? Was He so short-sighted that He omitted to provide for a state of things which would receive His sanction; or did He expressly-withhold all directions because the position was one to which His sanction could not be given? The character of believers as "not of the world," as associated with Christ in His "patience," as fellow heirs with Him whom God has not yet put in possession of the inheritance, fully explains the omission--and nothing else can. Strange indeed if He has authorized and instructed the fellow heirs of Christ to take part in bringing about that state of things which they will shortly be associated with Christ in judging and overturning!

But did not Jesus, it may be asked, go about doing good? And may not the possession of political power and interference in the world's concerns, be the means of doing great good? This, however, is man's reasoning, and the place of a believer is not to reason, but to obey. Looked at broadly, in the light of God's truth, a Christian cannot do good by political action, for the end to which everything is working is plainly taught in the Word, and that end is not good, but awfully bad.

Leaving, however, the domain of argument, and falling back on Scripture, what does the Word teach us? Undoubtedly it tells us that Jesus went about doing good; and it tells us too, that believers

are placed here for the same object for which He was here-"As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." John 17:18. How then did Jesus do good? Was it by the exercise of political power? Was it by worldly combinations and societies? Was it by seeking popular support? Himself the only One who had a right to rule, or whose rule could bring blessing, He absolutely declined to receive power. Offered it by the devil, He at once detected and denounced the deceiver. Asked to take the place of an arbiter, He replied, "Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" Luke 12:14. Perceiving that the people "would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone." John 6:15.

In private, none ever labored as He to do good. But the time for public and governmental blessing to the earth had not yet come. The scepter was not yet put into His hands by the only One who had a right to bestow it, and He would receive it from no other. If the scepter was not given by His Father, it must be taken either from the "god of this world," or from man, and from neither of these

would He accept it. In what respect are things altered? Has God yet changed His mode of dealing with the world? Can the Christian receive power from hands from which Christ refused it? Or will God give it to the fellow heirs while He is yet withholding it from the One whom He has made heir of all things?

## The Christian: Not of the World

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There are believers who take part in the world's concerns from generous and philanthropic motives - simply with a desire to do good, to relieve sufferings, or to check the aboundings of iniquity. We cannot question their benevolence, their high principles, or their sincere wish to do God service. But the purest motives will not lead a Christian right if he fails to understand his heavenly calling; and the question still remains whether these believers, sincere and excellent as they are, have entered into God's thoughts about what He would have them do.

If God were still carrying out His earthly purposes, if His design now were to bless or to improve the world, such a course as that indicated might be the right one for a believer to pursue. But this is not the case. The world is not going on to blessing, but to judgment, and a Christian is called to walk in separation from it. If he seeks to follow the guidance of Scripture alone, what would he say then to the idea of attempting, by political and social means, to improve the world? Would he not say, God has reserved the blessing of the earth till Christ comes; am I then to attempt it earlier? or can I, by going on without God, answer any good purpose? Am I more conscious of the evil than He is, or better able to redress it? If He has clearly foretold that the world is hastening on to the judgment it has incurred by rejecting Christ, can I arrest the judgment by my efforts, or shall I entangle myself in the system which is thus awaiting its doom? I am called to fellowship with Christ, and if He has bid Christ wait, shall not I, His fellow heir, wait with Him? If God is now calling a people outside the world, is not this my place, instead of plunging into the thick of its affairs, hoping to bless where God is purposing to judge? I cannot, by becoming responsible for the world's government, hope to avert the sentence. And as no man would paint and ornament a house whose foundations he knew to be giving way, the mere attempt to improve the world shows that I am not expecting its judgment, and helps to foster the delusion that peace and safety are ahead instead of the sudden destruction which God's Word announces. True benevolence demands that I warn those inside of its impending fall, instead of lulling them into security by joining in its decoration.

All this, however, it may be contended is mere inference from the general principle that the Church is heavenly in character. Is this inference supported by the directions given in the Word as to the walk of individual Christians? It is clear that the early disciples were called to share their Master's rejection. "If any man," says our Lord, "will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Matt. 16:24. He Himself was giving up His place of earthly power, and taking that of earthly rejection. So long as such is His attitude toward the world; that is, until His kingdom is established in glory, this is the fellowship into which He calls His disciples. It is no remote inference, but a direct, express statement.

The cross was the punishment of felons and slaves - not only a cruel, but a shameful death. To take up the cross was to assume a position outside the world, the object of the world's enmity and contempt. This then is what Jesus calls His disciples to do. Nor did this cease with His death. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world

would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also." John 15:18-20.

This shows what the early disciples were to expect. Will it be said that the world has changed? that Christianity has so spread as to make such language inapplicable now? In the first of the passages just quoted, Jesus joins His followers with Himself in rejection. For how long? No time is named, but as He utters these words in taking up the Church character and laying aside the Messianic, it seems clear that the rejection of His followers lasts during this state of things. In His Messiahship, He will be exalted and His followers with Him. This conclusion is confirmed by the other passage cited, which contrasts two classes - the world, and those who are "not of the world." These are spoken of as

opposed, not for a time, but in character and principle, and therefore as long as the age lasts. It is asserted generally that believers are "not of the world," and are therefore the objects of the world's hatred.

I admit that the outward marks of this antagonism are much effaced. Religion has become worldly, and the world has become religious. Christians, forgetting their heavenly calling, have struck hands with the world, bid for its favor and places, plunged into its pleasures and pursuits, and earned its patronage and rewards. But does this alter the Word of God which says that the believer is not of the world," or that the world hates what is not of itself? Alas! we measure God's truth by our own failures, and because the world tolerates a worldly Christianity, conclude that Christ and the world are reconciled! They are not; and if there is a truce between the world and His followers, it proves no change of the world toward Him, but the lukewarmness of those who profess His name. Scripture, instead of teaching that the spread of Christian profession would soften the distinction between true believers and the world, makes it one of the heaviest charges against the professing Church, that it has committed fornication with the kings of the earth. The commerce between the Church and the world is infidelity to Christ. The amity between them shows, not the conversion of the world to Christianity, but the conformity of Christians to the world.

Indeed, when we look at the descriptions uniformly given of the world in the New Testament, it is amazing that there can be any doubt upon the subject. What is the world as there portrayed? It is presented under two different, but kindred, aspects, as the place which has rejected Christ, and as an organized system of things with Satan at its head. Everybody admits that Christ was rejected, but that the guilt of His rejection still clings to, and characterizes the world, is a truth almost entirely overlooked. We are so accustomed to regard Christ's death from the side of God's grace, that we forget to regard it from the side of His government. The cross stands before our minds simply as the means by which sin was put away, and the rejection of Christ by the sinner is deemed nothing more than his own individual rejection of salvation. But Jesus is set forth

in Scripture both as the author of salvation and as God's anointed ruler, and in each of these characters His rejection involves much more than the loss of personal blessing.

It is not only, however, for having rejected Jesus as a Savior that the world is under condemnation. God sent His Son into this world as the anointed One, the rightful ruler, and the world has cast Him

out. Can this be a matter of indifference to God? On the contrary, it is a matter of deepest moment. What God sees in the world, and what He expects the believer to see, is a place guilty of having rejected His Son as its rightful Lord.

## Christian Worship

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Christian worship is the united outpouring of thanks and blessing to God and the Lamb from hearts purified by faith, who have the knowledge of the Father and Son by the power of the Holy Ghost, and who therefore draw near in the happy confidence of His love, in the confessed delight and enjoyment of what God is, in the praise of what He is and of what He is to them.

Any of you, children of God, who are not seeking to take the place given you by the word of the Lord, of true worshipers worshiping the Father, are losing your time upon the earth in forgetfulness of your sweetest privileges. No one dictates to you; you are not advised where to go, what to do, with whom to consort, but this only - consult, as to it, the Word of God for yourselves. If you be afraid of the test, if you are unwilling to follow its direction, you have not avoided a bad conscience. Remember what you are sanctified for. Let nothing be so prized as the glory of Christ, nothing so authoritative as the revealed will of the Lord.

Let me press this also upon you, as self-evident, that if you are mingled, Christians and no Christians, men of the world and believers in Christ together, there cannot be worship in spirit and in truth. There never was, since the Lord announced its nature, real Christian worship where such mixture exists. The effect of the attempt is, not that worldly persons are raised upward to the ground and power of worship in spirit and in truth, but that Christians must go down to the atmosphere of the worldly. That is to say, you abandon (and for what? or on whose authority?) all your own proper privileges.

## The Christian's True Character

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If you had all the world attending churches and chapels -persons walking soberly and in a decent, orderly way otherwise -what universal rejoicing over the improved state and prospects of Christendom! And what would all this be in the sight of God? I have not the slightest hesitation in saying, that, if there were no more, it would only be "a fair show in the flesh." What we, as Christians, are entitled to look for, and what we ought never to be satisfied without is, that souls pass from death unto life - that souls should be delivered from the power of Satan and be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Until they have passed the boundary, from the regions of men into the presence of God, what has been done that could be a positive ground of Christian joy and thankfulness?

It is not a question now merely of society or the world. We know that the world is under condemnation, that ever since the cross of Christ, judgment has been impending, as decidedly as after a criminal has been tried and found guilty, as he is waiting in his condemned cell for the sentence to be executed - such is man's condition. Do Christians realize it? Most imperfectly. If they did, could they be upon common ground with the world? Could a person go into the convict's cell and talk to him as if nothing were the matter? We must think such a speaker destitute of all right feeling. So it is in a far more awful way than the execution of a single criminal. We know well that in the day which is coming, there will be no escape then nor for eternity.

"As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day

when the Son of man is revealed." God looks that all His children should bear their testimony in the world that they know from Himself that all hangs on the uncertainty of a thread, that judgment is suspended over it, that Christ is ready to judge the quick and the dead. He awaits the will of His Father. All simply turns upon that. But we are told and know that He is coming, and coming shortly; and we wait for this. Yet in the midst of this scene of a condemned world, with the Lord coming to execute judgment upon it, there is such a thing as a number of souls who have passed through the faith of Christ into life everlasting, and who know it - at least, who ought to know it. They belong to Him who is going to judge, not to the scene that is going to be judged.

What is the effect of all this? They have in spirit abandoned the circumstances in which men are striving to keep up a vain show; they have repented toward God; they have bowed down to the Savior, the Lord Jesus, and have found eternal life and peace in Him. All is settled between their souls and God. With Christ the light, the truth, the life, the fair show has vanished. And while this great transaction is going on, a large part of the world seek to be as religious as they can; that is, to reconcile religion with the world. And as the effect of this strategy of the enemy, and of their own

unwatchfulness, very many of God's children descend to it, because great names are there, appearances are there, and even the Word of God may be quoted to show that it is right to walk there. This is commonly done by taking what God says to Israel, who were God's people after the flesh, governed by the law, and applying it to those who are God's people now, called to walk under grace and Christ alone, who have the Holy Ghost that they may walk in the Spirit, and not yield to anything of the flesh. The mingling of the two things beguiles Christians into what is, after all, only the religion of the flesh. They think that an earthly system of religious forms must be right now, because it had His sanction in the Old Testament. They see that God acknowledged "a worldly sanctuary" once, and they reason thence for all times and places. Thus they get drawn into the "fair show in the flesh" - the more easily, as it habitually entails an absence of persecution, nay, credit with the world.

People are sensible that you cannot raise the world to walk with you above its own level of sight and reason. But the moment you come down to meet the world, you are off Christian ground. A new nature is required. Faith is indispensable. The world has not this. You must descend to the world's path, if you will take common action with the world. It is not that the world becomes Christian thereby, but that Christians thus become worldly. Such is the only issue of the attempt to join Christians with those that are not Christians in the service and worship of God.... They want you to submit to religious forms. The reason is that they dread suffering for Christ. The cross is the term of the old world, where the flesh was acknowledged, and the introduction of the new state of things where nothing but what is of the Holy Ghost is of value in the sight of God. He shows that selfishness, after all, is at the bottom. When persons are walking with the world, there is never an easy conscience. Nothing so pleases the world as to get real Christians to walk with them. How humbling is the success of Satan in this.

What God called out Christians for is to manifest a people happy in Christ, and yet having nothing but tribulation in the world. I am not speaking now of our common, everyday trials. If saints do foolish things and suffer from them like others, they have their share of the results of their own folly. But there are trials that come upon a Christian because he is a Christian - to be despised and rejected, evil spoken of and calumniated, because he walks with God and has taken the side of God against the world; because he is a sharer of Christ's cross and waits for His glory, refusing therefore not only the world's bad, but its best things. This it is that the world is so angry at. They may talk about the faults of Christians, but if the same faults were committed by the world, how soon and easily they would be got over! But where it is a Christian, there is that which makes them feel that, though the person may be weak and foolish, yet there is something above the world; and it is really this which makes them uneasy.

If the Christians [in Galatia] would only have submitted to be circumcised! But anyone could be circumcised, even if unconverted. Only take a pledge with a worldly man, and he will be pleased, because you come down to a level that he can occupy with you. I am not meddling with the world's trying to reform the world; but I have much to say about the sin and the shame of Christians joining with the world in their efforts to stay the plague by means of man's promises and vows. It is altogether false ground and contrary to the gospel, which starts upon the utter badness of man's nature. Whereas the moment you do a work to improve that nature, which the worldly man can equally do (and he can sign the pledge as well as you), it is plain that you have reached ground where the Christian gives up Christ as his one divinely tempered weapon for dealing with man in

the flesh, and is gone back to the bow and arrows, if I may so say, of moral restraint. Indeed, I cannot but view it as a lower thing even than circumcision, which was the type of a most blessed truth - the entire putting away of the flesh. But when Christ died, all that had been merely types, and had utterly failed as adequate remedies, were buried in His grave; and now He is risen and there is a new life in resurrection, which has nothing to say to the old, save to mortify it. The reality of life has come out, and this is what the Christian has to do with now. Christ has become his life and his object too.

It is the great aim of the devil to get Christians to write some other name along with Christ on God's children: so that no matter what it is, whether you take circumcision as a type of spiritual blessing, or the mere natural moral restraints of the present day, it is altogether a mistake as to the object for which God has called us out in this world. The Christian is outside that sphere; he is called into the place of grace. The magistrate's place is not one of grace, but of government, which of course calls for the punishment of evil. That is not grace. Grace is not law, but "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." There would be an end of all justice if magistrates were to attempt to act thus. But while the Christian has no business out of the place of grace, he is bound to respect the government, and never to speak loweringly of dignities in the world. The better he knows his own privileges, the more he can afford to maintain the honor of the magistrate. He owns it so much the more, because he does not covet it himself. He has a much better place himself; but if he knows the secret of his own joy and liberty in this world, let him at the same time acknowledge the higher powers which God has ordained in earthly rule. When persons are in the same sphere, there may be more or less rivalry; for men prefer to rule others rather than to be ruled themselves. But when a soul is entirely delivered from the world, he can the more heartily own what is of God here below, and see the wisdom of His order there. It is on this ground that the Holy Ghost always presses the Christian's obedience of the law [of the land], and honor to the king or other governor he may be under.

## Chronological Table of the Apostle Paul's Life: About a.D. 36-67

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About A. D.

- 36 Conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9).

- 36-39

At Damascus - preaches in the synagogue - goes into

Arabia - returns to Damascus - flight from Damascus.

His first visit to Jerusalem, three years after his conversion.

Thence to Tarsus. (Acts 9:23-26; Gal. 1:18.)

- 39, 40 Rest of the Jewish churches (Acts 9:31).

- 40-43

Paul preaches the gospel in Syria and Cilicia (Gal. 1:21).

A period of uncertain length. During this time he probably

undergoes the chief part of the perils and sufferings

which he recounts to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11).

He is brought from Tarsus to Antioch by Barnabas, and

stays there a year before the famine (Acts 11:26).

- 44 Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, with the collection (Acts 1:11:30).

- 45 Paul returns to Antioch (Acts 12:2-5).

- 46-49

Paul's first missionary journey with Barnabas - goes to Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and back through the same places to Antioch.

They remain a long time in Antioch.

Dissension and disputation about circumcision. (Acts 13;14; 15:1, 2.)

- 50

Paul's third visit to Jerusalem with Barnabas, fourteen years after his conversion (Gal. 2:1).

They attend the council at Jerusalem (Acts 15).

Return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, with Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32-35).

- 51

Paul's second missionary journey, with Silas and Timothy.

He goes from Antioch to Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, Troas. Luke joins the apostolic band (Acts 16:10).

- 52

Entrance of the gospel into Europe (Acts 16:11-13).

Paul visits Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth.

Spends a year and six months at Corinth (Acts 18:11).

First Epistle to the Thessalonians written.

- 53

Second Epistle to the Thessalonians written.

Paul leaves Corinth and sails to Ephesus (Acts 18:18, 19).

- 54

Paul's fourth visit to Jerusalem, at the feast.

Returns to Antioch.

- 54-56

Paul's third missionary journey.

He departs from Antioch - visits Galatia, Phrygia, and reaches Ephesus, where he stays two years and three months. Here Paul separates the disciples from the Jewish synagogue (Acts 19:8, 10).

Epistle to the Galatians written.

- 57

Spring. First Epistle to the Corinthians written. The tumult at Ephesus - Paul leaves for Macedonia (Acts 19:23; 20:1).

Autumn. Second Epistle to the Corinthians written (2 Cor. 1:8, 2:13, 14; 7:5; 8:1; 9:1).

Paul visits Illyricum - goes to Corinth - winters there (Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 16:6).

- 58

Spring. The Epistle to the Romans written (Rom. 15:25-28; 8:1; 6:21-23; Acts 20:4).

Paul leaves Corinth - passes through Macedonia - sails from Philippi-preaches at Troas-addresses the elders at Miletus-visits Tire and Caesarea (Acts 20; 21:1-14).

- 58-60

Paul's fifth visit to Jerusalem, before Pentecost. He is arrested in the temple - brought before Ananias and the Sanhedrim - sent by Lysias to Caesarea, where he is kept in bonds two years.

- 60

Paul heard by Felix and Festus. He appeals unto Caesar -preaches before Agrippa, Bernice, and the men of Caesarea.

Autumn. Paul sails for Italy.

Winter. Shipwrecked at Malta (Acts 27).

- 61

Spring. Arrives at Rome - dwells two years in his own hired house (Acts 28).

- 62

Spring. Epistles to Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians written.

Autumn. Epistle to the Philippians written.

- 63

Spring. Paul acquitted and released.

Epistle to the Hebrews written.

Paul takes another journey, intending to visit Asia Minor and Greece (Philem. 1:22; Phil. 2:24).

- 64

Visits Crete and leaves Titus there - exhorts Timothy to abide at Ephesus.

First Epistle to Timothy written.

Epistle to Titus written.

- 64-67

Intends to winter at Nicopolis (Titus 3:12).

Visits Troas, Corinth, Miletum (2 Tim. 4:13, 20).

Paul arrested and sent to Rome.

Deserted and solitary - having only Luke, of his old associates, with him.

Second Epistle to Timothy written, probably not long before his death. These journeys and events are generally supposed to cover a period of about three years.

- 67 Paul's martyrdom.

Arranged by Andrew Miller

## The Cities of Refuge: a Way of Escape

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### Numb. 35

As Israel lay encamped on the farther side of the Jordan, in the plains of Moab by Jericho, with the land of their inheritance before their eyes, Moses, by the command of God, spoke to them of cities of refuge which should be provided for the manslayer who killed another unawares, and laid down regulations concerning them. This was Jehovah's merciful provision beforehand for all who should be in that land - for the children of Israel who inherited it, for the stranger who might inhabit it, and for the sojourner who might chance to be passing through it (v. 15).

Unlike the generality of human laws which are designed to meet cases similar to some which have arisen, for which no provision had been made, the laws of Jehovah for the guidance of His people were all drawn up and made known before the people had crossed the Jordan and entered on their inheritance. And so in this case; before the circumstances under which this law could take

effect had arisen, Moses promulgated it, that the first manslayer after the tribes received their inheritance should find a city of refuge ready to receive him. And however many centuries might roll by, this law, as long as they dwelt in their land, never grew obsolete. It needed not, like the laws of our land, frequent amendments, for, like that of the Medes and Persians, it admitted of no change. It was as needed and as suitable in the days of David or Solomon as it was in the days of Joshua.

The cities, six in number, were so situated, three on the east and three on the west of Jordan, that wherever the accident might happen, a refuge could be found within reasonable distance. Their names were made known and their locality described, that none should be in uncertainty about them or their position; for uncertainty at such a time might cost a man his life. To one of these cities must the manslayer flee. He could not choose for himself where he would go. They were chosen for him. He had to accept the choice, and make all the haste he could to the nearest at hand, for the avenger of blood might be on his track. If he loitered by the way, or hesitated about his road, the avenger of blood might come up to him. The city was his only sure refuge. The law did not admit of his contending with the avenger for his life. He was not to fight for his life, but to escape for it. Once within the city walls he was safe; a few yards, or even a foot, would make all the difference. He must be inside to be safe. Then, if conscious he had killed his neighbor unawares, or when acquitted of murder by the verdict of the elders of the city, he could meet his pursuer without fear. There the pursuer dare not touch the manslayer, unless the elders of the city allowed it. Outside the city, if he met him, he could kill him and none could interfere to prevent it. Inside the city, if he had attempted to take his life, he would have broken one of God's laws. Outside, if any had attempted to arrest the course of vengeance, they would have acted contrary to the will of Jehovah.

These regulations were for all in the land, whether inhabitants or foreigners. God thought of all. For anyone might kill his neighbor unawares. All, therefore, without distinction of religion or descent,

were to share in the benefit of this humane enactment. Life was a sacred thing, not to be taken without due inquisition. An accident by which a man lost his life did not entail death on the one who had killed him. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe -such was the law. Perfect justice was to be administered, but not life for life unless murder had been committed.

But observe three things these cities were not.

First, they were not a shelter from judgment. The manslayer had to state his cause before the elders of the city, who must adjudicate on it (Josh. 20:4).

Second, they were not a refuge from condemnation. To one guilty of murder, they afforded no hiding place. The murderer might fly to one of them, but the law relating to these cities afforded him no hope that he could live. Two witnesses were needful to establish his guilt; but that once established, the elders of the city could not screen him from his just doom. "Blood it defileth the land," was the word of God. "Guilty of death.... he shall be surely put to death," was the plain announcement of the Lord by the hand of Moses. The man who deserved to die was beyond the reach of human protection.

Third, they were not the manslayer's home, and never could be the place of his inheritance. The manslayer would feel this. His home, his inheritance was elsewhere. All the days of his residence there he was but a sojourner, an exile, and a prisoner; such was his condition. If his heart yearned after the place of his birth, he could not revisit it till the death of the high priest. The elders of the city could give him no safe conduct or pass to visit, even for a limited time, his kindred and his home. Once he overstepped the limits of the city, his life was in danger from the avenger of blood. How sacred was life in God's eyes! If taken unawares, the man who took it must keenly feel what he had done, by perhaps many years of absence from his home. Yet sacred was his life in God's eyes, for He had provided him a shelter till he could return to the land of his possession; a perfect shelter it was, but that was not all. He was there preserved as one who deserved not to die, but as one who had lost for a time the enjoyment, the comfort, the freedom of his home.

For anyone then to find an asylum in these cities he must have a title to life. If his title was forfeited he must die. An indefeasible title to life, and that alone, could give him peace in the prospect of the judicial inquiry to take place. With that he could fearlessly present himself before the tribunal, and look his accuser in the face. Conscious that there was no cause of death in him, he could rest assured of the result. But he must have that title to life before he stood at the bar of judgment, ere he could hope for an acquittal. If he had lost it by the deed of murder, none could restore it to him. The elders of the city, however well disposed toward him, could here afford him no assistance. No intervention of his friends or relatives could provide that which he lacked, and which was needful for his continuance on earth. If his life was forfeited, he must die.

Important as the possession of such a title was to the manslayer, is it not equally important to all? What then, we would ask, is the title of life to anyone who reads these lines? If we speak of the manslayer in Israel, we speak of a title to life on earth; if of the readers of these lines, of life forevermore. Have all our readers a title to live forever? Does such a question seem strange to any? It can only be strange to such as know not what God's Word has declared. There is a title to life everlasting; but that title is bestowed, not earned - derived, not inherent. The manslayer's title

to life on earth was inherent. He had it as a creature of God, but he had to defend it in God's appointed way, that the avenger of blood should not deprive him of it. Our title to life everlasting is bestowed. We have not to defend it, but to see that we possess it; once possessed, none can take it away; it is everlasting. But there is great need to make sure that we have received it, for "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." This is far more terrible than the wrath of the avenger of blood. He was a man; he might kill the body, and there his power ended. God's wrath can reach the soul. Through inadvertence or disinclination the avenger of blood might relax his pursuit. God's wrath will surely take effect on all who shall not have been sheltered from it. For if it be revealed against all ungodliness of men, another scripture declares all are liable by nature to it, "For all have sinned." "There is none righteous, no, not one." Rom. 3 The sinner then, unless a refuge be provided him from this wrath, must assuredly be overtaken by it, and forever perish. The murderer in the land of Israel. must die. The sinner must suffer death - the second death (Rev. 20:14, 15).

A refuge then from God's wrath is needed, but not such a refuge as God provided for the manslayer. A refuge for an innocent man will not suit us, for "there is no man that sinneth not." 1 Kings 8:46. A shelter from vengeance for one who deserves not to die will not meet the case, for "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." An innocent man could meet the judgment, but a guilty one cannot; David, a man after God's own heart, was so convinced of this that he cried out, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." Psalm 143:2. And again, "If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Psalm 130:3. Condemnation must follow judgment where the one to be tried is a sinner. What is needed therefore is a security from condemnation, and a shelter from judgment. This the sinner can find, for God has already provided it. As the manslayer had the city ready to receive him, the sinner has this place of refuge ready to run into. This refuge is in Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8:1.

As the names and localities of the cities of refuge were published that all might know which they were and where they were, so the refuge God has provided for the sinner has been in like manner announced. God's word told of the former; God's Word tells us of the latter. The manslayer could reckon on what that word said, and the description of the cities it contained. Shall the sinner not equally reckon on what that Word says to him now? In Christ Jesus there is now no condemnation. Then the guilty one, the sin-convinced soul, can find safety there. No condemnation! A sweeping -statement which should effectually set the heart at rest, and that forever. Now at this present time, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Does conscience whisper of past sins? does the enemy recall many an act of disobedience, many a word unadvisedly spoken, many an unholy thought or angry feeling concealed perhaps from outward eyes? To all, the sinner can answer with this word of God. The manslayer had to await the verdict of the elders of the city after he entered it. The sinner can know beforehand, can know now, the full deliverance God will give him when in Christ Jesus.

Here then is the next question: Can the sinner avail himself of this refuge? The Lord Jesus, the Refuge, has Himself given a reply in John 5. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Clear and simple is the testimony conveyed in

these words. There is an escape from judgment. "Shall not come into condemnation [or, as in the original, judgment]." Then there can be no condemnation, for condemnation succeeds judgment. It is not the being acquitted after trial, but the being kept from trial for life at all. The manslayer must be tried. The sinner is promised he shall not be tried, if he hears the word of Christ, and believes Him that sent Him; that is, the Father. And the sinner does show he believes the Father when he hears and accepts the Son. For "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son." 1 John 5:10.

No judgment, no condemnation, to those in Christ Jesus. He shelters the sinner from both, not by the exercise of a power as of a strong man who refuses to let judgment have its course, but by having bent to it, and borne Himself the punishment the sinner deserved. In Him who bore our sins in His own body on the tree" the sinner can hide. In Him risen from the dead is found an everlasting shelter. It is in a risen Christ who has fully glorified God, who lives to die no more, over whom death has no more dominion, that this refuge is found. This is not the result of years of effort. It is not the happy experience which the fathers in Christ may hope some day to enjoy. It is not reached by experience. It is reached by faith, being the present position of all who believe in Him. "We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 5:20.

And now, what the manslayer never could feel, that the sinner saved by grace in Christ can. The manslayer could never feel at home in the city. He was only a sojourner till the death of the high priest. His inheritance was elsewhere. But in Christ we have obtained an inheritance; in Him we are blessed as we never were or could be before (Eph. 1). Where our refuge is, there is our inheritance - "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." How welcome to the manslayer must his city of refuge have been! How far more welcome should be the shelter provided for the sinner!

## Clear Views: Perhaps As Cold As an Icicle

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Christian reader, beware of being satisfied with "clear views" of scriptural subjects. It is no doubt most needful to "hold fast the form of sound words"; but then a form of sound words without realized companionship with Christ will leave the heart as cold as an icicle. We must remember that, in nature, the clearest nights are often the coldest. Thus it is with professing Christians. A sound creed in the head, without Christ in the heart, is a poor, cold, dead, worthless, soul-deceiving thing.

The true way of obtaining clear views of the gospel, is to look "in the face of Jesus Christ." The true way to attain a knowledge of sound doctrine is to feel, by the touch of faith, the very pulsations of the heart of Jesus. One reason why so many Christians lack abiding peace is that they make peace their object, instead of cultivating a closer walk with God. It is impossible to be in the presence of God and not have peace, because perfect love makes everyone within its range feel perfectly at home. This is one of the precious effects of love.

"Clear views" may leave the heart barren and void. We want to enjoy the companionship of One in whom we can fully confide. The heart needs to be refreshed by the dew of true sympathy. We need to be sharpened by "the countenance of a man." Where can we find all these, but in Jesus? Every other heart but His will disappoint us at times.

"Earthly friends may fail or leave us,

One day soothe, the next day grieve us

But this Friend will ne'er deceive us-

Oh how He loves!"

Beloved reader, let me exhort you to seek a closer, deeper, more personal walk with God. It is your privilege to enjoy this. Jesus died, "the just for the unjust," not merely to give us "clear views," nor yet to bring us into a good place, but "to bring us to God." We are brought to God now. We are brought to Him in heart, in conscience, in understanding, in order that we may enjoy Him according to the mode in which He has revealed Himself. And how are we to enjoy Him? By the Word. If we attempt to think of God, apart from Christ; or to think of Christ, apart from the Word; or to think of the Word, apart from the Holy Ghost, all is mist, confusion, or cold speculation; whereas a single line or clause of Scripture can bring God into the soul with unspeakable sweetness and power.

This makes all very simple. We have received a new nature and have been brought into a new position. But this is not all. We have been brought to a Person. This is what we want. This is what the heart can understand. The human heart would rather have a cottage with companionship, than a palace in solitude.

"O God, we see Thee in the Lamb

To be our hope, our joy, our rest;  
The Glories that compose Thy name  
Standing engaged to make us blessed.  
Thou great and good! Thou just and wise!  
Hail! as our Father and our God!  
For we are Thine by sacred ties,  
Thy sons and daughters, bought with blood!"

## Collective Testimony: Individual Responsibility

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"And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp. Exod. 33: 7.

When the camp of Israel was defiled by a golden calf, separation from evil became all who sought the Lord, for He and evil cannot go on together. Moses acted with God-given perception in placing the Tabernacle "afar off" from that defiled place, and then, "every one which sought the LORD" went out to where the Lord was.

It is important to notice that each one had to act individually when he walked out from the camp to where the Lord was - in that, it was individual seeking of the Lord on the one hand and testimony against evil on the other. Another important point comes out in the fact that when the individual reached the appointed place he had two things: the Lord, and the fellowship of all his brethren who were likeminded.

While testimony in this day is individual in a certain sense, yet if one finds himself where the Lord is he will of necessity be with others who are in the same place - in this it becomes collective.

The same things are seen in 2 Tim. 2 where this present day of Church defilement and ruin is described: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ [the Lord] depart from iniquity," and "follow... with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." vv. 19-22.

Today each Christian - one who names the name of the Lord - has individual responsibility for separation from iniquity and of seeking the Lord, but let no one say there is no such thing left as corporate or collective testimony; find the Lord and those seeking Him only, in separation from evil, and you will find corporate testimony as well.

## Communism

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"Will all of Asia go communist?" is a question that at present occupies the minds of many great statesmen. We have seen communism with Russia's aid sweep from Siberia and engulf large portions of the continent; today these forces are on the march south from the Yangtze and sweeping all before them. The sudden effectiveness of the Chinese communist armies has surprised many. Nor is China the only Asiatic nation threatened by communism.

Burma, Malaya, and others have been having trouble with communism which is working from within, but all having its source and directing genius in Moscow.

It does seem that if the same effort had been made by the Western Nations to head off communist expansion in Asia as was made in Europe the course of things would have been different. As it is, China can be counted lost to Western influence - it can be written off as irretrievable.

And what does all this prove? Just this, that men are only working out God's prearranged plans and purposes. The greatest statesmen of the world are very shortsighted because they lack the knowledge of God's Word. It reminds us of what God says about the great leaders of ancient Egypt: "Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counselors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? Where are they? where are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the LORD of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt. The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err." Isa. 19:11-14. Egypt in her glory was blind, and her leaders only carried out what God had decreed.

How many of the nations' leaders know what God has written concerning this world? It would be hard to find any. A simple Christian with a God-given understanding of the Scriptures knows much more of the final outcome (not all the present details) than the wisest men without it.

The Word of God indicates an East-West rift. The book of Revelation deals with east and west, while Daniel speaks of north and south; all is counted from Palestine. The "north" of Daniel is very likely part of the "east" of Revelation, just being viewed from a different point. "The uttermost north" (N. Trans.) of Eze. 38 and 39 is also the east as compared with the Roman Empire of the west. In other words, Russia and

her satellites in Europe, and all of Asia would seem to belong to an "anti-west" arrangement in the future, and therefore it can be concluded that communism will continue to expand in Asia and most, if not all, of that great continent will come under Russian control, directly or indirectly.

William Kelly, a very well known expositor of Scripture, of the past century, thought so, and so wrote; and we quote:

"I presume that the nations of Central Asia will all succumb to Russia, and will perish most signally upon the mountains of Israel. It is well known that, even to the Chinese and others, the Eastern nations are sinking under the control of Russia, not without resistance and checks, but sure in the end to fall under its steady never abandoned policy. It is not more certain for the Porte [formerly, the government of the Turkish Empire] than for Persia or for Central India; not all to be absorbed into the empire, but all to accept its leadership. Astonishing is the blindness of men to what is coming. Such will be the part played by the Assyrian [the "king of the north"] who appears to be the great northeastern instrument of Russia's designs; but they will all come under the judgment of God."

Mr. Kelly had not seen Karl Marx's theories developed in his day, nor had anyone ventured to suggest that Russia would be taken over by this ideology which would spark her lust for power in all directions. His conclusions were based on what he discerned from Scripture.

May we betake ourselves more to the Word of God for our food, direction, encouragement, and outlook, as well as to have some understanding of coming events which today are casting such long shadows across the landscape of this world.

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Note: These remarks should not be construed as belittling those who are in authority in any land, nor as disparaging their discharge of duty, but should be taken simply as stated, that apart from a God-given understanding of the precious Word of God men cannot discern what is coming. We recognize in all who are in authority "God's ministers," and render "honor to whom honor" is due.

## The Conversion of the Jailer

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Acts 16:6.40

The events related in this sixteenth chapter of Acts have a peculiar interest for us as Gentiles, because, you will observe, this was the first time that the gospel got into Europe. The way in which it comes out is exceedingly interesting. The Apostle Paul is going on with his work in Asia; he tries to go this way and is hindered, and then he tries to go in another direction and is hindered again, and he does not know what to do. God sends him a vision in the night: he sees a man of Macedonia beckoning to him and saying, "Come over... and help us." Nothing could be plainer than this; here was a man who felt his need. "Come over... and help us" is the language of a needy man.

Paul wakes up and evidently understands the vision, "Assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." v. 10. He was at this time at Troas, a large maritime city of Asia Minor, and there gathered assuredly that the Lord would have him preach the gospel in Europe. Immediately, therefore, he goes down to the harbor and finds a vessel ready to take him over. And God gives him a fair wind, for he gets across in a day and a half, whereas you will find that when he is coming back he takes five days (chap. 20.6). The Lord loves to send the gospel to sinners, and I think the Holy Ghost delights to record God's readiness to meet the needy soul. There was a hungry heart in Macedonia - a needy sinner - and God orders everything so that His messenger with the gospel of His grace may reach that needy one speedily.

Well, the voyage is made, and Philippi is reached. Paul and his company go into the city, and they look all around for the man, but they do not see him. They find quite a number of women going to a prayer meeting. I do not gather that there was any set preaching to these women on the part of Paul and his companions. From the words which the evangelist Luke uses it would seem that they had just a little free conversation: "We sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." I do not know anything

better than that. I believe there are far more people converted by earnest Christians sitting down by their side and having a quiet talk with them than by sermons from pulpits or preachings from platforms.

The next thing we read is that Lydia's heart was opened. Clearly she received the gospel. I have no doubt that Lydia was an anxious soul, an inquiring one, who knew herself a guilty sinner, but anything she had ever heard up to that moment had not met her soul's need.

A void, no doubt, was in Lydia's heart; and oh, with what gladness does this simple, anxious woman hear the glad tidings of the blessed Savior, His coming into the world, His life, His death, His resurrection, the descent of the Holy Ghost, the joyful news of forgiveness, and pardon, and peace through His name! Her heart was opened, she drank in the good news; and when her heart was opened, her house was opened too. She received the gospel of Christ into her heart, and she received the servants of Christ into her house (v. 15). She came boldly out for the Lord; she was

not ashamed to own the Lord. She is real; she has the courage of her convictions.

She not only confessed with the lip, but in deed: "She besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." v. 15. I think the heart of the Apostle Paul was exceedingly happy when he found himself under Lydia's roof.

Now the devil does not like that sort of thing, and if he can hinder the work he will. First he tries to spoil the work by what I may call patronizing the apostles. He puts a poor girl "possessed with a spirit of divination," the slave and tool of Satan, upon the track of the apostles; and day after day she follows them, saying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." v. 17. The devil tries to mix himself up with God's work in order to discredit it. It is always so; wherever you find God working, be sure Satan will come in and try to spoil it. I am afraid most of us would have accepted this girl's testimony, for it sounded fair. But the Apostle Paul would not have Satan's help in proclaiming the truth of God. So Paul "turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

And he came out the same hour."

Immediately there was a great uproar, and why? Because the masters of this poor damsel saw that their money-making had been stopped. These men are in a rage, catch Paul and Silas, bring them to the rulers in the market place, stir up the people, and put the whole city into a tumult.

I do not doubt Satan thought he had put a stop to the spread of the gospel in Europe when these two servants of the Lord were taken. They received summary justice, and without more ado were stripped, beaten, and handed over to the tender mercies of a brutal, callous man, the jailer of the city prison, who, commanded to keep them safely, "thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." v. 24. This eastern dungeon was not at all like the prisons of today, but a damp, loathsome place, such as Roman cruelty knew how to prepare in the way of a prison. The jailer evidently takes a sort of brutal pleasure in thrusting God's servants into the inner prison, and then making their feet fast in the stocks.,

But this is the man God is going to save. This is the man who is marked out by grace to be truly converted to God. Having effectually secured the servants of the Lord, as he supposed, he left them in this horrible dungeon, with their feet fast in the stocks, and himself retired to sleep. No doubt the enemy thought that the work of the Lord was arrested. But you cannot check the grace of God, or the energy of the Spirit of God; and what looked like a great defeat, really became the opportunity for a wondrous display of divine grace, and the winning of a victory that only God could win.

But midnight approached, and what was heard in that prison? These two men, Paul and Silas, were praying and singing praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them. Their feet were fast in the stocks, their backs were sore and bleeding from the stripes they had received; they were hungry and cold, and yet they were not only praying, but praising. They were exhibiting the character of holy priests, and were soon to act as royal priests. As holy priests they were turning to God in prayer and intercession, and offering up to God praise and thanksgiving. They were able to thank and bless the Lord in the most adverse circumstances.

Now see what followed. God stepped in. It was midnight, and as the other prisoners heard what was going on - these songs of praise going up to God - we can imagine their astonishment. The particular nature or character of their prayer we are not told, but it strikes me very forcibly that it was connected with the testimony of God which they had come to render at Philippi. While others might be buried in slumber, and darkness reigned, the cry of prayer was going up from these two devoted servants of God for the testimony of Christ, and God heard them. He heard their prayer, and He answered it in this remarkable way: "And suddenly there was a -great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." v. 26. God answered the faith and confidence of His servants in this instance by an earthquake, and not only one earthquake, I think, but by two. There was a physical earthquake which shook the prison at Philippi to its very foundations, but this became the means of a moral earthquake in the soul of the poor godless heathen jailer, and he wakes up to find where he is, and what he has been doing.

God had stepped in; the prison was shaken, the doors opened, and every prisoner's bands loosed: "And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself."

God has various ways of waking up a soul. Here in Philippi was a man whose course had been one of ignorance of God, and brutal harshness in the exercise of his prison duties, but God had His eye upon him for mercy. The intervention of the earthquake was undoubtedly a testimony that God was pleased to give in connection with the introduction of the gospel of His Son into Europe, but it was also His direct interposition to reach this man. First he was rudely awakened, and finding the doors open, and everyone's bands loosed, he immediately inferred, "The prisoners are all gone, and my life is not worth preserving." The rule that applied to Roman jailers was that the jailer's life went for the life of the prisoners whom he had lost. He concluded that the prisoners were gone, and his own life therefore forfeited, and he was just on the verge of committing suicide.

But notice how beautifully the grace of God interposed. The voice of God's servant, whom he had treated so rudely and cruelly a few hours before, was heard saying, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." See the effect upon this man. It was the earthquake that woke him up out of his sleep, yet I do not think it was the earthquake that touched his conscience, but this: that he heard a man, whom he had so lately treated in the most brutal manner, calling to him in the most tender, loving way, and preventing him from taking away his own life, which he otherwise would have done. Is not that a lovely word for every sinner, "Do thyself no harm"? How many are doing themselves harm, fighting against God, fighting against the truth, refusing to bow to Jesus.

That word of affectionate pleading went to the heart of the poor wretched jailer; his conscience was reached; he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. It was in the darkness that Paul had spoken, and the jailer must have thought within himself, "How could that prisoner know that I was going to make away with myself? How could he know what I was about in the darkness?"

He had a sense in his soul that God was there.

No doubt this poor man was in a great state of trepidation. He came trembling; he was in real exercise; he was an awakened sinner. A little while ago he was a careless sinner, doing Satan's

work, but now by the grace of God he became an exercised man in the throes of the new birth, and deeply convicted of his sinful state.

This awakened, convicted man now brought out Paul and Silas, and put to them the most momentous question that a man could ask: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He had heard before, no doubt, that these men showed the way of salvation, but those words had no meaning for him. Now his eyes are opened, his conscience is aroused, he sees that up to this point he had been on the road to eternal damnation. You must remember that up to this hour he was a poor dark heathen who had never heard the gospel, who had never heard of Jesus, nor of the love of God, but now, awakened and convicted, with a sense of his sins pressing on his soul, he cries out, "What must I do to be saved?" And, you may depend upon it, it was with gladness of heart that Paul and Silas heard

the jailer's query. "What must I do?" he cries, because when a man is awakened, he always supposes there is something he must do, something which must be performed or brought forth by him, to put things right between his soul and God.

But what is the jailer told to do? God's answer to man's query is exquisite in its simplicity. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house," falls on the ears of the awakened sinner. How divinely simple. He had only to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and he would be a saved man. There is no word of anything that he must do in order to get salvation. This is a gospel that exactly meets helpless sinners without strength, and no wonder the jailer believed at once. His conversion was a rapid one indeed. One minute asleep in his sins, the next awake and deeply anxious about these sins - and straightway thereafter he hears the gospel and believes it, and rejoices in God with all his house.

We see what an immense difference one word makes. What shall I do? cries the jailer. He is not told to do anything but believe. I know that people have got in their heads the idea of being saved by works, but you will find in Scripture that men are not saved by works, but by simply hearing and believing. Faith rests on God's Word; faith comes by hearing.

But you might say to me, What did this man know about the Lord Jesus Christ? I do not think he knew anything whatever about Him up to that moment, and therefore the next verse is very important: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." They did not stop with merely saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," but unfolded the gospel to him; they brought out the glorious truth of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Observe, he was not told to believe on Jesus merely, but on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is very important, because His full title sets forth what the Savior is - He is Lord of all, His name is Jesus, which signifies Jehovah the Savior, and His character is that He is the Christ, the anointed One of God. He is more than a mere man. Yes indeed, were He not more than mere man, He would be no Savior for you and me. If He were not very Man He could not stand in our stead, and if He were not the eternal Son of God He could not rise to the height of God's claims.

The jailer heard the gospel, "Believe... and be saved." He believed and he was saved. Manifestly he believed with his heart, and confessed with his mouth, for we read, "He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." He did not wait till the morning.

What a wonderful change did grace make in that jailer's history.

Saved and blessed, he was manifestly on the Lord's side, and his whole life and ways bespoke the radical nature of his conversion. How different the way he dismissed the Lord's servants to that in which he received them. "Depart, and go in peace," are the last words we have from his lips, as in the morning he brought his guests out of his house. The lion had become a lamb. The servant of the devil had become the happy servant of Christ.

## Counsel to Young Christians

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Cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. Depend on Him. Some are allowed a long season of joy on first believing. But God knows our hearts, and how soon we begin to depend on our joy, and not on Christ. He is our object - not the joy. Sin no longer remains on you, but the flesh is in you to the end; the old stock will put forth its buds which must be nipped off as they appear. No fruit can come of it. It is the new nature that bears fruit unto God. But though the flesh is in you, do not be thinking of this, but think of Christ. As you grow in the knowledge of Christ, a joy comes, deeper than the first joy. It is a deeper, calmer joy. The water rushing down a hill is beautiful to look at, and makes most noise; but you will find the water in the plain deeper, calmer, more fit for general use.

Cleave to Christ with purpose of heart. A distracted heart is the bane of Christians. When we have got something that is not Christ we are away from the source of strength. When my soul is filled with Christ, I have no heart or eye for the trash of this world. If Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith, it will not be a question with you, "What harm is there in this or that?" but rather, "Am I doing this for Christ?" "Can Christ go along with me in this?" Do not let the world come in and distract your thoughts. I speak especially to you who are young. They who are older have had more experience in it, and know more what it is worth; but it all lies shining before you. Its smiles are deceitful - still it smiles. It makes promises which it cannot keep; still it makes them. Your hearts are too big for the world; it cannot fill them. They are too little for Christ; He fills heaven; He will fill you to overflowing.

You will have indeed to learn what is in your own heart. Abide with God and you will learn it with Him, and with His grace. If you do not, you will have with bitter sorrow to learn it with the devil, through his successful temptation. But God is faithful. If you have been getting away from Him, and other things have come in and formed a crust, as it were, over your hearts, you will not at once get back the joy. God will have you deal with this crust and get rid of it. Remember Christ bought you with His own blood, that you should be His, not the world's. Do not let Satan get between you and God's grace. However careless you may have been, however far you may have gotten away from Him, count on His love. It is His joy to see you back again. Look at the sin with horror, but never wrong Him by distrusting His love. Talk much with Jesus. Never be contented without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a dear friend. Be not satisfied with anything short of close intercourse of soul with Him who has loved you and washed you from your sins in His own blood.

## Creation Attests to a Creator: He Can Only Be Known by Revelation

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A well-known servant of the Lord once said something like this: "There are too many evidences of wisdom, power, and design for any reasonable being to suppose that things came into existence without a God; on the other hand, there are too many evidences of misery and evil for anyone to imagine that a God of power and love could have created things as they now are."

While it is perfectly true that the mind of fallen man is naturally infidel, yet, on the other hand, man's mind is so constituted that it cannot conceive of anything coming into existence without a cause.

Let anybody seriously consider, and he is driven to the conclusion that there must be a God. The first question that arises in the mind as we look at anything is, Who made that? Let it be a terrestrial globe, we say, Who made it? A man would be looked upon as a fool who would reply, Nobody made it. If we cannot conceive of that globe coming into existence without a maker, how much less this earth of which it is but an insignificant representation?

Yes, the mind of man cannot conceive of anything in existence that has not had a maker - such a thing would be unthinkable. There must be a cause for every effect. I ask, Who made that table? You reply, The carpenter. Then I ask, Who made the carpenter? Somebody must have made him; and so you get back to the first original cause, and that is God. Hence the first of Genesis opens, sublime in its grandeur and simplicity - "In the beginning God created." This commends itself to every man's reason; he knows there must be a God. Yet no uninspired man would have written that first chapter of Genesis as it stands.

What gropings in the dark have we in the philosophy of the ancients, and the scientific hypotheses of moderns! What voluminous treatises on cosmogony! What changing theories as fresh light breaks in exposing the fallacy of earlier conclusions!

But God's Word never changes. Though not intended as a handbook of science, it nevertheless alludes to scientific subjects, and in a miraculous manner is always right. Take such a chapter as Gen. 1, written between three and four thousand years ago, at a time when the science of geology was unknown, treating of a vast subject, the creation, and doing so in the briefest manner possible, yet invariably correct - how could this be accounted for apart from inspiration?

I merely give this as one evidence of inspiration, not by any means the greatest, but still there it is.

Now I quite admit that honest reason must bring a person to believe that there is a God, but mere reason can teach us nothing whatever about that God. The same process of reasoning that leads me to the conclusion that there must be a God, also proves to me that I cannot understand Him, or know anything about Him unless He is pleased to give me a revelation. For I cannot conceive of anything that has not had a cause; and yet, who caused God? He was the great cause of all things, but had no cause Himself.

We have reached, then, two conclusions. First, there must be a God; and second, He must reveal Himself if I am to know any, thing about Him.

But the Bible is this revelation. Shakespeare does not pretend to be a revelation from God; it has no authority upon any man, nor is it a guide to conduct.

The Bible is the only book that gives me certain information as to God, as to the creation, as to how man comes to be in the state of sin and misery in which he is found today. It is the only book that makes known to me God's remedy for sin - a remedy which no man could ever have invented or dared to propose - but which nevertheless the whole moral being recognizes as altogether worthy of God.

But what is man to say, "The only God I would accept is a God of love, and not a God of vengeance"?

Imagine a prisoner saying in open court, "The only judge I will accept," etc. Such a one would very soon learn that government has authority and power. And is God, the source of all supreme power, to be dictated to by His creatures? It is absurd. "Power belongeth unto God." Psalm 62:11.

"We know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb. 10:30, 31.

But the fact is that God is a God of love - He is love, and has so loved the world as to give His Son. And what has man done? Spat in His face and crucified Him, mocking Him as He died. Is this a small sin? But people today may say, We did not do that. Yet each one has taken sides either for Christ or against Him.

The proudest will must bow. It is no use "to kick against the pricks.-

No one need be lost in hell, for God has provided a Savior for all. Only man must bow, repent, and believe the gospel. Saul of Tarsus had to yield and own that he was the chief of sinners, though outwardly his was a blameless life.

The only place we can adequately measure sin is at the cross of Christ. By comparing ourselves with one another we get very poor ideas of what sin is. The greatest crime that could be committed was the murder of the Son of God, and we must remember that each one of us belongs to a world that has cast God out of it when He came in grace and love.

All the human reasoning as to the inconsistency between a few years of sin and everlasting punishment is folly. The fact is, men love sin and hate Christ more than they fear hell.

Man's mind is a poor and finite thing. The moment we have to do with God we have to do with the Infinite. And so (1) the enormity of sin in God's sight, (2) the infinite value of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, (3) the immortality of the soul, (4) the eternity of glory for the redeemed, and (5) of punishment for the despisers of Christ's sacrifice and God's grace - these are all things which far exceed all power of man's mind to understand. "By faith we understand."

## Danger of Mental Activity in Divine Things

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Insubjection of spirit is a dangerous thing among those who teach in public or in private, and quite as much in private as in public. It is truth severed from Christ and that consciousness of divine authority and of dependence on grace which we all need to keep us right, most of all perhaps those who teach. Few men are in such danger of mental activity in divine things, and this not merely because of self-importance on their own part, but from the desire to satisfy the craving for what is new among the saints themselves. The excitement of novelty is apt to carry away the natural mind, especially among the weak, to the hurt of all, both teachers and taught. Divine revelation, not human thoughts about it, alone secures the glory of Christ and the well-being of souls. As the Holy Spirit wrote it to this end, so He alone can make it good in practice. Mental activity gathers round its own source and forms a school; truth wielded by the Spirit judges the flesh in its most specious form, nourishes the new man, and builds up the body of Christ to God's glory.

## The Day of Small Things: the Danger of Despising

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In these days small things are considered of no account, and are despised by many in Christendom.

Such a thought too often gains an entrance into the minds of those who are the Lord's, and begets mourning over weakness and the apparent lack of results of service. Is not this but another way of lamenting that we have no resources in ourselves? "My strength is made perfect in weakness," the Lord said. And mark the cheerful response from "a man in Christ": "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Paul took pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; "for when I am weak, then am I strong," he says, and we also know this to be so (2 Cor. 12:9, 10). Let us therefore take pleasure in being made weak, in order that we may be sustained by the grace of God, and that the power of Christ may rest upon us. God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, and despised things, and things which are not (1 Cor. 1:27,29), so "that no flesh should glory in His presence." Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, "that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. 1:30, 31.

Who thought anything of the Lord Jesus when a babe in the manger? It was surely not the religious leaders of Judea, nor their priests (except Zacharias, who was righteous before God), and it was not the distinguished rabbis, who cared for Him. It was a small remnant of those who came from the Babylonish captivity, who were awaiting the Lord Jesus, and thought a great deal of Him then. They may have appeared of no account in the sight of men, but they were highly honored of God.

An angel spoke to the humble shepherds who were of that same company, on the plains of Bethlehem at night, of the birth of "Christ the Lord"; and a multitude of the heavenly host, in their hearing, at the mention of the Lord's birth, suddenly praise God and say, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:11-14). The Holy Ghost was moving John the Baptist, who was of that little remnant, to speak of Christ as the Light that shineth amid the moral and religious darkness. It was his joy to preach Christ, and he was honored by seeing the heavens opened upon Jesus, and the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him, and hearing "a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16, 17).

Not many believed John's preaching, but the Lord said of him, "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." Luke 7:28.

Anna, another of that little company, "gave thanks... unto the Lord," and spoke of Him "to

all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem"; while just and devout Simeon, who was waiting for Christ, was ready and happy to depart at His coming. He was another of that godly remnant. Mary was pondering and treasuring in her heart the things concerning Christ, of which the Holy Ghost testified; Zacharias and Elizabeth, likewise of that remnant, were speaking of and rejoicing

in Christ; others too gave thanks and worshiped (Luke 2). It was the brightest scene on earth Jesus was there. The mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace was with them, however much despised they may have been by others.

This godly remnant did not despise a day of small things, and the Lord honored them with His presence.

There may be something similar to this in these days; with this difference, however: the Lord Jesus who was crucified is risen from among the dead, glorified in heaven, and seated upon the Father's throne; and yet He is in the midst of those gathered to His name (Matt. 18:20), invisible to mortal eyes, but just as really present to faith as though visible. To such the Holy Spirit makes Christ precious, and to them the glory of His Person is sacred and dear; His name is enough for them. He alone is worthy to be adored and followed.

Such a company, although weak and small, could depend upon the Holy Spirit to make known to them the things concerning Christ from the written and inspired Word of God - the Holy Bible. And the Lord could take up and send forth any of that feeble few to labor for Him in faith, love, and patience of hope until He comes; and He would surely own such services in opening hearts, if even a few, to receive and believe in Him. God will always bear testimony to His beloved Son, and carry on His work of gathering to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us then boldly preach and speak of the beloved Son of God, and esteem the reproaches of Christ of far greater riches than the treasures of this world.

Like Anna, let us continue to delight to speak of Christ to all those who are looking for Him to come; and like Simeon, let us be glad for Christ to come, for the joy of being with Him. May we ponder in our hearts the things concerning Christ, and seek to carry out in our daily walk the

teachings of the sacred Scriptures, which through grace we have been taught to love and revere, because they testify of Christ. The test of our love to Him is keeping His words and obeying them (John 14:15, 23, 24).

Are there any Christians who consider it a little thing to devote some time to prayer for believers in Christ, that they may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, and that they may enter more into the love of Christ, and be filled with the fullness of God? There may be those who esteem it too small a service. Yet the Lord appreciates and commends such a labor of love, and it is a valuable and an important service to the Church of God. Epaphras, a dear servant of Christ, we are told, was "laboring fervently" in prayers always for the saints of God, that they "may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God"; he had the Lord's approval (Col. 4:12, 13).

May the Lord stir up the hearts of His own to excel more and more in this work of faith and labor of love.

Shepherding and feeding the flock of God may be a service little desired or thought of, but the Lord's words to Peter are, "Feed My lambs," "Shepherd My sheep," "Feed My sheep." John 21:15, 17; N. Trans. Conforming the sorrowing and tried, encouraging the weak, and bearing the burdens of the afflicted; searching out the straying, gathering the scattered; instructing those who oppose themselves; speaking a word in season to the weary, and to those out of the way; visiting the sick; helping on all, and exhorting one another - these are indeed services of love to the Lord. Oh what

a wide field of labor for Him all this is!

The promise to such laborers is "a crown of glory that fadeth not away," to be given them at the appearing of "the chief Shepherd." May we earnestly covet this pastoral gift; let us encourage all who are engaged in this service, because the flock of God is very dear to Christ (1 Pet. 5:4). A cup of cold water may not seem to be of much account, but the Lord says, "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Matt. 10:42.

"For who hath despised the day of small things?" Zech. 4: 10

## **Death Worketh in Us, but Life in You**

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In bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, Paul found death to self, and the result was life to the Corinthians. Paul held the power of Christ's death on the natural man, so that when he ministered among the Corinthians there was no Paul at all, but only Christ. It was life to them because death was working in Paul.

## Did Jonah Died in the Fish's Belly?

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"Did Jonah die in the fish's belly? I have heard it said that he did, and that his death was necessary to to complete the type of death and resurrection."

ANSWER: Our answer to your question is an unequivocal, No. There is not the least shred of evidence to support such an idea. In fact, one would have to add to the words of Scripture to make it appear so. Jonah was thrown overboard to be swallowed by a great fish that the Lord had at hand for that purpose. Later, at the Lord's command, the fish vomited Jonah onto the dry land. Where does it say one word about either his dying or his coming to life again? And when the Lord refers to it in Matthew 12:40, He only mentions the fact of the prophet's being there as the type of His own death and resurrection.

We also read of Jonah's exercise of soul while in the fish, and it is not the exercise of one who has died. He describes his own folly and offers to pay his vows (which one who has passed out of this life could not do), and finally comes to realize that he can do nothing where he is, and says, "Salvation is of the LORD "

If it be argued that he refers to being in the belly of hell, or sheol, where is the difficulty there? He most certainly was in the place of death - down to the bottoms of the mountains with the weeds wrapped about his head. Would we not feel the same way if we were in the same place? The Hebrew word "sheol" is translated in various ways - sometimes, "pit."

And as for Jonah's death and resurrection being necessary to complete the type of death and resurrection, that is folly. We have many Old Testament types of death and resurrection, without death, or without resurrection, being a fact. Let us notice some.

Abel is a type of the righteous One who was slain, and Seth a type of Christ in resurrection as the head of a race. But Abel did not rise nor did Seth die to rise, to complete the type.

Isaac on the altar was certainly a type of the Lord Jesus in death, and his coming from the altar was a type of resurrection. But Isaac did not die, although surely Abraham received him from death "in a figure" (Heb. 11:19).

The two birds of Lev. 14 also typify the Lord's death and resurrection, but the slain bird was not brought to life again, nor the living one killed and revived before being let go.

Joash (2 Kings 11), taken from among the king's sons that were slain, is also a type of Christ in death. Joash then was hidden six years while a usurper reigned, and then came forth to reign. This is a beautiful type of Christ now hidden in the "house of God," soon to come forth to reign. But again, Joash did not die and rise again.

We take this opportunity to warn our inquirer and all our readers against many fanciful interpretations of Scripture that are being circulated in Christendom - and by some leading Christian preachers. These strange things do not minister Christ to the heart, nor His Word to the

conscience. Their tendency is to tickle itching ears of hearers, and occupy the intellect - and this is not profitable. They also tend to draw disciples after men (Acts 20).

We do not feel that even answering such curious interpretations is profitable. Our only reason for using space to answer this question is to point out the danger of the growing list of fanciful interpretations and their danger to our souls. We do well to take heed what we hear.

Many of the oddities and vagaries of Biblical interpretations are the result of carrying the types and shadows too far. If we insist on making the types "go on all fours" we will get into difficulties and absurdities - some have gotten into serious error by this means. What we need is the quiet spirit, the unshod foot of reverence, and the subject mind, to understand these things aright.

## Did Paul Ever Leave Rome?

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The consideration of such questions as these from a merely intellectual point of view is much to be deplored; so also is the attempt to solve them by any sources of information outside the Word. For apart from the untrustworthy nature of tradition, however ancient, we may be assured that what cannot be proved from the sacred pages themselves is intentionally left dubious by the Holy Ghost, and that we err if we pry into it. The manner of Peter's death (crucifixion) is revealed to us in Scripture (John 21:18-19). Complete silence is kept as to that of the disciple whom Jesus loved (John).

It is in the belief that the Word sheds sufficient light upon the inquiry at the head of this article to render its investigation both permissible and profitable, that it is proposed. It is true that we have nothing whatever in narrative form as to his leaving or his not leaving Rome, but the Scriptures do not always present historical facts in this direct manner. Witness, for example, the martyrdom of Peter, alluded to above - a fact made known to us only by the Lord's intimation that it should be so. Having it thus from His lips, we are as sure that the event took place as if we had seen it for ourselves.

Now it is on similar evidence - though instead of the Lord speaking in person, it is the Holy Ghost speaking through the Apostle - that the departure of Paul from Rome, and his imprisonment there a second time, are established, I believe, beyond a doubt. Turn to Phil. 1:21-26 [which was written from Rome]. Let us read it, for the sake of accuracy, in the New Translation.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die gain; but if to live in flesh is my lot, this is for me worth the while: and what I shall choose I cannot tell. But I am pressed by both, having the desire for departure and being with Christ, for it is very much better, but remaining in the flesh is more necessary for your sakes; and having confidence of this, I know that I shall remain and abide along with you all, for your progress and joy in faith; that your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus through me by my presence again with you."

Remember that these words are inspired. The Spirit of God gives utterance to them through a human mouthpiece. Now what does the Apostle say? After telling them that while for himself he would choose the far sweeter portion of departing to be with Christ, he nevertheless felt desirous to stay a little longer, that he might be of service to them, he concludes with the -positive statements of verses 24 and 25.

Note particularly that he is not giving his opinion, but facts. "Remaining in the flesh is more necessary for your sakes," not "I think it is." "I know that I shall remain and abide along with you all," not "I think I shall." And verse 26 is most explicit. He is to remain in order that their boasting may abound in Christ Jesus through him by his presence again with them. How can we doubt, therefore, that Paul was liberated, quitted Rome, saw again the saints at Philippi, without practically denying the inspiration of this part of the Word? Would the Spirit of God have the Apostle to stultify himself by saying that he knew he should remain and see them once more if the

event was going to be just the opposite? Far be the thought.

There are passages in which the inspired writer is allowed to give his private judgment (see, for example, 1 Cor. 7:25 and other parts of the chapter where the Apostle gives his thoughts and judgment as a spiritual man, his mind animated and guided by the Spirit), but it is quite a different thing here. The remaining and abiding along with them are spoken of as actual facts that are to have their accomplishment; and inasmuch as we are reading the Word of God, and not the word of man, we believe that they did have their accomplishment. (It may be objected that Rom. 15:28 is as positive a statement that he will go by Rome into Spain. So it is. But why doubt that he went? What more likely than that upon his liberation he proceeded immediately thither, according to his long formed intention? Wherever the Apostle does not feel at liberty to speak with certainty of anything he proposes to do, he says, "I hope," or "If the Lord will," or the like. See 1 Cor. 16:7; Phil. 2:19; Philemon. 1:22)

But it may be asked, "Granted that this passage proves the point in question, what do we gain?" Much. How blessed the grace which, after Paul by his self-willed journey to Jerusalem had been brought a captive to Rome, so orders things that he is free once more, and visits yet again for their "progress and joy in faith," the beloved Macedonian saints! Sweet and precious to contemplate is this final mercy bestowed by the Lord upon His servant! How He loves to bless us, and to bless us just when by our foolish ways we have demonstrated our unworthiness to be blessed!

The passage in Philippians should surely be conclusive for an intelligent and subject mind. The second epistle to Timothy, however, it is well to note, supplies abundant confirmation. "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." Chapter 4:20. Now it is impossible that the Apostle can refer to his visit to Miletum in Acts 20:15.38 - to say nothing of the time which had elapsed since then, which must have been three or four years - because we read (Acts 21:29) that Trophimus was with him when he arrived at Jerusalem. And the narrative in Acts 27 makes it perfectly plain that he did not go near Miletum in his voyage to Rome, Myra in Lycia (v. 5) being the only point touched in Asia Minor. It becomes therefore a matter of absolute certainty that this leaving of Trophimus at Miletum must have occurred when Paul, having been liberated and having left Rome, was once again in Asia Minor.

Note therefore the largeness of the Lord's grace. Not only was it granted to him to revisit Macedonia, and cause the boasting of the Philippians to abound in Christ Jesus through him by his presence again with them, but also to see once more some, at any rate, of the Asia Minor assemblies, and also that at Corinth. "Erastus remained in Corinth." 2 Tim. 4:20. There must no doubt have been much sorrow connected with this journey, for when in Rome again he tells Timothy that "all who are in Asia... have turned away from me" (chapter 1:15), but to minister the truth carried with it a joy that no defection of the halfhearted could take away; and here and there he found a Prisca and Aquila - here and there a household of Onesiphorus. 2 Timothy is the last word from the Apostle. In Philippians he says that he was going to remain - in 2 Timothy, that he was going to depart. "I am already being poured out, and the time of my release is come." Chapter 4:6, N. T. In Philippians he says, "Do thy diligence to come before winter." Chapter 4:21. Beautiful are his closing words of triumph. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Chapter 4:7. "The

Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." Chapter 4:18. Beautiful are his parting salutations to his beloved child. "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you." Chapter 4:22.

## Disappointment and Happiness

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A book recently republished, "The Mirage of Life," tells a very familiar story; namely, that "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away." 1 Pet. 1:24. Men have striven all down through the centuries to find happiness in this world. They have sought it in various ways. Many have reached the pinnacle of glory among men only to find it vanish and leave them disillusioned and broken. They would be able to look back and say that the words of Ecclesiastes were true: "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." Eccles. 2:11.

It is not only ancient history that tells such a story the records in our days prove the same fact. Think of many of the great leaders of the nations only ten years ago who have gone down ingloriously. Where is the glory of Mussolini, of Hitler and his generals, of Tojo and his helpers? And one of the great French heroes, Marshal Henri Philippe Petain, is coming to the end of his life in prison. Once honored by his nation, the aged marshal must die in disgrace.

We are reminded of the lines found among the papers of an educator; speaking of fame, he said: "Her wreath mocks my brow- will it hang o'er my tomb? Too much I have labored, too willingly gave My thoughts to the world-and have earned but a grave."

We know that even if a man gained the whole world and died without having first lost it, he would still be a great loser if he died unsaved. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" But very many prove the fleeting character of all in this world before they are called upon to die. And behind many a smile is a broken disappointed heart.

The tragic death of James V. Forrestal is another reminder of the vanity of all here. He had risen in this world from a humble start to become a millionaire. Nor did wealth alone mark his accomplishments; he went into government in 1940 and rose to become a great national, and even international, figure. He became the Secretary of the Navy during the great war, and later, in recognition of his ability, he was made the first Secretary of National Defense, thus heading a potential war machine stretched around the world which would make the military might of the Caesars look very small indeed. And yet he took his own life after leaving the lines from an ancient Greek poet on his bed. We might quote some words from this poem to show the darkness that had come over him:

"Worn by waste of time -

Comfortless, nameless, hopeless....

When reason's day

Sits rayless - joyless -

quenched in cold decay

Better to die...."

What gloom! what despondency and hopelessness! are here expressed. But let us turn from the disappointing scenes where man's glory fades and joy vanishes, to the happy portion of the believer. Did the Lord Jesus ever forget His servants? Did He ever fail to stand by those who were faithful to Him? Never, never. A Pilate might serve Caesar well and sell the Lord of Glory to curry his favor, only to lose it and be banished a few years later; but the Lord will never treat His servants thus.

When the Apostle Paul got into trouble in Jerusalem the Lord stood by him in prison and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul." He was not left alone. And when he came to the end of his earthly course he wrote: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." 2 Tim. 4:6-8. There was no dejection with Paul - no "comfortless, nameless, hopeless, rayless, joyless," with him. No, he knew whom he had believed, and knew too that his faithful Lord would reward him in a coming day.

Nor was Peter despondent or discouraged after a life of service to his Lord. He came to the end of his pilgrimage and wrote with calmness and assurance, saying that our Lord Jesus Christ had shown him how he was to leave this scene (2 Pet. 1:14). He was to glorify God in his death (John 21:19).

And when the beloved Stephen - "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" - was about to be stoned by an angry mob who refused his testimony for Christ, he said: "Behold, I see the heaven opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." What a sight he was privileged to see! He was sustained by seeing his Lord in glory, as it were, waiting to receive him (Acts 7).

The Lord sent a special word of comfort and encouragement to the saints at Smyrna who were suffering great trials: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. 2:10.

We are fully persuaded that the only truly happy path through this changing scene is one of truehearted devotedness to the Lord. Such a path is richly blessed in the present, and has the sure reward of glory at the end. The Lord whom the Christian serves "is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love." Strange it is indeed that we should ever seek anything here on which God has written "vanity and vexation of spirit," but rather we should seek "those things which are above" and have our minds set on them. Then instead of disappointment we have the happiness of His approval now, and shall have His "well done" in the future.

## The Divine Basis of Exhortation

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There are few things less understood than the real nature of exhortation. We are apt to attach an idea of legal effort to that word which is quite foreign to it. Divine exhortation always assumes that a certain relationship exists, that a certain standing is enjoyed, that certain privileges are apprehended. The Spirit never exhorts save on a divine basis. For example; "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." Rom. 12:1. Here we have a fine instance of divine exhortation. "The mercies of God" are first put before us in all their fullness, brightness, and preciousness, ere we are called to hear the voice of exhortation.

Again, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Eph. 4:30. Here we are exhorted on the settled ground of our being "sealed." He does not say, "Grieve not the Spirit lest ye be eternally lost." Such would not be in keeping with the true character of divine exhortation. We "are sealed," not so long as we behave ourselves, but "until the day of redemption." It is absolutely done, and this is the powerful reason why we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit. If that which is the eternal seal of God, set upon us until the day of redemption, be the Holy Spirit, how careful should we be not to grieve Him.

Again, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." Col. 3:1. As those who are risen, what should we seek but "things... above"? We do not seek these things, in order to be risen, but because we are. In other words, the solid basis of our standing is laid down by the Spirit of grace before ever the voice of exhortation falls on the ear. This is divine. Aught else would be mere legality. To call upon a man to set his affections upon things above, before he knows, upon divine authority, that he is "risen with Christ," is to begin at the wrong end, and to lose your labor. It is only when I believe that precious emancipating truth that when Christ died, I died; when He was buried, I was buried; when He rose, I rose; it is only when this grand reality takes possession of my soul that I can lend an open ear and an understanding heart to exhortation's heavenly voice.

It is well for my reader to understand this thoroughly. There is no need whatever for a multitude of words. Let him simply take his New Testament and, beginning with the epistle to the Romans, trace throughout, the exhortations of the Spirit of God; and he will find, without a single exception, that they are as completely divested of the legal element as are the promises which glitter like gems on the page of inspiration. This subject is not fully understood. Exhortation in the hands of man is widely different from what it is in the hands of the Holy Ghost. How often do we hear men exhorting us to a certain line of action in order that we may reach certain privileges. The

way of the Spirit is the reverse of this. He sets before us our standing in Christ, in the first place, and then He unfolds the walk. He first speaks of privilege - free, unconditional, inalienable privilege. Then He sets forth the holy responsibility connected therewith. He first presents the settled and unalterable relationship in which free grace has set us, and then dwells upon the affections belonging thereto.

There is nothing so hateful to the Spirit of God as legality - that hateful system which casts us as doers back upon self, instead of casting us as lost sinners over upon Christ. Man would fain do something; but he must be brought to the end of himself, and to the end of all beside, and then as a lost sinner, find his rest in Christ -a full, precious, all-sufficient Christ. In this way alone can he ever expect solid peace and true happiness; and only then will he ever be able to yield an intelligent response to the Spirit's "word of exhortation."

## Divine Principles for Giving: Giving for the Work of the Lord

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"And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded,' saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair," etc. Exod. 35:4-6.

God would have His people to enter into His own thoughts and desires for their blessing, and He permits them in His grace and mercy to bring these materials as an offering. He directs what they should bring, although everything they possessed was His own gift (see 1 Chron. 29:14), and then He would reckon it as their offering. It is ever so. Believers cannot do a single good thing of themselves. Every good work is the product of the Spirit of God, and prepared before of God (Eph. 2:10), and yet when done, God in His grace calls it theirs, and clothes them with fine linen which is the righteousnesses of saints.

The willingness of God to receive from His people is thus proclaimed. The grace of God in this particular touched and opened their hearts; "And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD'S offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all His service, and for the holy garments." v. 21.

And again we read, "The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses." v. 29.

There are principles involved in these statements which are applicable to all dispensations. The Apostle enforces the same when he says, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. 9:7; (read the whole chapter).

It is therefore of the first importance to remember that everything offered to God must proceed from hearts made willing by His Spirit, that it must be spontaneous, not the result of persuasion or of external pressure, but from the heart. The Church of God would have been in a very different state today if this had been remembered. What has wrought more ruin than the many worldly schemes for raising money? and what more humbling than the fact that solicitations of all kinds are used to induce the Lord's people to offer their gifts? Moses was content with announcing that the Lord was willing to receive, and he left this gracious communication to produce its suited effect upon the hearts of the children of Israel. He needed not to do more; and if saints now were in the current of God's thoughts they would imitate the example of Moses, and would shun the very thought of obtaining even the 'smallest gift, except it were presented willingly and from the heart, as the effect of the working of the Spirit of God.

And let it be remarked that there was no lack; for in the next chapter we find that the wise men who wrought came to Moses and said, "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it

to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much." Exod. 36:5-7.

If the first Pentecostal days be excepted, there has probably never been seen anything answering to this even in the history of the Church. The chronic complaint now is concerning the insufficiency of means to carry on the Lord's work. But it cannot be too often recalled: first, that the Church of God is never held responsible to obtain means; second, that if the Lord gives work to do, He himself will lay it upon the hearts of His people to contribute what is necessary; third, that we are traveling off the ground of dependence, and acting according to our own thoughts, if we undertake anything for which the needful provision has not already been made; and last, that gifts procured by human means can seldom be used for blessing.

## Ebenezer: Do We Raise Our Ebenezer?

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It is important for us to consider and apprehend how prayer is used in times of difficulty, and we see it strikingly set forth in the case of Samuel. He is himself the gift of prayer, as his name declares (heard of God), and in his service toward Israel he uses prayer above any of his predecessors; in fact he introduces and proves to us the power of prayer. Other servants of God were distinguished for works of another kind-Samuel, peculiarly for prayer. Great works had been wrought by devoted servants in the times of the Judges; but now the failure of Israel is so deep that all service that made something of man is set aside. What God can be and what He can do for them when called on is now declared and shown forth through Samuel, whose power and the secret of whose success in his service, is prayer. Hence his example is one of great encouragement to us at the present time.

In 1 Sam. 7 we find an instance of deliverance and succor accorded in answer to prayer, and the spirit of true dependence in a moment of greatest difficulty.

"Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering [Christ the ground of our acceptance] the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.... Then Samuel took a stone, and set it up between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us."

When we have received mercy of the Lord, it is most important that we should own it. We may pray and receive, but the moment which perpetuates the mercy is not the mercy itself, but the Ebenezer -the acknowledgment of the heart

of how God has helped and succored us. The mercy conferred was great-a day ever to be remembered by Israel-but it is not the thing done, or even the marvelous way in which the thing was done, that is the monument of it; but more, it is the testimony of the heart to the unfailing help of God -the Ebenezer, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us." I know and own Him as my helper hitherto; the mercy may remain or it may pass away; the Ebenezer ever remains; I have not only received, but I know the One from whom I have received. I have a fixed judgment about Him and my heart records it. This is the real strength of the heart-and its Ebenezer. It is distinct and positive to me that it is His hand that has wrought.

I believe that souls lose immensely by not being able to record more distinctly that hitherto He has helped them. It is the experimental knowledge of God which is acquired by true dependence on Him. When we have true confidence in Him because of what He is and what He has been to us, we are enabled to go forward in spite of all difficulties, and then we have no self-confidence. Our tendency is to not have full confidence in Him, and though we have prayed, to have few Ebenezers--few monuments-fixed judgments in our hearts of the power and succor of Christ; and then we seek for confidence in ourselves, which easy circumstances tend to feed. One prays

largely and fully in proportion as one has confidence in God; and if I really know Him as my helper, if I have a sure Ebenezer, I can easily and simply look to Him. The great principle of prayer is that I know the One whom I am addressing, and I am reckoning on His help.

In the church of Philadelphia (Rev. 3) there is both the sense of the need of help and the knowledge of the gain of it, whereas the state in Laodicea is a "need of nothing"-no sense of the use of help, for there is no sense of needing it.

We ought to regard prayer as the prelude to blessing, and thus be able to raise our Ebezers. I know what God is, and how He has helped me hitherto, and I am expecting and reckoning on His help. We have not merely to own our weakness and need; that is the first thing; but we have to expect help and succor.

Prayer is a mighty engine through which the resources of God are made available to us. It

is as the needy one, not as the self-satisfied and self-confident one, that I avail myself of it; and as I exercise my heart in my Ebezers

as touching what He has been to me, the more am I encouraged to go on in faith, and to "continue in prayer with thanksgiving."

## The Effects of Error

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The consequences and far reaching effects of error are often but little perceived. What to our minds might be unimportant may have great ramifications and be detrimental to, if not destructive of, either Christian conduct or the truth of Christianity, or both. We see examples of this in the Scriptures:

The Galatian saints may have thought it of small moment to turn to the law for improvement in the flesh, but the Spirit of God through the Apostle Paul deals with their error very severely. The epistle is marked by sharpness as the Apostle reprimands them for trying to be made perfect in the flesh after having begun in the Spirit. He points out that their error was destructive of the very foundations of Christianity, and so he says that he had come to stand in doubt of them. They may have thought that they were only adding to their Christianity, but he shows them that they were really forsaking it.

In 1 Cor. 15 we read of some who said that there was no resurrection. Now many may have judged that this was only one point of doctrine and that it should not be condemned severely, but that each should be allowed to exercise his own judgment. But, was it really a small matter? How did Paul speak about it? First he shows that it was ruinous to the whole truth of Christianity, for if there were no resurrection then Christ was not raised, and consequently they had no Savior and were yet in their sins - a solemn consideration! Nor did this one error stop there, but evil communications corrupted good manners, and the resultant effect was looseness in their walk. If there were no resurrection they might as well eat and drink and have a good time while it lasted. Thus we see that what seemed to be only one little error was really heterodoxy that would condemn souls to a lost eternity, and was the forerunner of moral laxity.

In recent months we have had a number of contacts with adherents to the old but currently-circulated error that the Church of God will remain here on the earth during the tribulation instead of being caught up to be with the Lord prior to that time. It seems that as the very time of the Lord's coming for His own approaches, this mistaken theory is being propagated with energy and zeal. A considerable amount of this teaching is being put into print and some of it has been sent to us.

This is another case where the error is apt to be minimized as though it were only one small point that should not be contested, but (from the printed matter that we have seen) it is quite evident that the effects are very far-reaching. We would warn any reader against dabbling in this, for once the one point is even tacitly admitted one is in for all that the system contains -which is an astonishing amount.

In this error as in any other, when one embarks on a course of pushing one wrong interpretation of Scripture he will invariably run into difficulties with other parts of Scripture; and if he does not heed the signs and turn back, he will then force his way through by making every other part of the Word bend to the one pet theory. In this way what in the beginning may have been only one error soon

becomes a whole set of them, organized as a system. While we cannot go into the whole matter in these pages we shall point out some of the other truths affected by this teaching.

This wrong system must have the Church of God on earth during those awful outpourings of judgment found in the book of Revelation instead of admitting, what should be obvious to any inquirer, that it is not seen on earth from the beginning of the fourth chapter until the end of the book. It is seen in heaven from the time of those symbolic words to John, "Come up hither." Rev. 4:1. And what is the consequence of forcing the Scripture in this particular? Just this - the Church's true character is lost for in those chapters we have God again known as "Lord God Almighty," (not as "Father") which is the partial revelation of Himself in Old Testament times and which will be true again in the tribulation period after the Church is transported to heaven.

Another serious consideration of viewing the Church as present in the tribulation is to find her where cries of vengeance on enemies are heard. This most surely does not comport with Christianity, although it will be in keeping with the time after the Church's rapture. Many of the Psalms call for vengeance on enemies, and these very Psalms will be the language of a persecuted and faithful remnant in that day, but would be a denial of true Christianity now.

When the Church's position of relationship and its character of grace are so easily lost by insisting on the mistaken idea that it must be here during the tribulation, need we wonder that we are told by these misguided people that the Church is taught to pray "Our Father, which art in heaven,... Thy kingdom come." When was the Church ever taught this prayer? It was given to the disciples before the Lord's death as suited to them at that time, but it is not a suitable expression of Christianity.

Nor should we be surprised, to find that this system puts the Christian under the law for a rule of life, for it may readily go with it, whereas the Christian is not under the law for any purpose whatsoever. To say so is to lower his standing and reflect on the perfect work of Christ, His present offices, and those of the Spirit of God. It borders on actual Galatian heresy which is so strongly condemned in that epistle. The Christian who walks in the Spirit and has Christ for his object has a higher standard and a higher walk than merely keeping the law. He walks in the true liberty of grace, without being under any part of the law, although he walks above anything that the law could condemn. We need to remember that "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Gal. 3:10.

Another error comes in with this, and that is that Christ fulfilled God's holy law for us in His life. This is flagrant error. Our blessed Lord did not keep the law for anyone, but He did bear the curse of a broken law for those under it. His perfect, spotless life, proved the suitability of the offering, but in itself could only condemn us for we have not so walked, although there was One who did.

We even find this statement in one of their books, "He Himself bore our sins up to the tree; but on the completion of His sacrifice, all that had to do with sin was ended. This is the most serious error of them all. It is positively a sinful statement. It makes the blessed and holy Lord Jesus have our sins upon Him during His life and prior to the cross, and that is shocking. It involves God looking down with pleasure on Him and saying that He found His delight in Him when sins were upon Him. How anyone who loves the Lord could endorse that statement is a mystery to us. He never had any sins upon Him except during those three awful hours of darkness when He was forsaken of

God. We know that some reference Bibles give this same thought as an alternate reading for 1 Pet. 2:24, but it only proves that alternate readings in the margins are not trustworthy, for in this case it is gross error, although sometimes they are more correct than the text.

Again, this system will not allow the distinctions between the "kingdom of heaven," the "kingdom of God," and the "Church of God." All are mixed together in hopeless confusion, but their system must be preserved at all cost. These distinct subjects are thus bent to mean the same thing, evidently so they can all head up together at one point of time. Some persons might be impressed by their frequent references to the Greek, but the Greek text will no more support their teaching than does the English New Testament.

Their confusion is further apparent when they come to expounding the parables of the kingdom of heaven, for it is plainly evident that the "kingdom of heaven" embraces empty, lifeless profession, along with true believers. But "No," says the systematized error. So when they come to such parables as the ten virgins, where the Word of God expressly says, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins," of whom five were foolish, and were finally rejected, they insist that inasmuch as the kingdom of heaven and the Church are the same, there are no mere professors in the former. Their only way around the statement of Matt. 25:1 is to say that the five foolish are not in the kingdom of heaven, but God says they are. The whole system is redolent of the working of error, and one parable after another has to be distorted to suit their theory.

Perhaps their worst statement as to the parables is that they have some parts that are only "ornamentations." O the audacity of such a statement! Where is the "man... that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word"? Isa. 66:2. We shudder to even repeat the statement or think of the dire consequences of thus impugning the words of the Lord of Glory who said that His words were "spirit" and "life." We may confess that we do not understand some of the words He spoke, but to think that He ever uttered a word that did not have a real meaning for us, but was only given to ornament a story, borders on things we do not like to mention. Doubtless, those who say such things have never thought of their seriousness, but have sought a way out of difficulties which came from trying to make their predetermined doctrine fit with the parables. If such a way of disposing of any words of Scripture is accepted it opens the way for anyone to toss out anything not to his liking.

We might mention their confusing the Morning Star (the Christian's hope) with the Sun of righteousness (Israel's hope). No one would think of making the morning star and the sun the same thing in nature, nor insist that they appear simultaneously, but in this system it is one of the results of forcing their point. The same disorder, results from mingling the instructions for the Jews at Christ's appearing with the admonitions to the Christians to look for Christ Himself. Apply Matt. 24:1.44 to Christians and you have the Christians in Judea and limited to a Sabbath day's journey; apply it where it belongs, to the Jewish people after the Christians are gone, and all is plain.

Surely the folly to which this system leads should be a warning to each of us to be careful not to bring our own thoughts to the Word of God, nor to press some notion of our own, for it may eventually lead to a system of error.

Nor should we forget that this system does away with what is so plainly marked in the New Testament, the expectation of the momentary return of the Lord. It was the hope of the early

Thessalonians (indeed of all early believers) and was meant to be so down through the Church's history. The result of putting it off and looking for anything else (the Roman Empire, the man of sin, the beast, the great tribulation, etc.) is in principle saying, "My lord delayeth his coming." And in the measure that that hope has been lost, the Church has settled down in this world. O Christian, awake! awake! our Lord may call us hence at any moment. Let us watch and be sober.

## The Enemy of the Work of God

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Satan is always the enemy of the work of God in this world; he is especially opposed to anything that honors and glorifies Christ. When the gospel was introduced into Europe (Acts 16) he tried to connect himself with the work so that he might spoil it; he used a poor duped woman to follow the servants of Christ and speak about them. When this attempt at patronage was frustrated by Paul's freeing the woman from the power of the demon, Satan changed his tactics and had the messengers of the gospel beaten and imprisoned. He changes quickly from the "roaring lion" character to the guise of the "angel of light" - whichever he thinks will suit his purpose best.

This dual opposition has been witnessed many times in the world's history, but at no time more clearly than in Japan of recent years. At the turn of the century considerable work was done in promulgating the gospel in that benighted land, but the enemy was active and before the last great war he raged against Christ and all who were loyal to Him. He pressed Shinto worship until it became very difficult for Japanese Christians to stand out against a false god which was combined with national pride and loyalty.

Mere professors found it easy to render homage to the shrine and yet retain a semblance of Christian profession. Some real Christians were betrayed by subtle reasoning to comply with the idolatrous custom, excusing it on the ground that it was a national custom and not a religion. But some remained faithful and were severely persecuted. One sister in Christ, who held an important position in a large factory, was discharged because of her refusal to bow before a false god; but God used her faithfulness to encourage many others to take the same stand even at the cost of employment and other persecutions. When the city of Ogaki was bombed her home was miraculously preserved and became a haven for others.

One faithful servant of Christ was imprisoned, and for the testimony of Christ "was nigh unto death"; in fact he went into a coma from starvation, and was assumed dead and sent home in a coffin. He was later revived and was used for much blessing in a sanitarium where he convalesced. He is now faithfully preaching the Word. Doubtless there were many others who refused to compromise the truth, as there were seven thousand in the days of Elijah who, though unknown to him, did not bow down to Baal.

The "roaring lion" thought to close Japan to the gospel but, as another has said, he always outwits himself. The very ones that he had persecuted were often the means of bringing the gospel to others, as Paul and Silas were to the Philippian jailer. Doubtless the very spirit of national Shintoism helped to lead Japan in the direction of war.

Now Japan stands with the door more widely opened to the gospel than ever before. The brother who was jailed for faithfulness writes that everywhere he finds ready listeners to the gospel who often come to hear until after midnight. In one city, where he had been knocked down and his Bible torn fifteen years ago, he found the door wide open now. May God sustain all who faithfully seek to tell of the love of God and the work of the Lord Jesus.

Other evidence of the work of God is that some Christians who excused the shrine worship under pressure have been faithfully judging themselves before God for their sin and unfaithfulness. Surely we can praise God who has wrought such deep exercises in their hearts.

But Satan - true to form - is not content now with Japan opened to the gospel and Christians judging themselves for their past unfaithfulness; he is now flooding the country with modernism which undermines the very basic elements of Christianity, and with false doctrines of the wicked cults that he has helped to parade under the banner of Christianity. The enemy as of old is now the "angel of light," seeking to spoil the work he could not stop.

Fellow-Christian, let us bear up before God for His help and encouragement those that seek to be faithful to Him in that country emerging from the desolation of war.

## Engagement Conduct

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"Is it permissible for a young man to caress a young lady to whom he is not engaged? What would be proper conduct before and after engagement?"

ANSWER: Caressing is a display of human affection one for another. It is indeed a beautiful thing in its proper place. God Himself has placed affection in the human breast, and He has given us the capabilities of showing it, but surely it is to be done with propriety and discretion. The practice of promiscuous caressing in this day has brought it down from its lofty place to a cheap fleshly indulgence.

In every several relationship there is becoming conduct for one who seeks to walk in the fear of God and pleasing to the Lord. For instance, there is the affection that belongs to the relationship of parents to children, and children to parents; and to lack natural affection is not of God - it is one of the signs of the last days (2 Tim. 3:3). But even between parents and children there is a becoming demonstration of love and affection that should not be violated, nor should it be indulged in by those who are not in that relationship.

Then there are the displays of affection that properly and only belong to the relationship of husband and wife. There is that which is suitable in those whom "God hath joined together," but even in marriage there is to be propriety as Heb. 13:4 admonishes: "Let marriage be held in every way in honor" (see New Translation). Carelessness in observing these distinctions, and laxity in showing becoming conduct and proper delicacy have brought sorrow into many hearts.

There is also a suitable display of affection in those who have become engaged and are pledged to marry each other, but which would be entirely out of place in those not betrothed. It should, however, be remembered that persons who are engaged are not actually married, and that every display of affection for each other should be conducted with self-restraint and wise discretion. (In the "young man's book" - Proverbs - discretion is referred to a number of times.) How much better, safer, and happier to refrain from overstepping the bounds of propriety, and to enjoy only what is suitable, while anticipating the time when affection can be displayed more fully. Those who guard themselves in this are not losers, and when the proper time comes for a fuller display of affection they have an increased joy in that which has been kept pure. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered." Pro. 2:8:26.

For those who are not engaged the rule of "hands off" certainly is wise and safe. Oh how much sorrow Christians have brought on themselves (and dishonor to the Lord) by overstepping what is becoming and allowing mere fleshly indulgence. Satan is ever ready to set a trap for our feet, and he uses the "lusts of the flesh" very successfully. It is one of the marks of the "children of wrath" that they fulfill the "desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2:3). But we are exhorted to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11).

We should also remember that marriage is the blessed type of Christ and the Church. The man represents Christ, who has loved the Church and given Himself for it; and if a man plays with

affections and trifles with that which is sacred, he most surely is not true to that which he should display; nor is a young sister true to being a type of the Church in single-eyed espousal to Christ if she allows or receives embraces and intimate attentions from others than her own husband, or husband-to-be - in the latter case with due limitations. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Cor. 11:2.

These remarks will not square with either the general ideas or practice in the world, but when has the world ever been able to set a suitable standard of conduct for the children of God? The world is hastening on to its doom and is daily increasing in moral laxity and depravity, but God has called us out of it to Himself. May we remember the words of our Lord Jesus as He prayed to His Father (John 17); He made a great distinction between the world and those who were His, and He desired that we should be kept from the evil. It would be well for us to read carefully the fifth chapter of Ephesians where

we are called to be imitators of God while in this morally dark scene; we are to avoid all uncleanness, have no fellowship with it, walk as children of light, and be

circumspect and wise. May the Lord give us HIS thoughts of what is becoming of those who are thus called out of this world to Him who is holy.

## A Few Comments on Epaphroditus: a Need Met

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We want the reader to turn with us for a few moments to Phil. 2, and study the brief sketch of the interesting character of Epaphroditus. There is a great moral beauty in it. We are not told very much about him but, in what we are told, we see a great deal of what is truly lovely and pleasant - much that makes us long for men of the same stamp in this our day. We cannot do better than quote the inspired record concerning him; and may the Holy Spirit apply it to our hearts, and lead us to cultivate the same lovely grace which shone so brightly in that dear and honored servant of Christ!

"I suppose it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me." Phil. 2:23-30.

Now it is quite possible that some of us, on reading the above, may feel disposed to inquire if Epaphroditus was a great evangelist or teacher, or some highly gifted servant of Christ, seeing that the inspired Apostle bestows upon him so many high and honorable titles, styling him his "brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier."

We are not told that he was a great preacher, or a great traveler, or a profound teacher in the Church of God. All we are told about him, in the above touching narrative, is that he came forward in a time of real need to supply a missing link, to "stop a gap," as we say. The beloved Philippians had it upon their hearts to send help to the revered and aged Apostle in his prison at Rome. He was in need, and they longed to supply his need. They loved him, and God had laid it upon their loving hearts to communicate with his necessities. They thought of him, though he was far away from them; and they longed to minister to him of their substance.

How lovely was this! How grateful to the heart of Christ! Hearken to the glowing terms in which the dear old prisoner speaks of their precious ministry. "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me bath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.... Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and a, bound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."

Here we see the place which Epaphroditus filled in this blessed business. There lay the beloved Apostle in his prison at Rome, and there lay the loving offering of the saints at Philippi. But how was it to be conveyed to him? These were not the days of bank checks and post office orders; no, nor of railway traveling. It was no easy matter to get from Philippi to Rome in those days. But Epaphroditus, that dear, unpretending, self-surrendering servant of Christ presented, himself to supply the missing link - to do just the very thing that was needed, and nothing more - to be the channel of communication between the assembly at Philippi and the Apostle at Rome. Deep and real as was the Apostle's need, precious and seasonable as was the Philippians' gift, yet an instrument was needed to bring them both together, and to apply the latter to the former; and Epaphroditus offered himself for the work. There was a manifest need, and he met it - a positive blank, and he filled it. He did not aim at doing some great showy thing, something which would make him very prominent, and cause his name to be blazed abroad as some wonderful person. Ah no! Epaphroditus was not one of the pushing, self-confident, extensive class. He was a dear, self-hiding, lowly servant of Christ, one of that class of workmen to whom we are irresistibly attracted. Nothing is more charming than an unpretending, retiring man, who is content just to fill the empty niche - to render the needed service, whatever it is - to do the work cut out for him by the Master's hand.

There are some who are not content unless they are at the head and tail of everything. They seem to think that no work can be rightly done unless they have a hand in it. They are not satisfied to supply a missing link. How repulsive are all such! How we retire from them! Self-confident, self-sufficient, ever pushing themselves into prominence. They have never measured themselves in the presence of God, never been broken down before Him, never taken their true place of self-abasement.

Epaphroditus was not of this class at all. He put his life in his hands to serve other people; and when at death's door, instead of being occupied with himself or his ailments, he was thinking of others. "He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness" - not because he was sick, but - "because that ye had heard that he had been sick." Here was true love. He knew what his beloved brethren at Philippi would be feeling when informed of his serious illness - an illness brought on by his willing-hearted service to them.

All this is morally lovely. It does the heart good to contemplate this exquisite picture. Epaphroditus had evidently studied in the school of Christ. He had sat at the Master's feet and drunk deeply into His spirit. In no other way could he have learned such holy lessons of self-surrender and thoughtful love for others. The world knows nothing of such things; nature cannot teach such lessons. They are altogether heavenly, spiritual, divine. Would that we knew more of them! They are rare among us, with all our high profession. There is a most humiliating amount of selfishness in all of us, and it does look hideous in connection with the name of Jesus. It might comport well enough with Judaism, but its inconsistency with Christianity is terribly glaring.

But we must close. Ere we do so, we shall just notice the very touching manner in which the inspired Apostle commends Epaphroditus to the assembly at Philippi. It seems as if he could not make enough of him, to speak after the manner of men. "He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow

upon sorrow." How deeply affecting! What a tide of divine affection and sympathy rode in upon that unpretending, self-sacrificing, servant of Christ! The whole assembly at Philippi, the blessed Apostle, and above all, God Himself, all engaged in thinking about a man who did not think about himself. Had Epaphroditus been a self-seeker, had he been occupied about himself or his interests, or even his work, his name would never have shone on the page of inspiration. But no; he thought of others, not of himself, and therefore God, and His Apostle, and His Church thought of him.

Thus it will ever be. A man who thinks much of himself saves others the trouble of thinking about him; but the lowly, the humble, the modest, the unpretending, the retiring, the self-emptied who think and live for others, who walk in the footsteps of Jesus

Christ, these are the persons to be thought of and cared for, loved and honored, as they ever will be, by God and His people.

"I sent him therefore the more carefully," says the beloved Apostle, "that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me."

Thus it was with this most dear and honored servant of Christ. He did not regard his life, but laid it at his Master's feet, just to supply the missing link between the Church of God at Philippi, and the suffering and needy Apostle at Rome. And hence the Apostle calls upon the Church to hold him in reputation, and the honored name of Epaphroditus has been handed down to us by the pen of inspiration, and his precious service has been recorded, and the record of it read by untold millions, while the name and doings of the self-seekers, the self-important, the pretentious, of every age, and every clime, and every condition, are sunk - and deservedly so in oblivion.

## Error in Some Books

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A book with the misleading title "The Hope of Christ's Second Coming" was recently put into our hands; it was written by S. P. Tregelles and has just been re-published by a section of so-called "fundamentalists." Some might think it better to ignore the book and the teaching it contains, but as it strikes at the very foundation of our proper hope - the coming of the Lord to take His own - and as it is but one symptom of the flood of error that is coming in, it behooves us to take sufficient notice to be warned of our dangers from religious error. Perhaps never before has the

Christian had so much reason to exercise care in what he reads or hears. Fanciful interpretations, amounting to error, are to be found mixed up with truth in ways that are sometimes hard to distinguish.

The whole purport of the book is to set aside the Church's expectation of hearing her Lord's shout at any moment and being caught up to meet Him in the air. The blessed hope is supplanted with looking for the apostasy, the man of sin, and the great tribulation. It is really nothing new, for it is the old mistake of confounding the coming of the Lord with the coming of the Son of man - the appearing of the morning star with the bright shining of the sun. The Old Testament closes by looking forward to that coming day when Christ shall shine as the Sun of righteousness; the New Testament closes with a personal word from the Lord saying that He is the bright Morning Star. The morning star appears before the day breaks and is only seen by a few; this is our hope - the coming of the Lord while it is yet dark and the world sleeps.

Both truths are found in the Word of God and, kept in their respective places, are each beautiful and in order; but mix the two and there is nothing left but confusion, and we are deprived of the hope that should cheer us as we wait and watch for His return.

Mr. Tregelles does not see any reason for the Scriptures to tell us about the things that are to take place before the coming of the Son of man in judgment unless the Church were still to be on earth at the close of the tribulation. He forgets that the Lord reveals His secrets to them that fear Him; for instance, He told Abraham about the doom of Sodom although he was not going to be present.

Another underlying mistake of this author is that he does not seem to understand that there will be a remnant of believing Jews on earth after the Church is gone: those mentioned in Daniel as "the wise" who will understand. These will need the divine directions of the Word of God. Those who are then in Palestine will need to know when to flee, and they will indeed do that with God's help (see Rev. 12:14-17). The instructions that they will need are found in Matt. 24:14 (these are applied to the Church by Mr. Tregelles). The visible sign for them to flee from Judea will be "the abomination of desolation," or an idol, "in the holy place" of the temple. Has the Christian an earthly "holy place" in a temple? Are all Christians to be in Judea, and so to flee? He twists these instructions to make them apply to Christians in various places from which they are to flee, but the scripture is specific - flee from "Judea."

The error should be easily apparent from verse 20; the Jews are to pray that they do not have to flee on the sabbath day. How could this be applied to Christians? unless you mix Christianity and Judaism. Are Christians to keep the sabbath? are they limited in travel on Saturday?

In verse 22 it is stated that the duration of the "great tribulation will be limited for the sake of the elect - elect Jews of that day. This he applies to the Church; evidently he does not see how God will have elect here if the Church is taken to heaven. Did He not have His own elect before the Church? and will He not have them after the Church is in her heavenly home?

Matt. 24 and 25 form one of the most beautiful and complete prophetic pictures in the New Testament. They should be divided into three parts for proper understanding:

24:1 to 44

24:45 to 25:30

25:31 to 46

Part one is instruction for the Jewish remnant; part two is prophecy concerning the Lord's coming in connection with the kingdom of heaven - the profession of Christianity on earth, Christendom -where real and false are at present

found together; part three is the coming of the Son of man as it concerns the Gentile nations. In the central portion the figures used are "the bridegroom" and the "lord"; the Son of man character is not to be found in it, except in 25:13 where it is a mistake of the translators, as all better translations will verify.

When Mr. Tregelles attempts to prove that the Church will be on earth during the great outpourings of judgment as described in the Book of Revelation his confusion is equally apparent. He will not allow that that Church is found in heaven from the beginning of the fourth chapter; but how will he explain the twenty-four elders in heaven? Are they not the redeemed from the earth? as their utterances prove. And will he explain how the Bride comes to be in heaven and there make herself ready for the marriage, before she is seen descending from heaven? All this only shows that when we give up any part of divine revelation we upset the divinely perfect balance, and bring in chaos.

Even the language used in Revelation is not that suited to the Church on earth; there is the cry for vengeance on enemies, which does not comport with Christianity; and the divine titles given are those found in the Old Testament - Lord, God, Almighty - connected with the earth and an earthly people. God as our Father is not found there.

He says that Elijah being taken to heaven without dying could not be a type of the living saints caught up, but he disregards Enoch's translation. Enoch was caught up to heaven without dying before the day of judgment - the flood - came; but he was informed by God of the judgment that was to come, and he warned others, although he was not going to be there. Noah, on the other hand, is a type of the Jewish remnant who will be preserved through it.

We can see the work of the enemy of Christ in this giving up the precious truth of the Lord's coming. Very early in the Church's history he worked to obscure this hope, and consequently the Church settled down to the level of the world. The lowering effect is evident in this book for it says

that the Church is taught to pray, Our Father, which art in heaven," etc. Where does it ever say that the Church is taught to pray this? The prayer is admirable, and correct in its place, but its place was in the days of the disciples before the Lord's death and accomplished redemption. We may gather instruction and edification from it, but forgiveness is unknown in it and it is not in the name of the Lord Jesus, nor is it praying by the Spirit.

How sad it is to hear of Christians giving up this blessed hope as the very moment approaches. But unless this truth is held in the affections it is in danger of being lost. And if it is lost our whole manner of life will suffer, and there is no telling how much error we may fall into. There are other serious mistakes in the book we have reviewed, but our purpose here is to re-examine our true hope, and so to have it with renewed freshness in our souls. There is NOT ONE THING that has to take place before He comes, but already the signs of things to come after we are gone are beginning to appear. Surely the coming of the Lord is very near. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

## Esteeming Others Better Than Ourselves

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When a soul that is in any measure spiritual, thinks of himself, what he feels is his immense falling short of Christ. He has habitually before him how greatly he fails, even of that which he desires in his ways before God. But when he looks at his brother-Christian, let him be the feeblest possible, and sees him as a beloved one of Christ, in full acceptance in, and the object of, the Father's tender affections, this draws out both love and self-loathing!

Thus, if grace be at work, what is Christ like in another saint rises at once before the heart, and what is unlike Christ in himself. So that it is not a question of striving to cultivate high feelings about one's neighbors, and to think them what they are not, but really believing what is true about them, and feeling rightly about ourselves too. If one thinks of what a saint is in Christ and to Christ, and what he will be through Christ, then one's heart takes in the wonder of his love, and how much the Lord makes of him; but when the eye is turned to oneself, all the unworthy ways and feelings and shortcomings come up in humiliating remembrance.

## Eternal Life

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We know nothing about eternal life but what God has graciously revealed to us by His Spirit in the written Word. May we turn to it with reverence and godly fear, and receive its teaching with worshiping hearts, while remembering that the Spirit searches "the deep things of -God," and makes us "know the things that are freely given to us of God."

Scripture teaches us that "eternal life" was promised before the world began. We read also of "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus," and that "the gift of God is eternal life through [rather, in] Jesus Christ our Lord." (Titus 1:1, 2 Tim. 1:1; Rom. 6:23.)

We learn also that "eternal life" was with the Father. Father and Son being correlative terms, it is impossible to exclude the thought that He who was the eternal life was also the eternal Son. He was "that eternal life, which was with the Father." As with the Father, eternal life was in the Person of the eternal Son before He became flesh.

But eternal life has been "manifested." Precious truth! "The Word of life" has been seen and heard, looked upon and handled. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory....)" John 1:14. "That eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." 1 John 1:1, 2. In His whole life, ways, words, and being, eternal life was so manifested that it was seen, heard, and declared. The life was manifested in the perfection of His Person, in perfect love, obedience, and righteousness, in unbroken communion with the Father, and care for others; yea, the very "words" of our incarnate Savior were "spirit" and "life." He was "the life" and "the truth" seen and heard. A great mystery indeed, which cannot be explained by human language. Like the vessels of the sanctuary which the Kohathites knew were to be borne by them, but were so concealed from their view that they dare not touch, much less uncover them, under penalty of death, they were to bear them as Jehovah had commanded, but not to "touch" them "lest they die." (Numb. 4:15).

The deep sin of the human mind is attempting to unfold and explain that of which the Spirit says, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh"; and again, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." 1 Tim. 3:16; Matt. 11:27. Unfathomable mystery indeed! When the believer thus calls to mind His lowly and lonesome path through this scene, and discerns in "the man of sorrows" "the true God, and eternal life," his heart becomes filled with joy and gladness. He adoringly worships, and finds real delight in confessing and serving Him. In the gospel by John we see eternal life manifested in the Son; the first epistle of John treats of the character of eternal life as communicated to believers.

But though eternal life was promised, was with the Father, and in due time was manifested unto us, how could it lay hold on us who were such sinners? The answer is, Love was also manifested, and reached its immeasurable climax in the death of Christ, God's Son, His death upon the cross; for in this way God's gift of eternal life could be communicated to us. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might

live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:9, 10. Thus we learn that by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ two marvelous blessings have been secured for us (1) the removal of our sins judicially and forever by the one offering of Himself, and (2) that we might live through Him. Here again our souls are touched with the infinite and unfathomable-love of God toward us, and are filled with thanksgiving and praise. Divine grace so wrought that we might thus "live through Him"; for our Lord said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:24. Yes, men must be judicially cleared from their sins by the sacrifice of Christ in order to stand in true relationship to God. What unutterable love "that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." How impossible to contemplate such grace through righteousness without the heart exclaiming -

"Everlasting praises be

To the Lamb that died for me."

And further. In resurrection - the resurrection of the Son from the dead, by which He was marked out Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness- we behold Him alive again, and that for evermore. By divine power, and in divine righteousness, God has intervened and raised Him from among the dead, and glorified Him as man at His own right hand. Now we read that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." Not only "through" Him who bore the judgment for us, but "in" Him glorified. The Son is its source. Nothing in us has helped to bring it about or to produce it. It is the gift of God, and in the Son. He said, "I am.. the life." It is then for us a new and eternal life, both through and in the Son, and the gift of God. What divine wisdom, love, and power are thus brought into view! Are we not ready to cry out, while looking up to Him who said, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" - "Shall Thy praise unuttered lie?"

The gift of God then is eternal life - nothing less than eternal life. We therefore read of an inspired apostle writing to believers, and saying, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." 1 John 5: 11-13. Thus the believer on the Son of God has received the wondrous gift of eternal life, the source and seat of which is, not in Adam, but in the Son. An entirely new life has been communicated to us, and we are to know that we have it. We are said to "have passed from death unto life." The effects of having this life are love to the brethren, obedience, righteousness, communion, and prayer, into all which the Spirit surely leads; in short, to walk as He walked, for all these ways were perfect in Him who is our life. Nothing can be more clearly set forth in Scripture than the present possession of eternal life. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." Though communicated to us, it is in the Son as the source and fountain, and enjoyed by us through feeding upon Him.

We were dead, dead in sins, until by grace we heard the voice of the Son of God and lived - "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." John 5:25. Till we had faith in the atoning work of the Son of man we had no life in us;

then such have eternal life; and Jesus added, "I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:54. What divine certainty these words give us of being in glory with the Savior! Can we wonder at anyone saying, "Oh, how precious is the truth that the life, such as it was with the Father, such as it is in the Son, is given to me?"

But besides having eternal life, and because we have remission of sins and are sons, the Holy Spirit has been given to us as the seal, the earnest of our inheritance, and the anointing. Thus we have the power for communion with the Father and the Son, and to joyfully serve and honor our Lord Jesus Christ. (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15; 15:13; Eph. 1:13, 14.)

Having received the life which is in the Son, we are to manifest it in our mortal body. Holding as we should the flesh for dead, we are to be "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." 2 Cor. 4:10. While in a world so contrary to God, with the flesh in us, and Satan blinding and deceiving sinners and tempting saints, we are to reckon ourselves to have died with Christ, and, as created in Christ Jesus, alive unto God, we are to manifest the life of Jesus in our mortal flesh. This is practical Christianity. For such to live is Christ.

We also find that Timothy was enjoined to "lay hold on eternal life." Had he not received the gift of eternal life? Most assuredly he had. But for such to "lay hold on eternal life" is to grasp it by faith in all its glorious and eternal results when we shall "reign in life" (Rom. 5:17). We thus lay hold on all that eternal life involves, and so make it our own by faith and hope, that its blessedness, as made known to us in the Word of God, and to be consummated when we are with Christ and like Christ, may be enjoyed now. This glorious prospect being before us, and the Spirit revealing Him to us, we shall be led on, Christ reproduced in our life and walk, and we detached from what is unsuited to Him.

It is clear that when the Lord reigns the saved of the tribes of Israel, and Gentiles also, will go into life eternal in an order, no doubt, suited to people blest on the earth. (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46).

But Christ is to be manifested again. When the incarnate One was on earth, as we have seen, eternal life was manifested. Then He was alone. But when He is manifested in glory, "the sons of God" will be manifested with Him. "When He shall appear [or be manifested], we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." And we also read that "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear [or be manifested], then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Thus, when the mortal body is changed, and fashioned like unto His body of glory, we shall be conformed to the image of the Son, to the everlasting praise of the glory of His grace. Being already alive spiritually, we look for the Savior to change our body of humiliation, and fashion it like unto His body of glory. We have eternal life already; but when the Savior comes the "hope of eternal life" will be realized in the corruptible putting on incorruptibility, and the mortal putting on immortality. This we know will take place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Precious fruit of divine grace!

While Christianity in truth begins, as we have seen, with the possession of eternal life, and this life is in the Son, "the end" is also eternal life, but all "the gift of God." We have eternal life while we are going on "in the hope of eternal life." We find redemption also presented to us in Scripture in the same way. We have redemption now, and are waiting for redemption. Of the believer it is said,

"In whom [Christ] we have redemption through His blood," and yet we are waiting for "the redemption of our body." (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 8:23.) The same may be noticed as to salvation - we are saved, and yet we look forward to salvation. We receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls (1 Pet. 1:9), and yet "shall be saved from wrath through Him." The same inspired writer that says "who bath saved us," also says, "We look for the Savior... who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." This change and translation we are elsewhere told will take place when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. Then, having eternal life in all its glorious issues, we share with Christ the Father's presence in the Father's house, in all the unutterable blessedness of eternal glory.

## Faith of Rahab

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A report reached Jericho - all heard it. But Rahab believed the report. (Read Josh. 2 and 6, and Heb. 11:31.) She mixed it with faith. She had no more evidence of its truth than other people, yet she believed. There is power in God's Word. It should be believed because it is His Word. There is no one who does not act on the belief of man's word. If we were sitting in a train and an official came to the door and cried out, "This car is not going on; you had better change," we would all instantly get off. No one would think of saying, "He did not address me; I shall sit here until he speaks directly to me." Thus it is with the report of the gospel. It tells us that the train of self righteousness, of ordinances, ceremonies, or prayers does not go to heaven. It tells us to change to God's righteousness, which is by faith of Jesus Christ.

Rahab believed and was saved.

The fruit of her faith is seen in her hiding the two men. Her house became the only safe spot in all the doomed city. There was perfect security for all in that house, under the shelter of "the scarlet line." All within that house were as safe as if they were already in the midst of Israel's victorious hosts, although the house was "on the wall" - the very thing that was first to come down. Rahab occupied herself in seeking to get as many as she could under the shelter of the "true token." People might say, "How can you promise me security? How can a scarlet line save a man? Would not a white flag do better? Ought we not to send a messenger to Israel to say we will become tributary?" No; come in! come in! There is safety here, and nowhere else. All beneath the scarlet line are as safe as God can make them. If anyone were outside the door of that house, no power could

save him. But all within were perfectly safe. They were not hoping to be safe, or praying to be saved. They were not half or

almost saved. They were saved. "Our life for yours" had settled all! and the "true token" gave perfect peace to the heart.

## Faith's Warrant: "Borrow Not a Few"

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(Read 2 Kings 4:1.7)

These words were uttered by the prophet Elisha in the ear of a distressed widow who had come to him with her tale of sorrow. And assuredly the words of God's prophet did but express the grace of the prophet's God. He knew well on whose behalf he was speaking - on whose grace he was counting - on whose treasury he was drawing. He did not say, "Take care you do not borrow too many." He knew this was impossible. Faith never yet overdrew its account in God's bank. It has "unsearchable riches" to its credit there. Faith never yet brought an empty vessel to God that He had not oil to fill. In the case of this widow, the oil only ceased to flow when there was no longer an empty vessel to receive it. The source was exhaustless; it was faith's promise to keep the channel open. It is the business of faith to "open thy mouth wide"; God's part is to "fill it." We cannot expect too largely from God.

Dear Christian reader, let the remembrance of these things have the happy effect of encouraging your heart in the life of faith. Think of these precious words: "Borrow not a few." They come to you direct from your Father's heart of tender love. He wants you to draw largely upon His infinite resources. You cannot possibly expect too much from the hand and heart of Jesus.

Is your heart disturbed by the sense - the painful and humiliating sense - of indwelling sin? "Go, borrow thee vessels... even empty vessels" in which to receive the rich supplies of grace that flow from a crucified and risen Christ - your Surety - your Advocate - your great High Priest. And bear in mind those divinely liberal words, "Borrow not a few." Jesus has borne all your sins upon the cross, and put them away forever. The eye of God can never see your sins again. He has cast them all behind His back. He has actually reaped a harvest of glory by putting them away. Divine grace has reaped a richer harvest in the midst of a world of sinners than ever it could have reaped amidst the host of unfallen angels. "Go," therefore, "borrow... vessels... empty vessels;... not a few."

Again, is your poor heart bowed down beneath the weight of sorrow? Has the cold grasp of death seized upon the darling object of your affections? Has a serious blank been made in your heart and your home - a blank which no earthly object can fill up? Then remember the heart of Jesus is overflowing with tender sympathy. He has felt your sorrow. He counts your sighs, and puts your tears into His bottle. If He were here He would not chide your grief. He would sit down beside you and mingle His tears with yours. But you say, "He is not here." True, but He is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, and you can count with certainty on the sympathy of His heart. "Go," then, bereaved and sorrowing one, "borrow thee vessels,... even empty vessels," in which to receive the abundant consolations which flow from the heart of Christ, whose encouraging word to you is, "Borrow not a few."

It may be, however, that the reader is neither troubled about the question of sin, nor yet bowed down under the weight of sorrow. His heart is established in grace; and the beloved circle in which

his affections have been wont to play remains unbroken. But then family or commercial cares press upon his spirit. His children are not going on as he would like, or his business prospects are gloomy. If such be my reader's position, he too can learn a sweet and seasonable lesson from Elisha's words. He can go forth and borrow his empty vessels, for there is "oil" enough for him, even the "oil of gladness" for his burdened spirit. To such a one the word is, "Cast thy burden on the Lord." He will surely sustain. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and

supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Do not carry the burden for another hour. Cast it directly, cast it entirely, upon the One who is as able as He is willing, and as willing as He is able, to sustain it. In a word, "Go, borrow thee vessels... empty vessels" into which the copious streams of divine peace may flow for your perplexed and anxious spirit. And remember the gracious charge, "Borrow not a few."

But these lines may, perhaps, meet the eye of someone whose case has not, as yet, been exactly met. His exercise does not spring from a troubled conscience, a bereaved heart, or a spirit perplexed about domestic or commercial affairs. The fact is, the entire scene around has repulsed and disappointed him. And yet not so much the world, for no true Christian would think of expecting aught from it. But in the very midst of his Christian friends, all his hopes have been blighted. He had looked at those Christians from a distance, and they seemed to present the appearance of all that was lovely and attractive - so separated - so heavenly - so loving. Yet alas! on coming among them, he did not realize his fondly cherished hope, and his heart, once big with expectation, is now furrowed by sore disappointment. This is no uncommon case. There is many a furrowed heart within the precincts of the Church of God. But, blessed be God, the heart's deep furrows are but so many "vessels... empty vessels," in which to receive the streams of comfort and solace emanating from "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever"; and the heart that has many furrows is ready furnished with vessels "not a few." God will surely fill those vessels; and then one comes back to be a channel of blessing in the scene which had disappointed him.

In a word then, whatever be the state or condition of the soul - whether it be a question of sin or sorrow, difficulty or disappointment - the message from God is one and the same. "Go, borrow thee vessels" - and mark, it is "empty vessels" - vessels "not a few." What magnificent grace shines in the words "empty" and "not a few"! Our vessels must be empty. God will not pour into a vessel half-filled with creature supplies. In every case the vessel must be absolutely empty; for only then is it fully manifest that the "oil" has come directly from God Himself. The word "empty" shuts out the creature. The words "not a few" leave room for God to come in.

Beloved reader, these are simple truths; but simple as they are, they stand connected with the grand essential element of the divine life in the soul. Would that they were more deeply engraver on our hearts by the eternal pen of God the Holy Ghost!

## Fatal Neutrality: Gamaliel

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What fatal advice was that which was given by Gamaliel, the famous doctor of the law, to his fellow councilors, in reference to the work of God that was being accomplished by the apostles!

He said, "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." Acts 5:38, 39.

Now Christ declares, "He that is not with Me is against Me." Matt. 12:30. He shows that there is no middle ground.

Gamaliel on the other hand pleads for that middle ground in his advice; he advocates neutrality. He does not urge an honest investigation into the true nature of the work, in order to learn whether it be of God or man; and herein lay his clever but fatal mistake.

When the truth is in question, neutrality becomes opposition. Everyone is morally bound to know the truth and follow it, for he will be judged according to the amount of light in which, he has walked, and the measure of privilege he has enjoyed. If he rejects that light and neglects that privilege, his condemnation is but the greater, but his responsibility is coextensive with his light.

To shut your eyes to light, or to prefer darkness, is not neutrality; it is opposition; it is willful obstinacy.

Gamaliel cited two cases as precedents to his position. He mentioned one "Theudas," who boasted himself to be somebody (who or what, we are not told) and who had a considerable following; but his boast was transparent, and his imposture self-evident. He was slain, and his dupes brought to naught. In this case there was not truth, but only a boast.

Then he instanced "Judas of Galilee" who rose in the days of the taxing and drew away much people after him. But he perished, doubtless, on account of opposition to Caesar, and his followers were dispersed. In this case it was not truth, but sedition.

Think of producing such faulty examples as reasons why "these men" should be let alone!

What similarity was there between them and the case of Jesus of Nazareth? Did He boast that He was somebody? No! He did not need to boast or assume a character. He was altogether what He said. What He was expressed itself in His words and ways. Devils confessed Him, if man did not. Heaven acknowledged Him, if earth refused Him. He did not boast.

Again, Did He object to Caesar's taxation? No. "Render therefore unto Caesar," He loudly proclaimed, "the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's." A seditious word never escaped the lips of Him who withal was "born King of the Jews."

Between the cases of these two men and that of Jesus there is no resemblance. The folly and rebellion displayed by them demanded their rejection. The grace and truth that came by Him called for allegiance. Moral judgment should have refused the first, and espoused the other. But

Gamaliel, purblind doctor of the law, places them on a par. Is that all that learning could do for him? Is that all that his religious training and wide reputation could supply? What a fearful lack! Where is the mysterious "one thing" to be found that the most profound human erudition cannot furnish?

How does it come that these "ignorant and unlearned men" were more wise than this sage councilor? What had they that he had not? He had all that learning and scholarship and observation could give, and yet he was far behind them! They, like Daniel of old, who by the favor of his God knew more than all the magicians of Chaldea, were in the secret. They were the babes to whom these things had been revealed, as they were not to the wise and prudent; and they had, by grace, espoused a cause which was destined to survive the enmity of 19 centuries, and which bears the stamp of being both a counsel and a work of God.

"Refrain from these men," said Gamaliel. He had not even the eyes of Rahab the harlot, who distinguished in the two spies the forerunners of victorious Israel, and who at once threw in her lot with them. Rahab was not neutral. Hers was the faith that made her identify herself with God's work and counsel. Not so Gamaliel. "Let them alone," said he. He was prompted by the caution of unbelief and the wisdom of this world. Where was his determination to discover the truth? Where the zeal, the commendable zeal, that actuated one of his school to come to Jesus by night, and

learn, in the shades of obscurity, the love of God in the gift of His Son, and of the lifting up of that Son, in order that through faith in Him eternal life might be had? Where was there a trace of a similar energy? "Let them alone," was his fatal advice. "And to him they agreed." Suicidal agreement! But the vessel thus let alone by them is sailing in triumph still, as upborne on the waste by the infinite grace of her exalted Lord. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

And the council, guided for a time by the advice of Gamaliel, let the work alone, closed their ears to the testimony it bore, and shut their eyes to the blessed results it accomplished. They took no pains to find out whether God was in it or not. Theirs was the inaction of apathy. But the work stands while they have perished. God has placed the seal of indestructibility on that insignificant seed then sown by such unlearned and ignorant hands. Yonder massive creation will pass away, but "unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."

Oh, the more than folly of being neutral on such a battlefield, of endeavoring to occupy middle ground amid such antagonisms, to be lukewarm when Christ bids you to be either cold or hot! But, in fact, neutrality is impossible, for, again to quote His solemn words, "He that is not with Me is against

Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth," is only to prove that anything but wholehearted decision for Him is determined opposition to Him.

## The Father's House

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Certainly everyone enjoying his union with Christ where He is, has entered in spirit into the Father's house. The Father's house is the only resting place for the prodigal.

There are but two places -the "great way off," where he received the kiss of reconciliation, and the father's house; the first step from the one to the other is entrance into untold joy and blessedness. The right of entrance is not only assured but enjoyed. Sitting in the heavenlies in Christ is our calling, together with all saints. Entering into and enjoying the Father's house now in the Spirit is the right of children brought nigh unto Him.

The "holiest of all" is the moral character of the Father's house; Jesus is there for us. He has entered into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. He is the great High Priest. He sustains us there, and He is there. The more you are in the holiest, where you worship, the more will your assurance of the Father's love deepen without requiring any evidence of it. The perfect rest of heart found in the perfect acceptance vouchsafed to you there, will promote and enlarge in your heart the knowledge of the Father's love. When the love of the Father is in you (see 1 John 2:19), you are sensibly enjoying that which could, and would, provide and procure anything for you, and the love of the world is not in you. It is not anything you see which detains or draws your heart, because it is already occupied with a love that has the command of everything, and is ready to use all for you.

The Lord sustains you in the unclouded light of His own presence, growing more and more into the pleasures that are at His right hand.

## First-Born of All Creation

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Here (Col. 1:15), as elsewhere (Psalm 89:27), the title of first-born is taken in the sense of dignity rather than that of mere priority of time. Adam was the first man, but was not nor could be the firstborn. How could Christ, so late in His birth here below, be said to be the first-born? The truth is, if Christ became a man and entered the ranks of creation, He could not be anything else. He is the Son and Heir. Just so we are now by grace said to be the Church "of the first-born," although there were saints before the Church. It is a question of rank, not of date. Christ is truly first-born of all creation.

## The First Martyr: Stephen

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Christian warfare is unlike all other warfare - part of its resistance is to suffer. Our weapons too are not carnal, but spiritual; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places (Eph. 6). A Christian using carnal weapons is an anomaly, a contradiction, and cannot know what manner of spirit he is of. He can never have traced, with true spiritual intelligence, the wondrous pathway of his Lord, or have understood the meaning of those words, "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight." The Church militant is the Church suffering, and directly carnal weapons are taken up she has really ceased to fight.

We have the prototype of the true warrior in the brave and holy Stephen. He was the first Christian martyr; and what a victory did he gain for the cause, when he died praying for his murderers! David, centuries before, had said, "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked"; but Stephen, who belonged to another order of things, prayed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." This was true Christian warfare.

## Forever With the Lord

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There is something very sweet in the thought that we shall "ever be with the Lord." Too often, when we look beyond the borderland, we see only heaven with its thrones and crowns and think more of its cloudless peace, its unbroken rest, its joyous fellowships, its relief from conflict and strife, sorrow and sin, than of the One with whom we are to be, and whose presence alone will constitute our everlasting blessedness and joy. But surely the Spirit of God, acting in sympathy with the affections of Christ, would rather fix the heart on the Person in whose company we shall be, than on any material object, or any gift, however great and good. "So shall we ever be with the Lord." I confess my spirit is stirred when I think of that. The Lord, the One who loved and loves me, who washed me from my sins in His own blood-I shall be with Him, hear Him, and be ever more conformed to His image. And He Himself is coming for us. "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.... and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1Thess. 4:16, 17.

Blessed Savior, teach Thy saints to watch and patiently wait for Thee! Amen.

## Forgiven and Forgotten

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"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Heb. 10:17 It is a common saying among men "I can forgive, but I cannot for, get." The tide of human affections may rise at times to such a height as to cover the tablet or which memory has engraved the record of my misdeeds; but when the tide retires, the record is there. Not so the love of God; that mighty floodtide not only covers the tablet, but obliterates the inscription forever, so that not a trace of it remains. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Precious words! God can not only forgive but forget.

"The trembling sinner feareth That God can ne'er forget;

But one full payment cleareth His memory of all debt.

When naught beside could free us,

Or set our souls at large,

Thy holy work, Lord Jesus, Secured a full discharge."

Here is true rest for the exercised conscience. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7. The eye of infinite holiness cannot discern a single stain of guilt upon the conscience that has been once purged by the precious blood of Christ. All the sins and iniquities of the believer are plunged in the waters of eternal oblivion. God has pledged Himself *n e v e r* to remember them, so that it can be said, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob." Man cannot undertake to forget. He cannot prevent memory from throwing up, at times, upon its surface, the record of the past; but God can. The atoning work of Jesus has forever canceled the believer's guilt, so that it can never again rise against him

## Giving up or Pouring in?

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I said to one today, "If I could but be a consistent member of the Bride, the Lamb's wife, of the chaste virgin espoused to the Lord, how simple and bright all would be! if I could be simple as a little child of God placed near Christ, the first-born among many brethren, how bright all would be!" The answer was, "But what devotedness that supposes:" I replied, "Not what men call or mean by devotedness; they mean by devotedness having a great deal to give up. I am part of that virgin - a child in the family of God - but I look up for the heart and mind of the Bridegroom, and all His love and grace to be mine; I look up for Abba's love to free His child's heart. Will Christ's love, filling my heart and mind - will Abba's love, filling me to overflowing, be my giving up or His pouring in?"

## God Came Down to Deliver

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Exod. 3:1.8

One thing that is brought before us in Exod. 3, is the compassionate love of God. We find Him coming down; and what has brought Him down? Oh, He has heard some sighs, some groans; He has looked upon some burdened ones, and He has been moved with pity, and has come down to deliver. Well, we know how fully that is seen in God coming down to this poor world - sin stricken, and under the burden and bondage of corruption, where there is a continual groaning going on. We know what led Him to come down; that is, it was the compassion of His love - "God so loved."

Well, in what way did He come down? In what way did He appear to that servant to whom He came to communicate the great truth that He had come down to deliver, and deliver in love? Where was that servant? He was in an out-of-the-way place in this world - in the backside of the desert. And, dear friends, the secrets of God are learned, in principle, outside of this world.

We know from His Word that we must be in a state spiritually, more or less, to receive His communications; that is, our spirituality not deadened by unholy and unnecessary intercourse with this world. In a way, we must have intercourse with this world, and that is why I say "unholy and unnecessary intercourse." We have our callings to attend to, and those callings are to be attended to in communion with God; but Satan is ever ready to deceive.

One naturally connects Exod. 3 with Luke 2, and you may wonder why. In Exod. 3 Moses is in the backside of the desert, where he had led the flock. In Luke 2, wonderful things had taken place - an event that brought even the angel of the Lord down from heaven, "and the glory of the Lord shone round about," and it brought a multitude of the heavenly host, who praised God. To whom did that angel of the Lord appear? To shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night. What did Jerusalem and the great ones of this world know of what was going on out there on the plains of Judea? Nothing! And I believe we can find a certain principle there of the ways of God: that, in order to be in communion, there must be in some measure the spirit of separation from the world.

Here we get a blessed picture of the nature of God - He came down. Where did He come down from? Heaven! He had been looking down on the earth and, as we say, He had been seeing, and He had been hearing something that moved Him, and moved Him with compassion. Has that no word for us? Ah, yes; for God looks down on the whole world, as He did then over His people in Egypt, and this poor world is, in God's eyes, an Egypt. That is one phase of the world in the eyes of God - it is one vast Egypt.

There are several countries that bring the world before us as God sees it; Egypt, for instance, is a type of the world in its power and independence of God, not depending upon Him for its power. Here they are oppressing God's people, and were independent of Him.

Babylon represents the world in its glory - Babylon was a glorious kingdom. Tire is a type of the world of commerce.

And, dear friends, how thankful we should be to God for His letting us know what this world is in its various aspects before Him, and that the place of His people, and the place of intercourse with Him, is outside of it; that is, outside of it in spirit.

Here God is about to call that servant of His into the place of service. He takes him out to the backside of the desert for a lesson - a lesson that He has to teach all of His servants. Moses sees a burning bush there; and he watches it a little while. He expects to see it consumed; but it burns and burns, and is not burned. He says, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." And as he turns aside there is a voice which calls him by name, "Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I." What is the burning bush to that one whom He is now calling into His service? "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." God is ever trying, in some way or another, to remind us of what is due to His presence. What made that ground holy there in the backside of the desert? The presence of God is what made it holy. And it is quite at the beginning, as we may say, of Moses' history as a servant of God. It is a good thing to learn that at the outset, though God may have to remind us of the truth of it once and again afterward; and that truth goes a long, long way, and grows more into our daily lives.

Another thing: Why did God appear in that burning bush? I believe the scriptural interpretation of the burning bush to be in the prophet Isaiah. Now let us connect Isa. 63:9 with the burning bush in Exod. 3 It says, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." v 9. Ah, that's what the burning bush is. God has come down from His dwelling place, after having long looked upon the afflictions of His people, and hearing their groans and cries.

Oh the beautiful compassion of that; the mercy of it - "come down to deliver." It does not say, "I am come down to judge their enemies," but "I am come down to deliver." That is very comforting to one's heart. We read in the 7th verse, "I... have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows." Is there not One now in the glory who knows the sorrows and afflictions of His people here on earth? Yes, there is. There is One that hears every sigh and groan, and sees every burden; and more than that, He is One who shares all with them.

And then, "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Well, we have just said that God's presence made it holy.

Now I would address a word to those who by grace are gathered to the Lord's name, and rejoice in that word, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I." Just think of the grace of that! Who is it that says, "There am I in the midst of them"? It is the Son of God; it is the Lord Jesus. And I have often thought that if the Lord were there in bodily presence, how we should be mindful of what becomes His presence. Well, He is not there in bodily presence, but though the sight and sense are not affected in that way, He is surely as really there - "There am I." What does that presence claim? It claims holy and loving reverence. Don't we very, very often lose the sense as to the presence of the Lord in the midst, and what is due to that presence? And we suffer the consequences.

Another thing: God encourages - I would say, delights in - the intimacy of His people, but He never allows familiarity; there is a difference between intimacy and familiarity. With this thought before us, let us see the third verse: "And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." Now let us mark a point of great importance. "And when the LORD saw

that he turned aside to see GOD" - it is not the Lord now, but God - "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush." Why is there a change from "LORD" to "GOD" there? Ah, God never forgets what is due to His presence, however precious and great the grace through which He makes Himself known to us. I believe that is a very valuable lesson - He is God - that is what He is in Himself. The Lord Jehovah is what He is in relationship. But it is solemnly beautiful when we see Him as He comes down to deliver. But He never forgets, He is God. That little change there from "Jehovah" to "Elohim" is full of instruction: "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush." The first thing for a servant to learn is what is due to the presence of God Himself. There is an important verse in Psalm 89:7. It is not to sinners, but to saints. "God is greatly to be feared" - where? - "in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him." This is a word in season.

You know this is a day of lawlessness, and increasing lawlessness - a day of disregard of all authority, and all source of authority. It is just the forerunner of what is coming, and coming in a dreadful form, when a vast part of this world will be under the dominion of a man who knows no will but his own; he will do according to his will; he will exalt himself above all that is called God - that is what is developing. But in spite of all this sad failure of the world, God will be God; and we learn from His Word that those conditions shall not be in full until He allows them, and that lawless one is revealed. And these conditions are developing. In a certain place where I was recently I witnessed an incident that reminded me of the way these things will be fulfilled - the wife had prepared in a stove everything for a fire, so that when a fire was wanted she had but to put a match to it. Ah, God is

preparing the fire; but He will never put a match to it while His beloved people are here. "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." And so that passage comes in very seasonably - "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him." Is not that a word to the heart and conscience of all those that love the blessed Lord!

The love of God is a compassionate love, but when we realize whose love it is, the holiness of that One who loved us, the more should we drink in its true character. But what is especially on my mind is that we must ever remember the reverence that becomes us in the presence of God. Suppose I take up the Word of God and read it. If I am going to get profit from it, I must have, in some measure, the unshod foot; there is no other book like the Bible in the world, for the Bible is God's Word. If we would have Him communicate His thoughts to us from that Word (and unless He does communicate

His thoughts to us from it, we will never get them - vain is human learning as to getting the mind of God from His Word) we must have the unshod foot. Do you know anything of dependence upon Him in reading His Word; that is, in its character and nature of the unshod foot?

There is another servant who entered upon His service, and the Lord had to deal with him in the same way; that is, Joshua, the man of conflict. In Moses we have the man of communication; but in Joshua we have the man of conflict coming to "the captain of the host of the LORD." He is, as it were, just beginning the conflict; and he comes to a Man with a drawn sword, and says to Him, "Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries?" - a right question. "And it came to pass, when Joshua

was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked," (there is not a burning bush here) "and, behold there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us or for our adversaries?"

What has that man with the drawn sword to say to him? Read the 14th and 15th verses. What do we learn from that? Ah friends, the unshod foot - not the energy of the flesh - is needed for service, for conflict. Is not that the lesson we should learn from what the Captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua? Joshua said, "What saith my lord unto his servant?" Oh, he said, You must have the unshod foot - "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot" - and Joshua did so. Are you prepared to receive the communications from God, to enter the path of warfare? Such, I take it, is the lesson God had for us in telling of these remarkable servants, and His ways with them.

"Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Exod. 3:5. God has now brought Moses into a condition or position where He can communicate to him; and now He gives him communications; but let us not forget the way He took to prepare His servant to receive the communications. And what are those communications? Look at the 6th verse: "Moreover He said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

How welcome that word would be to His servant - God appearing as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That, as it were, puts him in the path of the presence of God, for the unshod foot lesson has been learned. God tells His people and His servants to feel at home in His presence, but in the sense of what He is.

A word comes to mind now; it is a good word to remember: "He is not a man, as I am." The principle of that is very important. God is God - the gracious, blessed God, but He is God, and I am a man - and if I give Him His place in my thoughts and actions, I will get my true place before Him. Now look at the 7th verse. "The LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows."

I think that shows us the nature of God: to deliver them, but delivering them is not all He does for them; that is where God begins, but not where He ends. God did not deliver that people of old from their burdens and groanings, and leave them where they were; and the gospel not only delivers the believer from the burden of his sins, but it does something more - it delivers us from the very place where these burdens were made. "Bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." Do we know anything of that deliverance, not only from the bondage of Egypt, but from Egypt; that is, the world? God's people are not only a forgiven and saved people, but they are a separated people.

Turn to Numb. 23 What is the second thing that God speaks of in connection with His people? "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." God's association with His people is in their separation from the world. "I have chosen you out of the world." Well, that is what He has delivered us from, and what He would keep us out of; but that is not all. How good it is to know not only what God has delivered us from but what He has brought us into. He goes on to bring us unto a good land and a large, and that is what He has done for every believer in His Son: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (N. Trans.) - "a good land and a large" - "every

spiritual blessing." Now that is the character of the Christian's blessings-they are not temporal; they are not physical. When God saved us, He left our purses where they were, and our bodies He left where they were - our blessings are spiritual. Israel's blessings were temporal and physical, and will be again; but the Christian's are spiritual. Israel's blessings were, and will be, on the earth; the Christian's are in heaven.

What is the measure of the blessing? To Christians, He has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ"; and the believer who enters into that with some little degree of comprehension, knows that his place is in Christ, and in heaven - that is the measure of a good land and a large."

How one feels his spiritual poverty when brought into the presence of the riches of God's grace; and one great cause of spiritual poverty is a lack of the unshod foot, lack of the sense of having been with Him.

"Holy and reverend is His name" - "to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him." The blessed Lord is grieved when there is not the conduct that becomes His presence - the reverence - the holy, loving fear. This is the character of reverence He means when He -says, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him." That does not mean judicial fear - it is what you may call spiritual fear, a happy kind of fear. The Lord give us then, dear fellow-Christian, to cultivate it.

May the Lord bless these scriptures to our souls; and may the truth of His Word teach us to shun something that is increasing - that which men call "liberty." The children of God are brought into liberty; it is the Spirit of God's liberty, but the flesh would turn that liberty to its own account. With the lesson of the unshod foot, God would teach us that we may guard against this false liberty.

## A Reader Inquires About God's King Book

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A reader inquires about chapter 2, of "God's King," published in the May, 1948 issue of "Christian Truth." The first three pages of the article contain the points in question regarding the 16th Psalm, where the Lord Jesus as a man expresses His dependence on God in the words, "Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee do I put My trust." The inquirer says that some persons were troubled about such remarks as these: "He was to show what Adam had failed to exhibit - the proper character and position of the lowest in rank of God's intelligent creatures, called by Him, man"; and "how fully then He took the place of a creature, who should ever be dependent upon the Creator"; and "He was as a creature dependent, and throughout He remained so." They were afraid that the deity of the Lord Jesus might in some way be sullied by these statements.

ANSWER: We appreciate the diligence that seeks to be careful to detect anything that would be derogatory to Christ Jesus our Lord. For a Christian to be indifferent to any slight put upon the Son of God would show a very low state indeed; it would be that lukewarmness that the Lord condemns in Rev. 3 We would, however, call our reader's attention to the context by quoting more fully from the article:

"Power to be exercised by Him as God's King seems only natural and right, but a position of lowly dependence is one which man would never have assigned to Him. Yet this was the place He took when upon earth, who will one day rule all nations with a rod of iron; for He was to show what Adam had failed to exhibit - the proper character and position of the lowest in rank of God's intelligent creatures, called by Him, man.

"Perfect God and perfect man, whatever be the relative position He occupies, in it He is perfect.

"As man on earth, He entered fully into His place, and acted throughout as befits the creature."

It should be noted that the author of "God's King" is careful to show that this position as a man was one which He took, and that He was "perfect God and perfect man." Surely Scripture bears this out. Does not Phil. 2 tell of His humiliation - His becoming a man? To deny His true - but perfect - humanity would be to dishonor Him who in love stooped so low. He ever was God, but in order to meet us in our deep need He came where we were - took the form of a man.

And in that position which He in grace took He demonstrated that perfect dependence and obedience which should have characterized the creature - Adam and his posterity - but, alas, did not. Surely we do not need to be reminded that this blessed One was not and could never be a creature,

for He was the Creator; but when in grace He came down to that low estate He did so in all perfection and showed out in His whole pathway full dependence and perfect obedience. What a great contrast between the first Adam and the Last Adam, the first man and the Second Man!

We might quote another portion of the article:

"To turn now to the Psalm before us, which gives us the principles of His walk before God-it begins with declaring His dependence, and ends with expressing His confidence. 'Preserve Me, O God,' is the first utterance. 'Thou wilt show Me the path of life' is the closing expression of confidence. How fully then He took the place of a creature, who should ever be dependent upon the Creator. To be as gods, was the bait held out but too successfully to Eve in the garden of Eden; the refusal to leave the path of dependence upon God, characterized the Second Man, when tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Yet all the while He was God. The stormy sea obeyed His behest, and was stilled; fishes were brought in abundance to Peter's net, and one fish brought him the exact sum demanded as tribute from the disciple and his

Master; the winds too dropped at His word; the devils owned His authority; and death released its grasp, when He bade Lazarus to come forth. Power then He had; all nature obeyed His bidding, who took so dependent a place as to say, 'Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee do I put My trust.' Is it degrading for a man to own himself dependent on a superior being? Is independence of God what the creature may desire? These questions receive a complete answer from the acts of God's Son down here. He was as [note: it does not say He was a creature but was as one-it is the position He took] a creature dependent, and throughout He remained so."

May our inquirer note that in this paragraph also the author is careful to affirm His deity. Should we not stand in wonder and admiration as we behold Him who created all things coming so low for the glory of God and our good? And when we think of the perfection He always displayed as a man down here, does it not by way of contrast show how far Adam and his seed fell? And does it not serve as a rebuke to us - His blood bought people - that we should fail in dependence on, confidence in, and obedience to, God? Well may we "consider Him" the only One who is the perfect example.

Another reader had questioned a remark in this same series about the use of the word "essence" in connection with the Lord Jesus down here. It said that as to His essence He was God. The meaning of the word "essence" would make clear that no error was there. Webster's Dictionary says: "That in being which underlies all outward manifestations and is permanent and unchangeable." Surely it was so that no matter what human veil there was He was nevertheless always God. As one of our poets has said,

"There see the Godhead glory Shine through that human veil."

## The Good Hands of the Lord

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"There was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron."

It was really, as we would say, against the infinite grace of our Lord Jesus. This is what answers to it in the antitype. This might seem strong to say of Christians; but whenever we are tried and occupied with circumstances, are we not doing so? Do you think the Lord does not know what troubles us? Do you think the Lord does not send it for our good? It may be bad in another; but the chief point we have to look at is to see the good hand of the Lord, no matter what it is. We are not to be "overcome of evil," but to "overcome evil with good." The true way to do so is to count on the Lord Jesus regulating everything. All power is given to Him on earth and in heaven; and why should we not be happy in His ways with us? He it is who deals with us, whatever may be the instrument and whatever the circumstances.

## The Gospels

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We will now turn to the gospels and try to discover what are the chief characteristics of each; but in doing this we can only point them out, and must leave the reader to pursue the examination for his own profit, begging him to notice that the designed differences in the gospels are to be seen not only in the broad outlines, but also in the minutest details.

### MATTHEW

The first verse gives us the key to this gospel. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." It does not say "Son of man," or "Son of God," but "Jesus Christ, the son of David"; and the genealogy is traced up to David, and thence to Abraham. We thus learn that in this gospel Christ is presented as THE SON OF DAVID; in other words, THE MESSIAH. The promise to Israel was, "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Isa. 7:14. In Matthew (but in no other gospel) is this said to be fulfilled in the birth of Christ (Matt. 1:23). As Messiah He was of course presented to the Jews; and this gospel relates how He was in various ways presented to the nation, together with, alas! His rejection at every step. Indeed the gospel may be said to be a living manifestation of that one short sentence, "He came unto His own [as the promised Messiah, Jehovah-Jesus] and His own received Him not." Note too that it was in the midst of this rejection that He speaks of the Church: "I will build My Church" (chapter 16: 18; and it is mentioned also in chapter 18:17). This is the more remarkable as in none of the other gospels is the Church, as such, ever mentioned, while here it is beautifully in character with the rejection of Christ by the Jews; though even in Matthew it is not fully brought out as it is afterward by Paul.

Note too that Christ as the seed of David was to abide continually. "I have sworn unto David My servant, thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations." Psalm 89:3, 4. And so Matthew's gospel does not record the ascension, but closes with Christ still alive on the earth.

This one fact alone ought surely to have opened the eyes of Christians to the truth that God had a special design in each gospel. Matthew of course was present at the ascension and knew all about it, and yet he omits this very important circumstance. But why? It would not have been in character with his gospel.

This gospel being the presentation of Christ to the Jews, we have here, as we might well expect, more quotations from the Old Testament scriptures than in the other gospels, with which the Jews were all more or less familiar. Here too we have the principles of the kingdom more fully brought out than in the other gospels.

To give one instance of detail, notice that on Christ's public entry into Jerusalem the cry in this gospel is, "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." Chapter 21:9. This incident is related by the other three Evangelists, but none of them mentions these words - "Son of David." It is only in Matthew that this title occurs, and

it is only in Matthew that this title is said to stir up the anger of the Jews: "When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased." v. 15. Surely this is not matter of accident, but will be at once seen to be in beautiful harmony with the distinctive character of the gospel.

Thus the careful student will find many instances of words and sentences and incidents peculiar to Matthew, all of which are in full harmony with the main character of the gospel, but which are different in the other gospels, or omitted altogether.

While thus speaking of Matthew's gospel, it must be guarded that it is not intended to convey the thought that Christ is never mentioned or alluded to in this gospel in other characters also. But this in no way invalidates the thesis that the Holy Ghost had a special design to manifest Christ in Matthew as the Son of David - the Messiah. And it is believed that the more it is examined and compared with the other gospels, the more it will be apparent and convincing. But we must turn to

## MARK

This gospel opens with, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," and it might be supposed that this is the key to the gospel, but it will be found that this is not the fact. Christ is here presented as THE FAITHFUL SERVANT. This may not be seen at first sight as lying on the surface, but it is believed that it will bear the fullest investigation.

Note as characteristic that here there is no genealogy, no birth of Christ, no parentage; for it is not usual to want to know the pedigree of servants (with reverence be it said of One who is our Lord). Again, masters say to their servants, "Immediately you have done so-and-so I want you"; or "Come immediately"; "Do this at once." and so on: so in this gospel we find the words "immediately" and "straightway" oftener than in any of the other gospels. There is more reference in Mark to the service of the disciples than in Matthew, but it especially exhibits Christ as the faithful servant; immediately He had done one work, He proceeds to do another. Remark too how Christ in this gospel allows Himself to be intruded upon. Here alone we read, "And they had no leisure so much as to eat." Mark 6:31.

Here, as we might expect, we have the nearest approach to chronological order; much, however, has been omitted that is in the other gospels.

Here we do not find Christ laying down the principles of the kingdom as in Matthew; they would be out of place in Mark's gospel. Nor do we meet with His judgment on the people in the words, "Woe unto you," so often repeated in Matthew. In this gospel alone are the words, "neither the Son," added in the passage, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Chapter 13:32. Here too is omitted the mention of Christ's power to call twelve legions of angels; and in the closing commission the words, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," are omitted.

Note too that in this gospel Christ does not address God as "Father" but once, and this is in the agony in the garden, when His service of love is closed. It is also remarkable that in this gospel His disciples never address Him as "Lord."

The reader will not fail to see how all this is beautifully in harmony with the character of Christ as the faithful servant, which is brought out in Mark's gospel.

## LUKE

In this gospel Christ is represented as the SON OF MAN. Here we have a genealogy which traces back, not merely to David and Abraham, as in Matthew, but to the first man Adam. Here we get the birth of Christ, and here exclusively we have the few incidents of His early life. He was subject to His parents, and He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. All this is surely in full harmony with Christ as Son of man.

This gospel takes a wider scope than Matthew - it is the Son of man presented to men. Doubtless it is to the Jew first. but afterward it is to the whole world. This is brought out in many of the details; note, for instance, the quotation (chapter 3:4) from Isa. 40, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." Matthew also quotes this passage (chapter 3:3), and stops here, but Luke continues t h e quotation: "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." This is all the more remarkable because Luke quotes less from the Old Testament than Matthew; but here he quotes more, and there is divine wisdom in this; doubtless the reader will see how in full harmony it was for Matthew to stop where he did in the quotation, and equally so for Luke to quote more. Here it is "all flesh" which is to see the salvation of the Lord. In like manner too in Luke, when the twelve apostles are sent forth to preach, they are not charged (as they are in Matthew): "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." Here too we have the still wider commission to the seventy (chapter 10:1).

In Luke, but in Luke only, we get the great moral lesson of the good Samaritan, showing that all men are our neighbors. Here alone we get, in answer to the objection that "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (chapter 15), the beautiful parable of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the prodigal son, exhibiting God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, engaged in the salvation of man. Here alone we get the divine insight into the future world, in the account of Lazarus and the rich man, with the fine lesson that outward blessing is no longer a sign of God's richest favor; and that memorable declaration that if men hear not the means that God has appointed, neither will they hear though one rose from the dead. Here alone we get the beautiful story of the Pharisee and the publican. The reader will surely not fail to see how all these points are the setting aside of the Jewish system, and Christ is revealing Himself as for man universally - the Son of man for man. This is the characteristic of Luke's gospel.

## The Gospels: Is It Inspired?

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In 2 Tim. 3:16 we read, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." Now mark this passage. In the original there are but three words: "ALL" [or every] (not simply a part, leaving a doubt upon obscure passages or apparent discrepancies; it is all

- books, chapters, verses, words -all) "SCRIPTURE" (the whole canon - the gospels as well as the epistles - the New equally with the Old) [is] "GOD-INSPIRED" (through a human element, but yet of God, as we appropriately call it, the Word of God).

Then God is the author, and the gospels must be worthy of Him as an author; and He could not have allowed the human instrument to spoil His Book with imperfections. Men often employ others to write at their dictation, but what author would let his amanuensis mar his work by something of his own? And yet we Christians are called upon to believe that because God used man as an instrument (and God could as easily use the various minds of men as we vary our writing with a steel or a quill pen), He had to let man put in so much of his own that we only have it in the "imperfections of human speech," and in the "limitations of human thought." But, by God's help, we will not believe this. We will rest the comfort of our soul's salvation on the words God has used, and believe Christ when He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away." Mark 13:31.

Of course it is not intended to assert by this that every individual word of our English translation (or of any translation) is inspired. What is here maintained is, that every word that God caused to be written is inspired; and where a translation is correct, the words of the translation are of equal authority. It is true there may be a few passages which those competent to judge of the text are not so sure about; but while it is believed that there are none which in any way throw a doubt upon any one of the fundamental truths of Christianity, these exceptions in no way affect the question of the verbal inspiration of that which God caused to be written. Christ said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." John 12:48. In 1 Cor. 2:13 it is said, "The words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." And in Pro. 30:5, "Every word of God is pure."

But here it will be again objected that the various manuscripts of the Greek vary so much, by the lapse of ages and by errors of the copyists, that the theory of verbal inspiration is of no use to any who maintain it. But this is not correct; for if it be once admitted that the writers only wrote imperfectly what God intended to convey to man, then all is uncertain; whereas if God caused the right words to be written, then we are certain we have those very words, except where the manuscripts disagree; and where they do differ, the weight of evidence is often so preponderating and decisive as to give a moral certainty as to which is right, thus leaving comparatively few places really doubtful. Verbal inspiration must be maintained.

But it is asserted that though we might believe this of some parts of Scripture, yet in the four gospels there are such real discrepancies that it is impossible that the very words of Scripture can be inspired; and an illustration is given in the inscription on the cross - not any two of the

Evangelists, it is said, give it exactly the same, and therefore some must be incorrect.

In answer to this, let us take a familiar illustration. Suppose I go into a graveyard and, from a tombstone of some notable person, I take an extract, and I say, "On such a stone is written so-and-so." Another person does the same thing but, for a particular reason and to illustrate some particular fact, he takes a different extract, and he also says, "On such a stone is written so-and-so." A third takes a third extract, and in doing so he copies a part (but only a part) of what the first did, and a part (but only a part) of what the second did; he also says, "On such a stone is written A fourth person takes still a different extract and says, "It is thus written on the stone."

Now in such a case as this might not all these extracts be strictly and verbally true, and yet no two of them be exactly alike? They surely might, as no one of the writers undertook to quote every word that was on the tombstone, each having a particular reason for quoting what he did. And if we apply this to the case in point, all difficulty and apparent discrepancy at once disappears. Suppose the actual writing to have been:

This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews

Matthew quotes, This is Jesus the King of the Jews

Mark quotes, the King of the Jews

Luke quotes, This is the King of the Jews

John quotes, Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews

Is it not surprising that an apparent discrepancy, so simply solved as this is, should be put forth by eminent scholars as an unanswerable proof of the impossibility that the words of the gospels are inspired?

We are thus forced back to the Word of God itself, which declares that every scripture is God inspired; and the answer to the question, Who is the author of the four gospels? is God, and none but God. And we cannot for a moment admit that He allowed the writers in any way to spoil His work.

But if this is true, our other questions return with their true weight: "Why are there four gospels?" and "Why do they differ?" Now it must follow, if the gospels are God-inspired, and if the writers penned nothing but what He chose, that all the omissions and differences are designed, and designed too for some wise purpose worthy of God, the author. And if this is so, instead of laboring to form harmonies of the four gospels, our chief concern should be to try and discover what special object God had in giving them to us as He has.

An illustration may perhaps help us in the elucidation of this part of our subject. Think of such a man as the first Napoleon, and suppose there was someone who had been his constant companion from boyhood. At his death this friend is asked to write out the characteristics of Napoleon, illustrated by his life. But in such a man there were several distinct characters, and the writer would soon discover that it would be far better to write separate memoirs: first, say, as a soldier; then as a ruler; then the moral character of the man: and so on. And suppose we take the last named, would not the writer feel he could not be hampered with chronological order? For

instance, in speaking of a particular trait of his character, he might best illustrate it by an incident in his school days, followed by something that happened in Italy, and then by something in his private life; whereas the last incident may have actually taken place between the other two, the writer taking a moral order rather than a chronological order. And if a stranger were to take these three supposed memoirs and attempt to make one, would he not find the greatest possible difficulty in doing so? But would it not be great rashness to conclude, when he failed in his plan, that the writer must have made grave mistakes?

Now if we bring this to bear on our subject, let me ask, Has not the Lord Jesus Christ many different characters? And may not the four gospels have been written each to set forth Christ in a different character? and in doing which, moral order may have been far better than chronological order? And if so, will not this at once account for the many apparent discrepancies, omissions, transpositions, etc., that are said to be discovered? and will it not show what a great mistake is made by attempts to force the four into one narrative?

But let us further illustrate this point, for it is of great importance to see it clearly. Suppose an artist were requested to paint a full length portrait of, say, the Duke of Wellington. Surely his first question would be, in what character shall I represent him? If he was wanted as a soldier, it would not do to paint it as he appeared in the House of Lords, nor as he appeared in the family circle. Surely all must see that the artist must have a definite character in the man he is to portray, and nothing could exceed the folly of insisting that the painter must give all the characters in one portrait!

Now may not the four gospels be so many divine portraits of the Lord Jesus Christ in different characters? And if so, to attempt to mingle the four into one portrait, would be as inconsistent as it would be to cut up four different portraits of the Duke of Wellington and put them together to make such a one as would give the whole man. The expression of the countenance, let alone the dress, would be very different in the politician from what it would be in the warrior; and the whole would be spoiled. So of the gospels: God being the author of them, if He designed to set forth Christ in different characters, He surely did the work perfectly; and we cannot alter a word or make a transposition without spoiling some of the fine touches in those exquisite portraits of our Lord as given by the Holy Ghost.

## The Gospels: John

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### JOHN

In this gospel Christ is presented as the SON OF GOD. All are familiar with the grand opening of this gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; and toward the close it is expressly stated that the object of the Evangelist was that men "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." Chapter 20: 31.

Here, surely, a genealogy would be out of place, so we have none; it is God being made known. In like manner we have no birth, no parentage, no mention of Him as a child growing up, etc. All this would be out of place; all are omitted. But in lieu of this, we hear of Him as being with God before creation, and then of making all things. He is the true Light of men. And then "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." Chapter 1:14.

In this gospel alone we get the raising of Lazarus from the dead with that majestic declaration, "I am the resurrection, and the life." Chapter 11:25. But let it be again noticed that while it is manifest that each of the gospels has in view a definite character of Christ, it is not to the exclusion of His other characters. The one is designedly prominent and characteristic, though the others are there also. Thus in this very chapter where Christ declares that He is "the resurrection and the life," we also read, "Jesus wept," which beautifully brings out His manhood also.

In this gospel is brought out the cardinal truth of this dispensation - the personal presence of the Holy Ghost. "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me." Chapter 15:26. And mark those words, "whom I will send." Who could speak of sending One who is God but One who is also God?

Here alone we have the record of that confidential address of Christ to His Father respecting His disciples and those who should believe on Him. Herein is omitted the agony in the garden with the saying, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me," which is in substance given in the other three gospels. Here alone it is recorded that when they came to take Him prisoner, and He said, "I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground." Chapter 18:6. Here alone we have that declaration of Christ to Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above." Chapter 19:11. And here we have no ascension. It was as Son of man He ascended; but here He is the Son of God; and the reader will not fail to see how characteristic are the other points above noticed as to Christ in His divine character of THE SON OF GOD.

This then is a rapid sketch of the characteristics of the four gospels, and it is believed that they will bear the fullest investigation and will be found not only to lie in their broader outlines, but also in their minister details. Nothing more is attempted here than the merest outline; hut if Christians, instead of straining any part to form harmonies of the gospels, would more study the characteristic

differences of those divine records, it is believed they would, under the blessing of God, gain much instruction and see beauties they have never yet discovered.

And now we trust we have gained answers to the questions with which we started:

Why are there four gospels?

Because God designed to set forth Christ in four different characters.

Why do the gospels differ?

Because God has thus the better brought out those different characters.

3. Are the gospels thus differing fully inspired?

They are; God is the author. They are "God-inspired," and He must have done His work perfectly. Not only the statements, but the words, are inspired; and to alter a word or leave out or transpose a sentence is only to spoil the work of God and mar the "fine touches" of the Spirit of God.

The writer is well aware that by some this will be called fancy or something worse. He knows that the full inspiration of the Scriptures is daily being more and more undermined. He has already quoted an accredited orthodox writer (as a type of many) who says we have the treasure only "in the imperfections of human speech and in the limitations of human thought." But then it must follow that God has done His work imperfectly, or allowed man to spoil it (though man would never allow an amanuensis to spoil his work), and we are not sure of any part.

But we are sure. The gospels are "God-inspired"; He Himself declares it; and Christ's word shall judge the unbeliever in the last 'clay (John 12:48). Then by God's grace we will believe it now - believe it all - and rest the assurance of our soul's salvation on it. And may He give grace to us all the better to understand His holy Word!

"Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89.

## The Gospels: Why Are There Four? Why Different?

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It has been a standing problem in the Church of God to account for the various differences which are found in the four gospels - a problem too that has been very seldom satisfactorily answered. Many have been the attempts to form "harmonies" of the gospels; but these attempts have the more brought to light the great differences which unquestionably exist, and have proved the extreme difficulty of forming, from t h e whole, one continuous narrative. Scarcely two of those who have made the experiment are agreed in every particular. These harmonies seem to have established very little more than that the four gospels may all be inspired because they may be made to harmonize; and it should be remembered that that these harmonies can only be formed by many transpositions, accommodations, and studied conjectures, while they leave the main problem totally unsolved.

Some, however, have boldly met the question, How are the differences in the four gospels to be accounted for? The usual answers may be mainly said to be two; namely,

1. That the evangelists copied from one another, or from a common written document to which they all had access. Thus a well known writer says, "Mark, however, presupposes the existence of Matthew and, as it were, supplies his omissions; Luke does the same for both of them; John for all three. Matthew, an apostle, wrote first, and thus established an authority for both Mark and Luke. John, also an apostle, wrote last, and confirmed to mankind more fully the words of Mark and Luke, already sufficiently firm in themselves. Matthew wrote especially to show the fulfillment of the Old Testament scripture, and to convince the Jews. Mark produced an abridgment of Matthew, adding at the same time many remarkable things which had been omitted by his predecessor, and paying particular attention to the noviciate

of the apostles." - Bengel's Gnomon.

Is it not strange that any one should have stated such a theory as this to account for the differences of the gospels? We can easily understand that if two or more persons copied from one an-

other, or from some one original, they would agree in most if not all parts thus copied; but that the copying can account for the differences is manifestly inconsistent.

But there is a graver question at issue than this; and that is, Is God the author of the gospels? and if so, Is it worthy of Him that Mark should supply the omissions of Matthew - that he should have made an abridgment of Matthew? Is it not a marvelous fact that no book was ever written that is so full and comprehensive in such a condensed form as the Bible? And yet we are told of one repeating what the other had written and supplying his omissions; then a third doing likewise; and then a fourth! Again I ask, Is all this worthy of God's being the author of the four gospels? Assuredly it is not.

2. But there is another theory; namely, that the apostles in preaching and teaching related, from time to time, the incidents connected with Christ's life, together with His discourses; and that the evangelists (or at least the first three) wrote what they had thus heard; the differences in the gospels are accounted for on this theory by our having them secondhand. Thus says a distinguished writer: "This common substratum of apostolic teaching - never formally adopted by all, but subject to all varieties of diction and arrangement, addition and omission, incident of transmission through many individual minds, and into many different localities - I believe to have been the original source of the common part of our three gospels [Matthew, Mark and Luke]... With regard to those parts of our gospels which do not fall under the above remarks, there are various conceivable sources whence they may have arisen. As each evangelist may have had more or less access to those who were themselves witnesses of the events, whether before or during the public ministry of our Lord, or as each may have fallen in with a more complete or a shorter account of those events, so have our narratives been filled out with rich detail or confined to the mere statement of occurrences." -Alford's Greek Testament.

Now is not a good deal of this merely accidental? An evangelist wrote what he may have heard! or what he "may have fallen in with!" Again the, questions must be pressed, Isaiah this worthy of God? It is consistent with God being the author of the gospels? Assuredly it is not.

But why are we obliged to have any such imaginary theories? We know from Scripture that Matthew and John were apostles; we know from Scripture also that besides the twelve apostles there were men who had "companied with" them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, beginning from the baptism of John unto the day that He was taken up from them (Acts 1:21, 22); and Mark may have been one of these. And of Luke, we know from the Scripture that he "had perfect understanding of [or, was accurately acquainted with] all things from the very first." Luke 1:3. Surely then we have sufficient facts recorded in the Scripture itself as to those who wrote the gospels that render it altogether unnecessary to elaborate human systems, let them be never so cleverly wrought.

But another question here arises: Suppose any one of these theories were correct, would it at all account without direct inspiration for the things recorded in the gospels? Suppose, for a moment, that oral teaching was the foundation of our first three gospels, and that oral teaching was by the apostles; how could the apostles know accurately what took place before they were apostles? the conversation, for instance, between the angel and Mary, and the angel and Elizabeth? And then, when they were apostles, how did they know what took place at the temptation of Christ? Who was there to hear? How did they know the conversation that took place between Christ and the woman of Samaria? How did they know what Christ uttered in the garden of Gethsemane? Simply being apostles would not tell them these things; and how then could they record them? In John there are still deeper things: "In the beginning was the Word,... All things were made by Him," etc. How did he get this information? We cannot answer

these questions satisfactorily without bringing in divine inspiration. If God is the author, of course He could use any means that might exist, or He could make to the writer a direct revelation. He who revealed to Moses the account of the creation could as easily reveal to the evangelists what no human eye had ever seen, and what no human ear had ever heard.

But here these grave questions must be pressed: Is God the author of the four gospels? and if He is, has He done the work perfectly or imperfectly? Now it is to be feared that many a Christian would shrink from answering these questions. As a theory they hold of course the inspiration of the Scriptures, but if pressed with a few plain questions (for instance) as to the differences and apparent discrepancies of the four gospels, they bring in at once the human element, and alas, give that the prominent place; and, one is bold to say, that as they bring the human element into prominence, so they virtually shut God out, and virtually declare (though they would shudder to say so in so many words) that God has done the work imperfectly! We must let a writer speak for himself - one too, observe, who holds with the inspiration of the Scriptures:

"The men were full of the Holy Ghost - the books are the pouring out of that fullness through the men - the conservation of the treasure in earthen vessels. The treasure is ours in all its richness; but it is ours, as only it can be ours, in the imperfections of human speech, in the limitations of human thought, in the variety incident first to individual character, and then to manifold transcription and the lapse of ages." -Alford's Greek Testament.

Alas, alas, for us! Must we then give up the perfect inspiration of the gospels? Must we admit that we have them only "in the imperfections of human speech," and "in the limitations of human thought?" Our blessed Lord often referred to His "words," and many simpleminded Christians thought they had in their New Testament the very words Christ uttered; are they now to believe that this is a mistake, and that much is uncertain? Christians have been in the habit of resting for comfort on single words; such as, "He that believeth on the Son bath everlasting life." Is this true or is it an "imperfection"? "My sheep... shall never perish": is this true, or is it a "limitation"? "The Word was God": is this true, or is it a "variety incident to individual character"? May we not exclaim, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" But, thanks be to God, His foundations are not destroyed, and He has given us an assurance that answers fully and completely all these objections.

## Government and Religions

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The sentences imposed on Cardinal Mindszenty and his associates in Hungary and the Protestant leaders in Bulgaria emphasize the ages-old conflict between governments and religions. Communism will not brook any interference with the state; the state must be supreme and even God (in their thinking) made subservient.

Diversity of religions forms one of the greatest obstacles to unity in a nation or an empire. Nebuchadnezzar found this out when he consolidated his conquests. He had brought together nations and peoples with many deities (all false ones, but Jehovah of the Jews) and then decided on a plan to superimpose a grand national deity over them all. His image of gold was set up in the plain of Dura and edicts issued to enforce a single religion. (See Dan. 3)

We do not attempt to speak of the justification, or the lack of it, in any of these trials of and sentences imposed on various church leaders, but only of the principles that lead to conflict within nations. The freedom of

India was long delayed because of the division of the teeming millions of that vast country into opposing and hostile religions. Their independence was granted only when a plan was devised to separate the peoples and divide the country. Even then the separation was not accomplished without bloodshed.

In the early days of the Bolshevik revolution there was a concerted effort to drive God and religion out of Russia. While there was not much conflict between religions in Russia, there was an insurmountable barrier between communism and religion in that communism admitted of no allegiance to God - all must be to the state. While communism is not a religion it savors of one for it is more than a form of government; it is something that takes hold of the inner being of a man, forming deep-rooted convictions. When this is achieved there can be no middle ground; no allegiance can be tolerated to anything or anyone else, even to God.

Therefore, in the early days of communism in Russia, atheism was advanced to take the place of God and religion in the minds of men. Any even formal recognition of God acts as a deterrent to man's unbridled will, and communism has its roots in that throwing off of all restraint - lawlessness, that in the hands of a few becomes law.

But man is inherently religious, and after years of unrestrained atheistic activities more than half of the people still held to some belief in a Supreme Being; therefore there was a change in the U.S.S.R. attitude. Churches were tolerated and religion given a limited, recognized place, but it was to be made a national religion wholly subservient to the state, and its instrument in wielding power over the minds of the people. This attitude is the underlying cause of the present campaign against the religious leaders in the Russian satellite countries. If there is to be a religion in these countries it must be the tool of Moscow to mold the minds of men so that the Soviet state retains its supremacy.

The Vatican sees in all this a challenge to its very life, and therefore will not give or concede anything; the battle is joined to the death. They have made good use of the sentencing of their Hungarian leader to arouse public sympathy outside of the iron curtain. It has been a capital gain for them in many countries, and they have used it as a means to draw people and support to themselves. And last, but not least, the same thing happening to the Protestant leaders in Bulgaria has given Protestants and Catholics a common cause. • All this is definitely leading up to Roman Catholicism's ascendancy for exercising her great sway over the Roman Empire, so-soon to be revived. It also paves the way for that "Babylon the Great" character which will no doubt draw some of lifeless Protestantism within her fold. Yes, things are shaping up for the end, and that rapidly.

As stated in a previous issue, there are "leftist" elements within the sphere of the to-be-revived Roman Empire, and these will be ready to help destroy that great religious system when the time comes in God's calendar of events (see Rev. 17 and 18).

## A Great Calm

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The 4th chapter of the gospel by Mark contains, in verses 26.29, a parable or similitude of the kingdom not mentioned by the other Evangelists. Following as it does upon the parable of the sower and the Lord's exposition of it to His disciples, and bearing in mind that this gospel presents our Lord Jesus Christ as the Servant-Prophet, the Minister of the Word, we shall see that these verses serve, if one may so speak, to maintain the spiritual sequence of the first part of the chapter with the last scene upon the lake, concerning which it is upon my heart to say a few words.

We have, first, in the parable of the sower, the new place the Lord takes consequent upon His rejection; that is, One bringing that which has life in it, instead of seeking fruit from men. The explanation follows, and then in the verses above cited there is an indication of what would succeed the time of seed-sowing by the Lord personally - that He would absent Himself from the scene of labor, and according to all appearance would not only take no active part in tending the seed, but so far as could be observed, would take no interest in it. It is as if He "should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." v. 27. Let us observe, in passing, the expression "sleep, and rise," for this thought seems to recur at the close of the chapter. The earth brings forth fruit of itself, but at harvest time the Lord personally reasserts His place, and puts in the sickle. So will it be at the end of the age. The parable of the mustard tree follows, which develops the thought of what Christendom would become in the world during Christ's absence. Springing from the smallest of seeds, having the most circumscribed commencement, it would become great; as it is said, "greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches," so that the fowls of the air (the powers of evil; compare vv. 4, 15) may lodge under the shadow of it.

Now this is what we find true today. Christendom has become a worldly power, and for faith there is oftentimes the deep exercise, "Where is Christ in all this?" What a comfort that when they were alone "He expounded all things to His disciples." If we cultivated communion more with Christ alone, we should understand His things better. The slackness is with us, never with Him (compare Psalm 73:1.6, 17).

The evening has now drawn on the close of the day of toil, and one cannot forbear the comparison that the day of seed-sowing and salvation is rapidly drawing to an end. What has the heart of the disciple to steady it in a world like this, which becomes a foreign element to him when he knows Christ. Oh! these blessed words, "Let us pass over unto the other side." v. 35. What security they breathe! what joy! In spite of the fact that the world sees Him not, we see Him (John 14:19), and in all the confusion of the present moment, His word strengthens the feeble, and claims the allegiance of all. "Let us pass over unto the other side." What room for fear in the heart of the disciples if they had seen what the words implied? They meant that He charged Himself with their safety right over to the other shore. And yet they cry out in the presence of what appears danger with the unbelieving thought that He cared not if they perished!

Yes! but you may say He was asleep. Beloved reader, after that word, "Let us go," whatever happened, they were secure. It was only to sight and sense that He seemed to take no interest in their welfare, but neither the storms of life nor all the powers of evil can engulf us if we confide in Him. He slept, but at their cry He arose (compare v. 27), and rebuking the elements, the disciples see the power and love that was with them all the time though they knew it not. "And there was a great calm." v. 39. Is it too much to say that spiritually such a juncture as this occurs in each history? The power of death affrights the soul, but acquaintance with Christ's word and the knowledge of His presence quiets every fear for the journey. It is only in unbelief that He cares not. And when our hearts know Him thus, with us "all the days, until the completion of the age" (N. Trans.), what fear can remain? Is there not "a great calm" in the soul?

O dear reader, do you know it?

In the midst of all the dangers, the heaving and tossing and threatening of the billows, do you know that voice that speaks not only peace to the elements, but a great calm to the heart, by the same almighty power? The Lord give all His saints to know Him better in this way.

## Hannah's Prayer

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Read 1 Sam. 2:1-10

The Spirit of God says that this is Hannah's "prayer," so it is something addressed to the Lord, but here it is recorded in God's blessed Word, so it is spoken back to us again. It is a most remarkable scripture!

The first thing we notice is, "And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted, in the LORD; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in Thy salvation."

No one can rejoice in the Lord who is not able to rejoice in God's salvation. Men ordinarily rejoice in the work of their own hands. But one who can really rejoice in the Lord knows something about God's salvation. The only person in this world who has a moral right, a divine right and title, to be glad is the one who knows Jesus as his Savior.

You see, if we are not saved, if we do not know Jesus as our Savior, there are ten thousand sins behind our back, there is the wrath of God over our heads, and the blackness of darkness forever before our faces. Who will dare be glad with that accumulation?

Here Hannah says, "My heart rejoiceth in the LORD." It is a wonderful thing to be brought to that point of triumph. There was a time when she wept. There was a time when her soul and heart were heavy, but the Lord came in and delivered her, and instead of her being occupied just with her deliverance, she is occupied with her Deliverer.

A large percent of teaching in this day, even where it is very earnest and accompanied with a great deal that presents a body of devotion, is calculated to engage us with ourselves and the work of the Spirit in us, rather than with Christ and His work for us.

What you find characterizing Hannah is, she is not looking within; she is not engaged with herself; she is occupied with the Lord. If we know the Lord Jesus as our Savior we should be, as to the state of our souls, where we can squeeze the very juice of praise out of the most knotty circumstances.

Even at this moment there was a great deal of trial for Hannah's heart. I have no doubt that there was quite a tug there, but she rejoiced in the Lord, gloried in the Lord, and was glad in the Lord. There is a lesson in that for us.

One reason we go through the world, even we who know the Lord's salvation, so languidly, so lazily, so haltingly, is because we are not glad in the Lord. I sometimes think that we are a very poor advertisement for what we profess. The happiest, the most joyous people in this world should be those who know Jesus as their

Savior and have owned that blessed One as their Lord. I do not mean they will not have sorrows; they will, but just as the Apostle says, if we do have the trouble and sorrow, "yet always rejoicing";

sorrows at the bottom, joys on top.

How blessedly this is illustrated in Paul and Silas at Philippi. Everything was discouraging. There they were with their feet fast in the stocks and their backs bleeding. They prayed and sang praises to God at midnight. They were not looking on the dark side of things. They were where the light always shines and they rejoiced in the Lord just as Hannah did here.

When the children of Israel were in battle array, their order was, the singers went before - not the bowman - not the spearman - but the singers, in recognition of this principle: "The joy of the LORD is your strength." It is a practical thing to rejoice in the Lord. It is the fruit of the Spirit. In Gal. 5:22 "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," etc. When it is a question of what the flesh produces, it is called "works."

There are some people who can only be real glad when a big meeting is going on. The joy, perhaps, is more in the meeting than in the Lord. The exhortation is to "Rejoice in the Lord always" - not only when everything goes smoothly. The Lord gives us to know what it is to boast somewhat after the fashion of Hannah in this prayer.

She says, "My heart rejoiceth in the LORD"; you see it was from within, out, and that is always God's way. "Mine horn is exalted in the LORD."

"My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies." Who are your enemies? Satan is one; is your mouth enlarged over him? It has a right to be. He is not a vanquished foe but he is a defeated one.

Then what about sin? That is another foe of yours which has been dealt with and all put away so that you have "no more conscience of sins." Blessed fact! Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. That is another foe disposed of and positive blessing brought.

What about death? He has annulled death and brought life and incorruptibility to light by the gospel.

What about judgment? The Judge Himself says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment]; but is passed from death unto life." Is not that wonderful? Our mouths may well be enlarged over our enemies.

What about wrath? We read in the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians, " Which delivered us from the wrath to come." The whole field is cleared; every bit of it; everything now and everything then. There is no reason why you and I should not be glad and have a song in our mouth all the day long. There was a time when our mouth was stopped according to the third of Romans, 19th verse: "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

So you see Satan, sin, death, judgment, and wrath have all been disposed of. Do you know what Jesus said on the resurrection morning when He entered behind those doors that were closed for fear of the Jews? He said, "Peace be unto you." It was divinely imparted and they had a divine right to it. The One that made peace pronounced it. He made it by the blood of the cross and conveyed it by His own words. Have you a right to be glad? You have - a real right.

Now I notice another thing: "Because I rejoice in Thy salvation." There is something striking in that expression. You hear lots of people rejoicing in my salvation, but here it is "Because I rejoice in Thy salvation." It is viewing salvation from His side instead of ours. If you think of salvation as your salvation (to be sure you are the subject of it), you measure it by your need; but when it is Thy salvation, you measure it by His need, so it is just as big as God Himself. He is revealed in that character as Savior.

In Hebrews we have salvation spoken of as "great salvation." It is not great because of what it saves us from, or what it saves us to, but great because of the One who has wrought it, who has effected it, and accomplished it. It cannot be an ordinary salvation, because it has not been provided by an ordinary one, but by the One who made the world.

When you go out at night and see the stars and moon, just remember that the One who put them there and gave them their place, and the One who maintains them there, became your Savior.

Then Hannah says, "There is none holy as the LORD." That is a very salutary truth. You hear people constantly speaking about the love, pity, and compassion of God, and it is blessed to make lost and guilty ones feel that God is such, but do not be led to believe that God is love in such a way as not to be righteous. People are saying everyone will be saved and none will be lost. It is just like this: if sin is a thing of such enormity that it required the death of the Son of God, can it be any wonder that a sinner will be judged if he rejects that Son?

You remember the devil's early lie to Eve in the garden of Eden. "Ye shall not surely die"; as much as to say, God is too good to carry into execution His threat. He is saying now, Death is all; God is too good to punish man. He does not want you to believe that story in the 16th of Luke: "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." Nor does he want you to believe "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

"There is none holy as the LORD." His holiness required the sacrifice of his Son and it will require the punishment of the sinner who rejects that Son.

"For there is none besides Thee." Has Christ so filled up the range of your soul's vision that all other persons and things are lost to you? See Col. 3:11 in connection with this: "Christ is everything" (N. Trans.).

"Neither is there any rock like our God." It is very beautiful to see how the Spirit of God brings God in as the Rock. You get the expression in Genesis and very frequently in Deuteronomy. God recognized very early in man's history that he needed something solid to rest upon. Everything is going to give way some day, and you want to be standing on the Rock at that time. Are you on the Rock? Are you there? Can you say, because you know it, "There is no rock like our Rock, neither any rock like our God?"

Luke 6:46.48: "And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid

the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock." Have you ever answered in the obedience of faith what He tells you to do? The first thing He tells you to do is to believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ. That is where you are to begin as a sinner.

In Isaiah this Rock is called the rock of ages; or, the rock of eternity. That is where you want to build and be, for everything is going to pieces and you want to be on that which abides.

"Neither is there any rock like our God." Is it not wonderful that Hannah learned this? She was near the Lord and got into some of the secrets. Science has its rocks but they usually splinter to pieces.

"Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." It is surprising how loquacious we are outside of God's presence, but when in the presence of God a hush takes place. You very often find men talking about what they have done, what they purpose doing, and so on. Sometimes they speak of what others do not do, and so on. We will not think much about ourselves when we get into God's presence. I used to see a Christian doing this, that, and the other thing, and I would say, "I am just as consistent as he. If he goes to heaven, I will." I found I had to have it out with God myself.

Why are we not to talk so proudly or arrogantly? "For the LORD is a God of knowledge." He knows what motive prompts what you say; He knows all about it. It is a very solemn thing to know He knows me altogether.

"O LORD, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, Thou knowest it altogether." Psalm 139:1-4. He is a God of knowledge and by Him actions are weighed. God does two things with man; He weighs him and measures him.

When He measures man what does He say? "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Sometimes people think,

"If I were to stand before God, I might hold out." You might say that when a long way off.

How about being weighed? Let us notice the 62nd Psalm, 9th verse (a very precious word to those who know grace, and very searching to those who do not): "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity."

Let us remember, if nothing else, that "The LORD is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed."

## Helps: Who Are They and What Do They Do?

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This little word occurs in the first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 12:28, where the inspired writer enumerates the various gifts and orders of ministry in the assembly. "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."

Now there is what we may call a beautiful undefinedness about the term "helps." We can see at a glance, and understand fully what is meant by an apostle, a prophet, a teacher, a miracle, a gift of healing, a government, a tongue.

But the full import of the term "helps" is not just so easily seized. It indicates a very wide field of happy and important Christian service. There are many persons in the assembly who could not be said to possess any specific gift; they are not evangelists, pastors, or teachers; but they can render effectual help to those who are.

You may sometimes find a man who is quite incompetent to take any part in public ministry, and yet he exerts a far more powerful influence for good than one who takes a prominent place. He is not a preacher or lecturer, but he takes a deep interest in the work of such. He has no thought of occupying the desk or the platform; but it does the heart good to see the way in which he opens the door for you, leads you to a seat, hands you a Bible and hymnbook.

His heart is in the work, and he is ready to do anything or everything to further the good cause. There is a genial brightness and self-forgetting elasticity about the man, rendering him a most delightful element in the assembly and in the work. He is ready for every good work - ready to serve all who may need his service. No matter what you want done, he is your man. Go to him when you will, or with what you will, he is always at your service. Difficulties are nothing to him. He only views them as an occasion for the display of energy. He is not encumbered with crotchets. He does not believe in them. His heart is free - his spirit fresh and bright. He loves Christ and His people, His servants and their work. He takes a profound interest in the progress of the gospel - in the salvation of souls - in the prosperity and growth of God's people. He is not self-occupied. He delights to see the work done, no matter who does it. He is ready to sweep the floor if needs be - ready to help in every possible way in which effective help may be rendered.

Have we any difficulty in assigning such a one his place in the category of gifts? None whatever. He is one of the "helps" - a most blessed and valuable element. Would that we had more of such. We pray for evangelists, for pastors, and teachers, and so we should, for we want them sadly. But we should pray for "helps" also, for they exert a marvelous influence for good wherever they are found.

We have little idea of how much the blessing of God's people and the progress of His work are promoted by that class of persons indicated by the brief, but comprehensive, term "helps." You may often hear a man say, "Oh, I am not an evangelist or a teacher. I do not possess any gift for speaking." Well, but you can be a help. You may not be a preacher or a teacher, but you can very

effectually co-operate with such in a thousand ways. You can hold up his hands, and encourage his heart, and refresh his spirit, and further his work in numberless and nameless little ways which, you may rest assured, are most grateful to the heart of Jesus, and will be amply rewarded in the day of His coming glory.

It is a very great mistake, indeed, to suppose that no one can help the Lord's people or the Lord's work unless he has some special gift. Every one has his own place to fill, his work to do. Every bird has his own note, except the mockingbird. This latter has nothing of its own, but mimics the notes of others. How much better to be real and simple - to give forth my own note, even though it be but the note of a robin - than to be seeking to imitate the thrush or the nightingale.

What we really want is a heart for the Lord's work. Where there is this, it will not be a question as to my gift. I shall be ready for every good work. Even though my gift may be most distinct, I should hold myself in constant readiness to lend a helping hand to others, to put my shoulder to the wheel, to further the blessed work in every possible way. Gift

or no gift, if I really love Christ, I shall seek to promote His cause and His glory. If I cannot preach the gospel, I can seek to gather the people; I can make them welcome. I can prove that my whole soul is in the work, and thus give a holy impetus to others. I can help by prayer, by my presence, by my very look. A genial heart, a bright happy spirit, a mind free from petty and detestable jealousies, a cordial well-wisher may prove a most delightful "help" to the work and the workman.

Beloved Christian reader, let us give ourselves to earnest prayer that the Lord may be pleased to develop in our midst that most interesting and valuable agency suggested by the heading of this paper. And may we all seek to do what we can for the furtherance of the cause and glory of that blessed One who gave His life to rescue us from everlasting burnings.

## Honest Things

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It is sad when indolence takes the place of providing things honest in the sight of all men. Yea, without care, the Christian may fall into the almost universal dishonesty of the world. Is not a deceitful, dishonest transaction of the same character as highway robbery? These are words that need to be put up in every office, shop, and home: "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." O for more faith and unswerving obedience in the common things of everyday life. We are persuaded it is carelessness in these things, if not worse than carelessness, that is the cause of much of our weakness.

## How Man Fell: a Lesson From the Garden of Eden

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Fallen human nature too plainly speaks on every hand not to have discovered to us the fact that the moment a prohibition comes home to us - from the earliest childhood to our latest breath - at once is kindled within us the desire for the very thing which it forbade. A thousand instances and examples might be presented to prove this.

But there was "law" in paradise -before man fell - and man was a responsible creature before he broke away from God; he was responsible to obey the law prohibiting his eating the fruits of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil before he became a "transgressor." God had revealed His ways to him, as a Giver, in the largest and widest munificence. Nothing was withheld from man. The ten thousand tributary streams which contributed to his happiness in Eden, spoke of a God who would withhold no good thing. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat," proclaimed the freeness and fullness of no niggard hand. The man was to enjoy it all freely. One small interdict prohibited the eating of the fruit of one tree-a tree which marked a responsibility which, when accepted, would only entail evil-"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In observing this prohibition he expressed that his will was subject to God who had placed him there, and surrounded him with every creature blessing.

This is the principle of law. An interdict will always prove a will in the person addressed, either subject or not subject to another.

The smallest interdict is sufficient for this. It is the way to discover whether another is subject to you or not. If not subject, the authority of that other is refused, and as a consequence, two wills are opposed, the one to the other; while the man that is tested, owns in conscience, that God has a right to be obeyed.

Now Satan did not begin by calling attention to the blessedness with which the man had been surrounded, nor to the character of God as giving all things richly to enjoy. Rather does he seize upon the prohibition, Calling attention to the interdict alone; "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" whereas God had said, "Of every tree of the

garden thou mayest freely eat." The grand master stroke of the serpent was to instill lust into the soul, and distrust of God - to cast a suspicion on the fullness and freeness of His nature to bestow. This was the poison of the serpent which has permeated humanity ever since that day. It was done before ever there was a sin committed. The devil had stepped in and sown distrust in man's heart, creating a suspicion in the soul, and separating man and his Creator by the loss of faith in Him.

This is what men do between each other nowadays to reach some end they have in view. I dare say they do not perhaps think so, but many of the 'sorrows between men, or even between brethren, are caused by some hint behind backs, or some whispered story to which the heart of others is ready to lend an ear, which causes distrust to spring up between souls. Distrust engendered, dislike follows but more especially in the one who has wronged the other. It is

exceedingly hard to trust a heart you have wronged.

"A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it"; "He that repeateth a matter separateth very friends"; "But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away," etc. These passages (kindred in their character) are but the workings of this principle of evil. Hence the true saying, "The injured may forget; the injurer, never!"

To restore man to perfect confidence in God, and to meet the outrage on His nature, was the work of Christ at the "end of the world."

Man then was a responsible creature before he fell. Distrust of God, and lust were instilled into the soul of the woman. Will was put forth against God, and in the case of Adam it was highhanded will (for "Adam was not deceived"; 1 Tim. 2:14), and man fell. A breach, as wide as the poles, came in at once between God and man - an abyss, impossible to repair or to recross. Man became as "one of Us," said the Lord, "to know good and evil" (Gen. 3:22). This he never can unlearn. He never returns to innocence again.

What then is it "to know good and evil"? It is something which is said of Godhead too - "as one of Us," we read "to know good and evil." It is to sit in judgment, and pass sentence, on good or evil which we find in our own souls. Of David the king, it was

said by the wise woman of Tekoah, "As an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad." 2 Sam. 14:17. This was in reference to the decisions of judgment. This we read of Solomon in 1 Kings 3:9; of Israel in Deuteronomy 1:39; see also Hebrews 5:14.

This is the work of conscience - to take knowledge of the evil practiced by a will opposed to God - to sit in judgment upon it and to condemn - and alas! to apprehend the good, while opposed to it - to approve of it without the power to perform. This was fallen man with a conscience. Responsible before he fell, he distrusted God and transgressed in will His command. He had an ability, even when fallen, to pass sentence upon his own actions, by the knowledge of good and evil - good that he had not the power nor desire to practice, and evil that he was not able to avoid! Then at last he is driven out of the presence of God; for he had lost his place on such a ground forever. These three things marked his state: distrust of God; sin committed in that distrust; and his place irrecoverably lost. These three things are reversed by the gospel. His confidence is restored by faith in Him as a Savior, his sins removed, which had been committed in distrust; and he is brought into a new place in Christ before Him.

## How Many Loaves Have Ye?

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Mark 6:3; 8

The Lord uses what the disciples had. It was but little-nothing for such a multitude. But when blessed and broken by Jesus, it goes a long way. The God who gave life could sustain it, independent of means, or multiply the means to make them adequate to the need. So now, it is what "we have" that Christ uses. Use what we have in faith, and He will make it meet the need of all present. It is the power of God giving efficacy to His word, that makes much or little a blessing, and without that, plenty is in vain. In ministry of the Word, the grand end is getting the soul, through the presentation of Christ, brought into living connection with God. True ministry does this for the poor in spirit; the rich go empty away.

## Israel As a Nation

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A most remarkable prophetic description of the state of the children of Israel during the past 1878 years is found in Hos. 3:4:

"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim." Since the day of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A. D., they have been in this condition with nothing outwardly to bind them together; yet they have remained a separate and distinct people with characteristic Jewish hopes and aspirations.

They have had neither king nor prince; that is, neither a duly anointed king, nor a ruler that might be described by the word "prince." Thus all Jewish civil polity was gone. And all religious or sacred institutions were likewise missing, for they have had neither sacrifice nor priesthood, which is represented by the "ephod" - a part of priestly attire. Their temple was destroyed and all their sacrifices came to an end; neither have they genealogies to prove the right to priesthood by any.

Another remarkable point in this prophecy is that they were to remain without "teraphim" which was used in worship of idols (see Judg. 17). Before the Babylonian captivity they had been idolaters, but after the remnant returned in Ezra's and Nehemiah's days they did not go back into idolatry, and have not to this day. This fact is also referred to by the Lord Jesus in Matt. 12:43 as the unclean spirit (of idolatry) having gone out of the man (Israel). But, alas, He said it will yet return in a more depraved and diabolical form.

Could any man looking back over the past 2,000 years write a clearer, more concise history of that people than the Spirit of God gave prophetically almost 3,000 years ago?

But what are we to think now that we see Israel as a nation once more in their land? They still have no temple, no sacrifice, and no priesthood; they still do not possess Jerusalem, but they again have a civil government and a duly elected "president." They went to Jerusalem to inaugurate their president to indicate their claim to that city (and then retired to Tel Aviv), and they have plans to restore their "past glories." The celebration at their opening ceremony included the blowing with the rams' horns which were used so prominently in their first entrance into the Land of Canaan at the conquest of Jericho (Josh. 6); and their new money system is to be based on the familiar "shekels" and "gerahs." Clearly they intend to restore Israel as in days of old. But has the time come for the fulfillment of the next verse in Hos. 3? - "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days." No, not yet. The fifth verse will be fulfilled just as surely as the fourth has been for 1878 years, but something else must precede the seeking of Jehovah their God.

Other scriptures let us know that they will go back to their land in unbelief; will be backed by the revived Roman Empire; will build a temple and re-establish a form of religious observance; will accept as their king one of their number who will claim to be the long-promised Messiah, but will be in reality the "false prophet" and "antichrist." This false king will betray them, and will be in

league with the Roman Empire's wicked head who will stop the sacrifices and enforce open and glaring idolatry (Dan. 9:27; 11:36-39). Then our Lord's words as to the return of the unclean spirit will be fulfilled (Matt. 12:45). All this is to precede the coming of the Son of Man to execute judgment and reign, and the return of the remnant to "Jehovah their God, and David their king" (or the Messiah).

But the events that have already taken place in Palestine are of startling significance and should not be forgotten as just a piece of yesterday's news. Clearly the "many days" of Hos. 3:4 are about up; they have about run their allotted course. Israel is already in the land, with a recognized government, and are reestablishing the old traditions and customs. Soon they will be talking about a temple, and acting too. And while they will not get complete control of the city of Jerusalem until the Lord gives it to them, they will receive some rights there and have a temple. There are some things that we cannot speak so definitely about, but where Scripture speaks, so can we.

But, Christians, are we all aware of this great change that has taken place? And do we understand its significance? Has it laid hold of our being that we are at the very end of this age? The Lord rebuked the Jews of His day with this remark: "How is it that ye do not discern this time?" Luke 12:56. They should have known from the Scriptures what time it was when He was here; and should we fail to see the signs of the running out of the "many days" of Israel's dispersion? Well might the poet say,

"Those gloomy years have rolled away, The years of Israel's mourning." Just ahead now is the time of their greatest idolatry and wickedness, and terrible judgments; then an elect remnant of them will return and "seek Jehovah their God, and David their king."

We are not told that we should see all that has now taken place before the coming of the Lord for us, but there it is, unfolded before our eyes. Soon, very soon, the Morning Star will appear! "Let us watch and be sober." 1 Thess. 5:6.

## Jabez: One More Honorable Than His Brethren

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Jabez was the child of sorrow; his name was the standing memento of the bitterness in which his mother bare him (1 Chron. 4). But he "was more honorable than his brethren"- not that he was honored by them or by his nation, but the Spirit of God registered him as one of God's honourables. And why? Because his heart was toward God; he honored the God of Israel and called upon His name. He has no record but the sorrow of his conception, and his prayer to Jehovah. His parentage, his genealogy, his locality - all are denied us. He sprang out of Judah, and was closely connected with Bethlehem - a passing shadow thus of One that was to come. More we do not know, except the breathings of his heart Godward. He cries, with deep earnestness and with touching pathos to the God of Israel, "Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!"

His resource is in God, nor has he any other. It is He whom he counts upon for blessing indeed, and to enlarge his coast, and to give him His presence, and to keep him from the evil. He has learned, at least, that every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above. This alone he values, the gift which comes from God; and this alone he dreads, the evil which God hates. His heart was right with God. He was in fellowship with the heart of God; he honored the God of Israel, and God honored him, and he being dead yet speaketh.

"And God granted him that which he requested," for he met the heart of God and refreshed His spirit in a dry and thirsty land more than the hosts of Israel; and the Spirit of the Lord has given an eternal testimony of his words; the child of his mother's sorrow is ennobled by the God of Israel, and his honor shall never decay!

Now if this be God's answer to one of His ancients of Judah, may we not gather from it how true He must ever be to His own immediate word - "Them that honor Me I will honor"? Every breathing of our hearts by the Spirit of God is precious in His ear; every cup of cold water given in His name; every service rendered to His saints; every sigh over that which grieves Him; every thrill of joy for what brings glory to Him; every step trodden, or word spoken in furtherance of interests dear to His heart is written with an eternal pen and treasured in the archives of heaven, nor will He fail to requite even those who think upon His name

(Mal. 3:16). Children of sorrow we may indeed be, of whom the world has no record, and knows neither whence we come nor whither we are bound, but if our hearts be in the secret of the Lord, we are not only of the royal line, like Jabez, but, like Jabez, also of the line of faith; our requests are answered, our record is on high for eternity, heavenly resources are ours in their richest plenitude, and an opened heaven will soon receive us into its bosom. Then shall be fully displayed what only faith accepts now - the immutability of that word, "Them that honor Me I will honor."

## The History of Jonah the Prophet

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Our moral corruption is very deep. It is complete. But at times it will betray itself in very repulsive shapes from which, with all the knowledge of it which we have, we instinctively shrink, confounded at the thought that they belong to us. Privileges under God's own hand may only serve to develop instead of curing this corruption.

The love of distinction was inlaid in us at the very outset of our apostasy. "Ye shall be as gods," was listened to; to this lust, this love of distinction, we will in cold blood, sacrifice all that may stand in our way, without respect, as it were, to sex or age, as at the beginning we sacrificed the Lord Himself to it (Gen. 3).

We take God's gifts, and deck ourselves with them. The Church at Corinth was such a one as that. Instead of using God's gifts for others, the brethren there were displaying them. But the man who had the mind of Christ, in the midst of them, would say, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

The Jew - the favored, privileged Jew - grievously sinned in this way. Rom. 2 convicted him on this ground. His separation from the nations was of God; but instead of using this as witness to the holiness of God in the midst of a revolted world's pollutions, he took occasion to exalt himself by it. He boasted in God and in the law; but he dishonored God by breaking the law.

Now Jonah was of the nation of Israel, and among the prophets of God. He was thus doubly privileged. But nature is quick in him to take advantage of this, and to serve her own fond ends by this. Yea, and Jonah was a saint of God also; but this alone, under pressure and temptation of the flesh, does not secure victory over nature.

As a prophet, the Lord sends him with a word against Nineveh - a word of judgment. But he knew when he received it that in the bosom of Him who was sending him (2 Kings 14 had given Jonah proof of this) mercy was rejoicing; and he reckoned, therefore, that His word which was to speak of judgment, would be set aside by the grace that abounded in Him (chap. 4:2).

Was he prepared for this? Could he, a Jew, suffer it, that a Gentile city should be favored, and share the mercy and salvation of God? Could he, a prophet, suffer it, that his word should fall to the ground, and that too, in the presence of the uncircumcised? This was too much. He goes on board a ship bound for Tarshish instead of crossing the country to Nineveh. But surely, when we look at him under such conditions, we may say, it is a proud apostate, another Adam, that is now in the merchant ship on the waters of the Mediterranean. He was a transgressor through pride, like Adam; and, like Adam, he must take the sentence of death unto himself.

Simple, sure, and yet solemn, all this! To accept the punishment of our sin is the first duty of an erring soul. We are not to seek to right ourselves by an effort of our own, when we have gone wrong, lest Hormah (Numb. 14) be our portion. Our first duty is to accept, in the spirit of

confession, the

punishment of our sin - to be humbled under the mighty or chastening hand of God (Lev. 26:41). David did this, and the kingdom was his again. Jonah now does the same. "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea," said he to the mariners, in the midst of the tempest; "so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. And they did so, but with a grace that might well shame their betters, which bespeaks the hand of God with them, as it was against Jonah. And Jonah is soon wrapped among the weeds of the sea, down in the bottoms of the mountains there.

Could Gentile Nineveh be in a worse plight? Was not Jonah's circumcision as uncircumcision? A Jew, a prophet in the depths of the sea, with the weeds wrapped about his head, because of the displeasure of Jehovah! Surely, such a one in such a state may well cease his boastings, and no longer despise others. Could any one be lower? Proud Adam was behind the trees of the garden; proud Jonah is in the bottom of the sea.

The Lord by no means clears the guilty. The Judge of all the earth does right. But grace brings salvation, and this very soon; and it will be only Jonah's sin that shall be in the bottom of the sea, Jonah himself being delivered, as his first father, Adam, left his guilt and his covert behind him and returned to the presence of God.

But Jonah was taught as well as delivered. In the belly of the fish he finds out that, Jew as he was, he stood in need of the salvation of God, just as much as any Gentile could need it. Uncircumcised Nineveh had been unclean and despised in his eyes, and he grudged her God's mercy. What would become of himself now but for that mercy? He was in prison, and he deserved to be there. What could do for him, what reach his condition, but mercy - free, full, and sovereign? "Salvation is of the LORD," he has to say. It is not in himself as a privileged Jew, or a gifted prophet, that he will now rejoice, but only in Him to whom it belongs to bring salvation.

And then the exulting question arises, Is He the God of the Jew only? nay, but of the Gentiles also. Our need of salvation, our dependence on the sovereignty and grace of God, equalizes us all. "It is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." Rom. 3:30, 31. The Jew must come in on the very same mercy that saves the Gentile. Jonah must be as Nineveh.

This is the lesson the whale's belly taught Jonah, the Jew. Let Nineveh be what it may, Gentile and uncircumcised, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, or anything else, it could not stand more in need of the salvation of God than the favored Jew and the privileged, gifted prophet at that moment did, being as in hell for his transgression. It was all over with him, but for that. But that he gets, and the fish casts him up on the dry land, when he had learned, and confessed, and declared, "Salvation is of the LORD."

He was a sign to the Ninevites.

His nation, by and by, will have the like lesson. No sign is now left with them, but that of this prophet; and they will have to find out, as from the belly of hell, or as from under the judgment of God (where now as a nation they are lying), that grace and the redemption it works is their only place and their only refuge.

But this salvation of God, in which Jonah is called to rejoice, we know gets all its authority from the mystery of the cross; because One who could do so, for us sinners, went down under the dominion of death, under the judgment of sin, and of whom in that condition, as in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights, Jonah himself in the belly of the fish for the like time, is made the type.

And when we think of this, we may say, Scripture may magnify its office, as the Apostle of the Gentiles does his. It has to reveal God and His counsels; and surely it does this in marvelous and fruitful wisdom, delivering forth, as here, pieces of history for our instruction, but at the same time making that history deliver forth samples, and pledges, and foreshadowings of further and richer secrets for our more abundant instruction. •

Jonah, as a sign, suits both the Lord Himself, and Israel as a nation, as the Gospels let us know. Israel must go through death and resurrection. Their iniquity is not to be purged till they die (Isa. 22). All Scripture affirms this - the valley of dry bones illustrates it. But they will be a risen people in the day of the kingdom - all thanks and praise to the death and resurrection of the Son of God for this and every blessing! And Jonah's death and resurrection, as I may again say, applies significantly

or typically to the history of his nation, and to the history of his Savior (see Matt. 12:40; Luke 11:29, 30).

Jonah's sin too was the expression of the nation's. He and they have alike refused the thought of mercy to the Gentiles (1 Thess. 2:16). When Paul began to speak of God's mercy to the Gentiles, the Jews would listen to him no longer (Acts 22:21, 22).

The story of our prophet is a fruitful one. True as a narrative, it is significant as a parable; and all of us, the elect of God as well as Israel, may, in our way, take our place with him, as dead and risen, the only character that can be ours as saved sinners.

Returning, however, to the history itself, we may now observe that as one that had been thus taught, taught his need of God's grace, Jonah is again sent with the message to Nineveh. He goes, and with words of judgment on his lips, he enters that great city, that Nimrod city, the representation, in that day, of the pride and daring of a revolted world. "Yet forty days," he proclaims as a herald, "and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Thus he mourned. It was his commission. Responsively, Nineveh lamented. The king rose from his throne, and all the nation put themselves in sackcloth; and in such condition, as humbled under the hand of God, a king of Nineveh shall find the Lord as a king of Israel had before found Him. "I said," says David, "I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." "Who can tell," says this royal Gentile, "if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" And so it was. "God repented of the evil, that He had said He would do unto them, and He did it not."

"Is He the God of the Jews only?" again I ask with the Apostle; and with him again I answer, "Yes of the Gentiles also." Grace is divine. Government may know a people, and order them as such; grace knows sinners just as they are - whoever - wherever. The earth has its arrangements, but heaven holds its court in sovereignty. Nineveh, like Jerusalem, is spared; the hand of the

destroying angel is stayed over the one city as well as over the other (1 Chron. 21; Jonah 3).

But "tell it not in Gath." Let not the daughters of the Philistines hear of Jonah the Jew in the 4th chapter!

Did Lot go a second time to Sodom? Did Hezekiah, after the going back of the shadow upon the sundial, sin through pride, with the ambassadors of Babylon? Did Josiah, after his humbling and tenderness, go willfully to the battle against the 'king of Egypt? Did Peter, in spite of warnings from his Lord; deny his Lord? Have you and I, beloved, forgotten lessons learned, and corrections endured? And is Jonah now to be unmindful of the whale's belly? It is a passing wonder - a lesson so sealed, so stamped, so engraven, apparently, and yet so quickly lost to the soul!

Jonah is displeased. The mercy shown to Nineveh has made a Gentile important to the God of heaven and earth; and this was too much for the Jew. The word of a prophet had suffered wrong, as pride suggested, at the hand of the God of mercy. Jonah was very angry. He cannot exactly again take ship and go to Tarshish but, in the spirit of him who lately did so, he goes outside the city, and he says, "O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil. Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live."

What naughtiness of heart all this was! Was he preparing another whale's belly for himself? He well deserved it. What troubles we make for ourselves! Why did not Lot remain in the holy, peaceful tent of Abraham? and why did he prepare for himself a first and second furnace in Sodom? Why did David bring a sword upon his house, which was commissioned of the Lord to hang over it unsheathed to the day of his death? "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." The Lord's voice crieth to the city, and the man of wisdom shall hear; but Jonah was deaf. He has forgotten the lesson of the fish's belly, and he must now be put to learn the lesson of the withered gourd.

Outside the city, Jonah prepares a booth for himself, that he may sit under it, in his moody, bad temper - angry as he was with the Lord. The Lord then prepares

a gourd to overshadow Jonah in his booth, and Jonah is very glad because of the gourd. But then the Lord prepares a worm that eats and withers up the gourd; and the sun and the east wind beating on the unsheltered head of Jonah makes him exceedingly angry, and he wishes in himself to die.

The Lord then, in marvelous gentleness, turns all these simple circumstances into a page of the profoundest and most affecting instruction. "And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came

up in a night, and perished in a

night: and should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

The prophet's delight in the gourd is but the faint reflection of the Lord's delight in the mercy that visits the creatures of His hand - be they whom they may - at Nineveh, at Jerusalem, or elsewhere; it matters not. And if Jonah would fain have the gourd spared, he must allow repentant Nineveh to be spared. Out of his own mouth he shall be judged; Jonah shall witness for the Lord against himself.

It is, indeed, a precious and an excellent word. Jonah had been sent down to learn the grace of God in one character of it, and now he has been taught it in another; that is, his need of it, and God's delight in it. The whale's belly, the belly of hell, where he once was, had taught him his own need of "salvation," in that sovereignty of it, in that magnificent height and depth of it, that could stretch as from the throne of power in the highest heavens, down to the bottom of the seas in the lowest, to deliver a captive there under the righteous judgment of God.

The withered gourd now teaches him (as all parables in Luke 15 have also taught us) how the blessed Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Lord of the cattle on the thousand hills, whether in Assyria or Judea, delights in His creatures, the works of His hands, finding His rest and refreshment in the mercy that spares them when they repent and turn to Him.

## Jonathan

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"And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.... Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." 1 Sam. 18:1, 3, 4.

What an exquisite picture we have here! A picture of love stripping itself to clothe its object. There is a vast difference between Saul and Jonathan in this scene. Saul took David home with him in order to magnify himself by keeping such a one about his person and in his house. But Jonathan stripped himself to clothe David. This was love in one of its charming activities. Jonathan, in common with the many thousands of Israel, had watched, with breathless interest, the scene in the valley of Elah. He had seen David go forth single handed to meet the terrible foe whose height, demeanor, and words had struck terror into the hearts of the people.

He had seen that haughty giant laid low by the hand of faith. He participated with all in the splendid victory.

But there was more than this. It was not merely the victory, hut the victor, that filled the heart of Jonathan - not merely the work done, but the one who had done it. Jonathan did not rest satisfied with saying, "Thank God, the giant is dead, and we are delivered, and may return to our homes and enjoy ourselves." Ah! no; -he felt his heart drawn and knit to the person of the conqueror. It was not that he valued the victory less, but he valued the victor more, and hence he found his joy in stripping himself of his robes and his armor in order to put them upon the object of his affection.

Christian reader, there is a lesson here for us - and not only a lesson but a rebuke. How prone are we to be occupied with redemption rather than the Redeemer - with salvation rather than with the Savior! No doubt we should rejoice in our salvation; but should we rest there? Should we not, like Jonathan, seek to strip ourselves in order to magnify the Person of Him who went down into the dust of death for us? Assuredly we should, and all the more because He does not exact aught of us. David did not ask Jonathan for his robe or his sword. Had he done so, it would have robbed the scene of all its charms. But no; it was a purely voluntary act. Jonathan forgot himself and thought only of David. Thus it should be with us and the true David. Love delights to strip itself for its object. "The love of Christ constraineth us." And again, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Phil. 3:7, 8.

O for more of this spirit! May our hearts be drawn out and knit, more and more, to Christ in this day of hollow profession and empty religious formality! May we be so filled with the Holy Ghost that with purpose of heart we may cleave unto our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## King David and the Woman of Tekoah

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2 Sam. 14

God does not allow mercy to glory or triumph over judgment but causes them both to rejoice together - righteousness and peace to kiss each other. Glory to Himself in the highest is declared, as well as peace on earth to man. This was prefigured of old, and realized in the cross.

There was a ram caught by the horns for a sacrifice, when Isaac was freed. There was blood upon the lintel when Israel was freed. There was an altar to be set up in Oman's threshing floor when Jerusalem was freed.

And so at the cross. The victim had been offered, and then the veil was rent, and then the graves were opened; that is, the sacrifice was accomplished on the altar; it was then accepted of God in heaven. Then the gospel went forth to free the captives of sin and death.

In the case of Oman's threshing floor, already alluded to, the sword of the angel was stayed, that David might have some hope and occasion for exercise of spirit. But the sword of the angel was not sheathed till the altar was raised. It was the altar that sheathed the sword, as it was the blood that rent the veil.

Now this is God's exclusive glory. "There is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside Me." Isa. 45:21. And therefore God Himself immediately upon this says, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Christ is this Savior-God.

David's son Absalom fled after having Ammon slain. While he was in exile, a wise woman of Tekoah came (at Joab's request) to David and said: "Neither doth God respect any person; yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him." 2 Sam. 14:14.

Now David was a man, and not God; and this glory of which we speak was just that which did not belong to David. He could not find a way whereby to bring his banished home to him. If he please, he may forgive his own private wrongs seventy times seven times a day. He may, in all such cases, let mercy rejoice against judgment. But this is the utmost he can do. He is unable to be just and yet a justifier. He cannot justify the wrong doer and be righteous himself. Seated on the throne, and yet Absalom's father, he is not equal to the task of maintaining the integrity of that throne, and at the same time of gratifying the heart of that father. He attempted it, but he failed. Absalom was never really brought home. His was not the return of the prodigal in Luke 15. He returned, but it was to be a plague and dishonor to David, and only to expose him a thousand times more than ever. His heart spoke in answer to the woman of Tekoah. His heart was gratified, but his throne was cast down. But God, through the sacrifice of the Son, is never more righteous than when justifying the believing sinner.

## The King of the North and King of the South

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In previous issues we have noticed some of the remarkable current events that herald the approach of the coming storm, even the "consumption... determined upon the whole earth." For that time, Israel must have their own government in their own land; this they now have, and each month their strength increases. The Western powers must unite under one head at Rome; this they are being prepared to do by preliminary moves in that direction under the threat of the Russian menace.

There are to be two other powers directly connected with that time of trouble, and with the land of Palestine; they are the "king of the north" and the "king of the south." They are often mentioned in the Old Testament and were the determined and avowed enemies of Israel; but while they agreed (and will agree) in their hostility to Israel, they were (and will be) enemies of each other. Generally speaking today, these are the followers of Mohammedanism, under which banner they have a fanatical zeal to frustrate the hope of the Nation of Israel.

In Dan. 8 the prophet was given a vision of a "ram which had two horns" (the kingdom of Media and Persia) which was subdued by a "he goat" which had a "notable horn between his eyes" (the Grecian Empire under Alexander the Great). After the "notable horn" was broken (Alexander died) there arose four notable horns toward the four winds (the four generals who divided Alexander's Empire). Two of these four horns (the "king of the north" and the "king of the south") became especially interested and involved in Palestinian matters. Their territories lay to the north and to the south of the "pleasant land."

In Dan. 11 the prophet was permitted, to see what these two kings would do in their frequent quarrels between themselves. In their incursions into each other's country they made the land of Palestine their roadway, and often their battle ground.

In both Dan. 8 and 11 the Spirit of God takes us in thought from the (then future but now past) doings of these enemies of each other and of their hostilities to the Jews on down to the "time of the end" - that time now so near at hand. In Daniel 8 the transition from the part which was fulfilled long ago to that time now approaching is at the 23rd verse, and in the 11th chapter the change is at the 36th verse - "the king" of the 36th verse being the apostate Jewish king, the antichrist, for which the stage is all set. And while this willful king will have the backing of the revived Roman Empire - yes, even of Satan himself - he will have the bitter enmity of the Moslem kings both north and south of Palestine; the king of the south will push at him from his side, and then the king of the north will invade from that direction, conquer partly, and go on to the south (Egypt) to attack his rival.

Isa. 28; 29, and 30 give some prophetic pictures of this enemy of Israel coming as a hailstorm from the north; Mic. 5:5 speaks of the same enemy coming into the land. The Assyrian of old was used as a type of the scourge that will come from that same quarter against an idolatrous Israel. The details recounted of the Assyrian in those chapters in Isaiah could not apply to the Assyrian of the

past, but they look forward to the "time of the end."

Now as the end approaches we see the Moslem world opposing the revival of an Israelitish state, but these people are by no means united. Egypt, as in former times, has pushed at Israel from the south, and other enemies have come in from the east and north, but it is plainly evident that Egypt and these other countries are not in agreement nor working in unison against Israel. If they had been truly united they could have made Israel's position much more difficult.

Today Egypt, south of Palestine, has gained much of her independence, and is ready to become a major actor in the development of the "time of Jacob's trouble."

Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Iran are all under Russian pressure of one kind or another. The governments in these countries are becoming unpopular with the masses because of the realization that the new Israel has been established in spite of their opposition. It seems that turmoil is brewing in that part of the world and often such turmoil brings forth a dominant leader who can rally the forces behind him. The people are there in the same relative position to Palestine as before, and with the same hatred of the Jews; what they now lack is a coordinating head which Dan. 8 says will understand dark sentences, or perhaps a dealer in oriental mysticism - the occult. This man will come forth as somewhat supernatural and will exert a powerful influence over the Moslem hordes. He will use deceit and craft to accomplish his ends, and he will be backed by another power, or powers, hostile to the Jewish state and the backers of it - the Western powers.

Christian reader, the coming events are casting longer and longer shadows across the landscape as the darkness approaches. Israel is ready for their apostate head; Western opinion is being crystallized into thoughts of an alliance of powers, with the Americans at their back; they are largely committed to assisting the Jew to have their land; Egypt has its own government and is just awaiting the time to enact their pushing at the antichrist from the south; the peoples of the countries north of Palestine, formerly known in Scripture as the "Assyrian" and later as the "king of the north" are in increasing fomentation awaiting their occult leader and the signal to invade Palestine from the north on their way to fight the Egyptians. But, remember, long before these events take place each of us who know the Lord Jesus as our Savior will be safely housed in the Father's house. There is nothing that has to take place before our Lord calls us home, and everything is shaping up for what will take place after we leave this scene of strife and conflict.

## Knowing God's Will: Spiritual State of the Soul

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The knowledge of God's will is based on the spiritual state of the soul--wisdom and spiritual understanding. "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Col. 1:9. And this is of all practical importance. No particular direction by man as to conduct meets this at all - rather saves us from the need of spiritual understanding. No doubt a more spiritual mind may help me in the discernment of God's will; but God has connected the discovery of the path of His will, His way, with the inward state of the soul, and causes us to pass

through circumstances - human life here below - to test and to discover to ourselves what that state is, and to exercise us therein. The Christian has by his spiritual state to know God's ways. The Word is the means. (Compare John 17:17, 19.) God has a way of His own which the vulture's eye bath not seen, known only to the spiritual man, connected with, flowing from, and to, the knowledge of God. (Compare Exodus 33:13.) Thus the Christian walks worthy of the Lord; he knows what becomes Him, and walks accordingly, that he may please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing

by the knowledge of God.

J. N. D.

## **Last Interview With a Departing Servant of Christ: J.N.D. With J.G. Bellett**

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Sadly altered was the poor worn-out body, pillowed in an easy chair, but his spirit rejoicing in his much-loved Lord. He said, "Two months ago, when I felt this sickness was unto death, I asked Him to reveal Himself to me in increased loveliness and nearness. He did, He filled me with Himself - I know the blood has done its blessed, blessed work for my soul; it is His love, His beauty, His perfection, that fills my heart and vision." He then spoke of feeling a little better that day; "But, ah! that is no pleasure to me." Then, clasping his dear, thin hands together, he said, while tears flowed down his face, "My precious Lord Jesus, Thou knowest how fully I can say with Paul, to depart and be with Thee is far better! Oh, how far better! I do long for it! They come and talk to me of a crown of glory - I bid them cease; of the glory of heaven - I bid them stop. I am not wanting crowns - I have HIMSELF! HIMSELF. I am going to be with HIMSELF: Ah! with the Man of Sychar; with Him who stayed to call Zacchaeus; with the Man of the 8th of John; with the Man who hung upon the cross; with the Man who died; Oh! to be with Him before the glories, the crowns or the kingdom appear! It's wonderful - wonderful! - with the man of Sychar alone; the man of the gate of the city of Nain! and I am going to be with Him forever! exchange this sad, sad scene, which cast Him out, for His presence. Oh! the Man of Sychar."

## The Law, a Rule of Death

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The object of the law was to bring out the sinner's true condition of soul-not at all to bring him into blessing, but to bring out the fearful ruin into which man had fallen by sin. The law was not meant to be the rule of life; indeed, it is rather the rule of death. If a man had no such thing as sin, it might be the rule of life; but he being a sinner, it is an absurd misnomer to call it the rule of life.

## Legal Restraints Contrasted With Ways of Grace

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### Eph. 5

It is a serious thing, while full of comfort and warning to our souls as well, that there is nothing that so condemns sin as grace. The law condemns it no doubt but the law in itself never judges the nature. It condemns acts. If applied by the Spirit of God, it leads one to gather what the tree must be from the fruit. It infers what the nature is, but it does not directly, and immediately, and entirely deal with it. Grace does. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son" (that is grace) "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin" (as a sacrifice for it), "condemned sin in the flesh." Rom. 8:3. God condemned the nature, root and branch, and executed His sentence upon all that man is in his best estate. No disguises could stand now - no excuses - all was brought into the full light of God Himself, and all condemned. It is the same thing from first to last.

Grace is that which strips off all the thin veils with which the flesh would cover itself in order that we should not learn what we are. Grace, while it puts away what we are, yet gives us the privilege of learning it, puts us on God's side to execute His judgment upon it, and enables us to deal with it with an unsparing hand just because we have a new nature given from God. We can afford to mortify our members which are upon the earth because we have a new and divine life that death and Satan cannot touch. And therefore it is, you will find, that in those parts of Scripture where grace is most fully brought out, there we have the closest exhortations to holiness. Consequently, whenever souls are afraid of grace, they avoid the only thing which can produce real holiness; they avoid the only thing which can detect and destroy the vain show in which they are walking.

But there is another and a very serious thing for those who have received the grace of God, and who profess to stand in it. It is this, "God is not mocked." He will not allow that the name of His Son should ever be allied with evil. He will not allow that His grace should be pleaded as an excuse for sin. Grace has stretched out His hand and has plucked us from hell to carry us straight from the jaws of death into heaven itself; no less than this is done in principle when we receive the Lord Jesus. We are taken out of the net of the spoiler and set in the hand of the Father and of the Son, whence none shall pluck us. But if this be so, what is the practical purpose of God in it? What does He intend that we should do under the shelter of this almighty grace which has wrought such marvels for us? Assuredly, that we should never allow the natural evil of our hearts - that we should watch for God and be jealous for Him against ourselves. We are taken out of ourselves and transplanted into Christ. We become, therefore, (if we have faith in Him - if it be a real work of the Holy Ghost) identified in feeling with the Lord; we are put in the interests of God, if I may so say, against our own corrupt nature against evil everywhere, but above all wherever the name of Christ is named.

We have nothing directly to do with the corrupt world outside, but we have everything to do with our own corrupt nature, much to do with it for God, wherever it dares to show itself. In love to one another, and jealousy for the Lord, we may have to deal with it even in another; but then it must

always be in holy love. For even where we have to watch over one another for the Lord, it is never in the spirit of law-never merely to condemn the evil, and then leave a person under the effects of his folly and sin.

But let us listen to a few words spoken to the Ephesian saints. First, in a verse or two of chapter 4: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Evidently there you have what is to guide and form the spirit of my walk with my brethren. Is that all? No. It not only takes up our spirit toward one another, but we are reminded what God's way is toward us: "forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Then it goes on to another thing.

The Lord Jesus did not merely die to put away my sin, but to give me the immense privilege of being put before God in all His acceptance and loveliness. I could not be in heaven if it were not so - if it were only that sin were put away. God cannot have anything in heaven that is merely negative. Mere absence of evil is not enough there. If we are to be in heaven at all, God must have us there lovely in all the loveliness of Christ; and that, as far as the new man is concerned, He communicates to us here. Accordingly, it is said to us, "Be ye therefore followers [imitators] of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." That is going further. A person might forgive another, but there might still be reserve remaining - a shutting oneself up in one's own little circle. Here on the contrary, we find there is to be the energy that goes out - the love which delights in another's good. It is the activity of love going out toward the saints. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us."

But then another thing comes to light. There is danger even among the saints of God. The devil can come in and turn brotherly love to a snare, and this not only in the way of positive evil being allowed to break out, but in the unjudged tendency to it. "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks." The Lord in no way forbids the happy cheerfulness which He loves in His saints. He does not call us to be monks, which is men's way of keeping the flesh under restraint, and only another form of self. We may have self under a legal form, and self under a lax form; but under any form it is not Christ, and the only thing which God values now is Christ.

"For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." This raises a serious question for all of us. These are exhortations, not merely to apply to other people, to measure them by, but to take home to ourselves. They are for saints, not for the world. No doubt we find the evil warned against in the world, and our hearts ought to feel for those who shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. But, remember that the primary object of the Holy Ghost was to warn and guard the saints themselves, who, desiring to watch against the evil distance of the flesh, will, directly they come together, find the danger of another thing, and that is evil nearness. Who then can take care of us if such be the dangers that surround us? Only God - but God still acting in the way of grace.

There is no reason why a soul should not have perfect confidence in God against self. But wherever there is the desire to have our own will and our own evil thoughts gratified - wherever

there is the wish to have our way according to the flesh - depend upon it, the judgment of God will be there, unless the grace of God interferences to deliver the soul. This is a solemn thing, and one that we need to lay to heart. For the Lord is jealous on our behalf and He is jealous for His own glory. Therefore, may we be watchful. May we remember what He has written: that if "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His," be on the one side, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," is on the other. "Depart from iniquity." Is it possible that such a word could be said to the saints of God? Yes. It is the word of the Holy Ghost Himself, wherever the name of Christ is named. Let our souls then hold fast grace; but let us remember that the object of all the grace which has been manifested to us is that we serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. It is always so.

There is another thought which seems to me of value - that sin, when looked at in the presence of God, always acquires its true name and character. I am not allowed to gloss over it and call it by a name that men might give it. For instance, there are a thousand things that men would call polite. What does God call them? A lie. Again, there are many things that men would say are allowable in the way of business. What does God call them? Dishonesty and covetousness. Such is God's sentence. And would we escape from it? No.

May we be jealous not to allow in ourselves the smallest thing that is contrary to God. What a list of things the Spirit of God here warns me against! I can look within and know how the heart there answers to the Word of God without that which has already put me on my guard. If I despise the warning, what then? I shall prove what I am, to the dishonor of the name of the Lord Jesus, and my own shame and sorrow. What an effect of a moment's gratification! If then a little word is as the letting out of water, what is a little act of sin, where it is allowed? The Lord keep us from little sins - keep us watchful, jealous, careful, but at the same time never letting slip grace -rather reminding and strengthening one another in that perfect grace in which we stand.

Let us remember that He who hath called us to watch against these things, has also called us to thank Him, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always and for all things. Even if we have to humble ourselves before God for what we are, we are never to forget what Christ is for us and to us.

May we be kept faithful and circumspect in our ways for the Lord Jesus' sake.

"As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy: for I am holy."

## Let Her, It, Them, Him Alone

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"Let HER alone: against the day of My burying hath she kept this." John 12: 7

Mary of Bethany, who had ere this found her happy place at the Master's feet, came to the supper prepared for Him just six days before His death, and poured upon His feet her very costly ointment of spikenard, the odor of which filled the house.

Her act of devotedness was directed toward the Lord Himself. It was in the nature of intelligent worship, but it provoked the hostility of the disciples. To them it was a "waste." They said that it should have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor. To them worship so pure and elevated seemed superfluous.

But the blessed Master viewed it otherwise, and placed upon it His own gracious interpretation. What they called a "waste," He recognized as heartfelt worship. In what they considered loss to "the poor," He saw an apprehension on her part of His coming death, an appreciation of His sufferings, which marked her as being in possession of the truth in a way un-

My burying hath she kept this."

John 12:7 known to them. "Against the day of My burying hath she kept this," were His words; just as though He gave her credit for anticipating and preparing for His burial; just as though it had been the leading thought in her mind, while His kingdom and glory had occupied those of the disciples. But the glory is reached through death. She was right, and they were wrong; and therefore He gently screens her from their cruel censures. He will not allow her to suffer under their aspersion. He spreads His sheltering wing around her, and firmly says, "Let her alone." If none can value her devotedness, He can, and does; and that is enough for Mary. Her Master's smile suffices. The sense of giving Him pleasure compensates for the misunderstanding of man. Blessed experience!

"Lord, let IT alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Luke 13:8, 9.

"Let it alone this year also" was the prayer of the dresser of the vineyard on behalf of the fruitless fig tree. The lord of the vineyard had come and looked for fruit for three years, and being utterly disappointed, he gave commandment that it should be cut down. The tree cumbered the ground. It was occupying space that could be planted with profit. It was not only fruitless, but it was doing mischief. Such a fate became it. But the dresser, knowing that his lord was not a "hard man," and divining his thoughts of mercy, prayed that another year of grace might be shown, during which time he would do all in the way of pruning and culture that could be done; then, if fruit were still wanting, the blow should fall.

His prayer was granted, and the tree was "let alone" for one year more. But the fruitless fig tree fell. Israel, illustrated thus, yielded no fruit; Christ came seeking for fruit and found none. Judgment called loudly for the cutting down of the fruitless tree, but mercy interposed, and another year of

grace (protracted indeed until the death of Stephen; that is, until the definite rejection of the Holy Ghost) was allowed. Then the stroke fell, and the fruitless, mischievous nation was cut down as a nation. But how mercy lingered! How judgment delayed! How the voice of patient grace was heard saying, "Let it alone."

If that be true in the case of a nation, is it not likewise true in the case of the individual? "This year also"-and also, and also-until, alas! in spite of great longsuffering, no fruit can be found; and then, "after that," judgment, long suspended, overtakes the sinner, and he is "cut down"!

"Let THEM alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Matt. 15:14.

A solemn verdict this - awfully solemn! It was spoken by Christ in reference to the false teachers of that day - the teachers who placed tradition above Scripture, and who taught for doctrines the commandments of men. Of religion (such as it was) they had plenty, for they drew nigh with their mouth, but their heart was far from God. Oh, what a difference! Mouth-religion may be musical, eloquent, attractive, imposing but most delusive. It may consist of prayer and chant and oratory, but never affect either the throne of God or the conscience of man. It may present the most

splendid appearance outwardly, but withal leave the soul barren and unsatisfied.

It may appeal to history, to language, to learning, or to fathers, but pass over the plain, palpable facts of Scripture. The light of truth, its liberty, its moral power - all is unknown. It dwells in the unspiritual darkness of human thoughts and reasonings. Its teachers are blind, and by them the blind are led. What a condition! And they glory in it.

True of the first century, it is true of all others. The disease is chronic. Moreover, rebuke is unbearable. They were offended, after they heard this saying." They are offended still. Nothing offends more quickly or deeply or unpardonably than the exposure of a false religion; and, strange contradiction, the more false and foolish, the greater the tenacity with which it is held!

Thank God, the written Word, when received by lowly faith, makes all plain; but as to the proud teachers of a tradition that is contrascriptural, "Let them alone," says the Lord. They have made their bed; they must lie in the same.

"Ephraim is joined to idols: let HIM alone." Hos. 4:17.

"Joined to idols." - not merely idolatrous, bad as that may be, but definitely joined to them in a fearful and daring unity. Recovery appears hopeless. A long course of tampering with evil has not only blunted the conscience, but turned the evil into a pleasure, and every sense of what is due to God is dulled, so that the idols assert their authority, and God is forsaken. Alas, that the heart should thus become entrapped, Satan so easily conquer, and man fall so completely! Yet so it is; and when Ephraim is thus joined hopelessly and willingly to idols, the only, but terrible, sentence is "Let him alone." He must be left to the governmental ways of God. The ministry of man must not now interfere. He has chosen his course, and selected his path, and he must rue his folly. A man's way is his reward. What he sows he reaps. The object of his worship gives form to his life and character - to his future. Such is the nature of God's government, and therefore He said, as to idol-ruined Ephraim, "Let him alone."

To be let alone by God is the most awful condition in which man can find himself. Ten thousand times better to be emptied from vessel to vessel, like Job, than

allowed to drift down the stream, like Ephraim. Better to feel the weight of God's hand in chastening - for it is a Father's hand - than exist under a sense of His averted countenance.

Thank God there is grace as well as government, and His desire is that His people should "continue in the grace of God."

What a wide difference between the let alone that was passed on the conduct of Mary, and that passed on Ephraim; between the "let her alone" of divine approval, and the "let him alone" of divine displeasure; between the shield of heavenly shelter and the sentence of holy condemnation.

Dear reader, may you know and enjoy the first for your own comfort, and for the joy and glory of the blessed Lord who died and rose in order to give us a place at His feet, as the happy, blood-bought worshippers of a Savior who knows how to appreciate the smallest oblation that love can bring.

## Living Devotedness

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Few Christians realize what an honorable sphere is open to them, of living devotedness to Christ. We have an example of this in Paul - he was ready to die for the name of Jesus. He had nothing more to gain or hope for here. We want more of this earnest devotedness of heart to the Lord. We want to get above the heavy atmosphere in which most Christians live. Our testimony should not be confined to the seasons of united worship, but abroad in the world and among the multitudes of poor dying sinners around we would seek to testify of Jesus, both by our words and our ways.

How happy we ought to be as Christians! Nothing can make us unhappy if we have a single eye to Christ - calling on the Lord out of a pure heart. It is the want of this which causes much of the nervous depression and lowness of spirits we meet with in many Christians. If Christ were the one object of our hearts, His glory the one thing we had in view, we should not be thinking or caring about ourselves at all. We want just to yield ourselves to the Lord. Isaiah 6 illustrates this. First, the prophet says, "Woe is me," etc.; when purged, the word follows, "Here am I, send me." These principles are carried out through the book of Isaiah; the testimony is first to Israel's uncleanness, and then, in the latter days, they appear as the willing messengers to others of the grace of God.

May we know the privilege of living devotedness to Christ. It is an honor to be used of Him. At the same time we must remember that direction is needed as well as devotedness of heart. As on a railroad the steam is the propelling power, but without the rails the train would run into the fields or anywhere else, so the Word is needed to guide our zeal for the Lord.

## Loins Girded and Lights Burning

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Luke 12:35.48

This world is in a state of ruin, the result of man having distrusted God and sinned and of his having been driven out of paradise. No one can shut out the fact that evil is here. Outward things prove it. What is the magistrate for if there is no evil to stop? There it is, and God has dealt with it. He called out Abraham, He gave a law, He sent prophets, and He sent His Son. Yet the world has gone totally wrong. There has been great development in it, no doubt, such as telegraphs and railroads, arts and sciences, and so on, but all that is just what Cain set out to do because he was away from God. People will tell you there is no harm in it. Why no, of course there is not. The harm is in the use we make of such things. The trees in the Garden of Eden were good enough in themselves, but they were not intended for Adam to hide himself from God behind them. If I strike a man dead, the harm is not in my strength in itself, but in the use I am making of it. What is wrong in music? The sounds are beautiful; just look around in this great city and see the purpose music is serving in places of entertainment and elsewhere.

Adam sinned against God, and Cain sinned against his brother; and then he builds a city in order to make himself as comfortable as he can without God. Workers in brass and iron and music are found therein. And the difficulty now is that Christians do not understand that they are to be witnesses of grace in a world that will only last for a time and then it will be given over to judgment.

People talk of the progress of the world! Well, I do not deny it, but what will that be to you when you are dead? For the next generation? And where will you be when the next generation comes? All sorts of conveniences have been made, but then are people morally nearer to God by these things? The moment they are used to make the need of reconciliation to God less important to people's souls, they are simply Cain's works. There may be hundreds of things yet to be found out, but can anybody say that my soul is in a better state before God because of inventions? But directly my soul learns that I have got to do with God forever, I have a sense of what I am.

The truth is that God has brought light into this world, which tells me everything that concerns me for eternity, while it leaves other things where they are. And in the Christ of God I find that which gives me a relationship that will last forever. Thus God has dealt with this world as with a world that has departed from Him, and yet He has dealt with it in perfect grace.

And Christ coming into this world has become a servant for the believer. He says, "I am among you as He that serveth"; that is to say, to glorify God and to save us. As taking up our cause, He has set Himself to carry this out, and to be eternally the minister of blessing to us according to God. Alone with God He has done all that which was needed, for He has been "made sin." God cannot allow sin, and so

Christ gave Himself for our sins that instead of putting me away for my sins He might put my sins away for me.

The effect of this is that Christ has become everything to us who believe, and our hearts are taken out of this world altogether. Christ is sitting at the right hand of God and faith follows Him there in spirit, so that now we do not belong any more to this world. Quite true, we have to go through the wilderness, but it is with the consciousness of belonging to Christ outside of it.

Well then, Christ has redeemed us from this present evil world, and the more we see the world making progress, the more we need to learn that Christianity consists in our being Christ's and not the world's. The world that I am in, but not of, is the world that has rejected and crucified the Son of God. The Christian is to be gracious in the world as Christ was, but his heart is with Christ. How blessedly this works! It brings hearts down that have had too much of this world, and it lifts hearts up that have much of sorrow and trial. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low. Christ fixes our hearts upon Himself, outside of this world.

And we are to be as men that wait for their Lord. The meaning of "lights burning" is that we have a distinct definite profession so that men should know what we are. "And your loins girded" is the practical application of the power of the Word. Christ looks for the distinct and full confession of Himself in word and deed, and also that your hearts should be all right and in order. "Loins girded" and "lights burning" should characterize Christians in the world - truth in the heart and a good confession of Christ.

It is an astonishing fact that nobody with a false religion is ashamed of it. A Mohammedan will say his prayers while he is making a bargain with you. And yet, how many a true Christian is ashamed of Christ!

But the Lord wants us to be as men that wait for their Lord. Are our hearts really waiting for God's Son from heaven? I do not talk of understanding the prophecies - very blessed in their place - but the Morning Star is what belongs to us, a heavenly Christ who has given His life for us. As then we are found looking to be with and like Christ forever, this helps us to go through this world. The character attaching to the Christian is then that of watching. It is not understanding prophecy, but it is attachment to Christ as having got the promise that He is coming so that we are waiting for Him. Such have found Christ precious to them and they say, "Oh, that He would come!" Are we Christians then as men that wait for their Lord? If the Lord were to come tonight, would He be able to say of each one of us, "there is a blessed servant"? Remember, He is waiting more truly than we are. Christ has become our servant - love likes to serve, and selfishness likes to be served - and He never gives up His service.

In this wicked world we must keep our loins girt while so watching, but when He comes He will gird Himself and make us sit down. Not merely shall we have the best in heaven, but we shall have Christ Himself to minister to us.

He adds another thing. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." Here we have the service of Christians. We have had the state; now it is the service. We have just to fill up the little niche

He has put us into. So, accordingly, the promise here is different - "He will make him ruler over all that he hath." This is not the best of heaven ministered by Christ to us, but it is the kingdom - "You must come and reign with Me." The perfect love of Christ is not merely satisfied with ministering to our happiness, but all that is His own He makes ours.

Now what has brought in the evil around us? Just this, "My lord delayeth his coming. If we were really waiting for Christ, would we be heaping up money and property here? Would we be really glad if Christ came tonight - I mean as to the state of our hearts? Ah! the shaking that will next come will be the shaking of the things that can be shaken, so that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. The Lord gives us to have our loins girded and our lights burning, and ourselves to be as men waiting for their Lord!

The Lord give us to know Him in His love as manifested down here in the efficacy of His work on the cross, and then, while waiting for Him, to have our hearts looking up to Him and longing to be like Him!

## The Lord Jesus Christ

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The touching story of Mary Magdalene in John 20 is familiar to almost everyone. It is a striking instance of ignorant, yet genuine affection. She might have known of His glorious resurrection. She ought to have remembered His words, "After three days I will rise again." But though her faith and intelligence were defective, her heart beat true to its object and her treasure. Contrast her with Peter and John, and does she not stand on a platform far above them? They can return to their home, satisfied that Jesus' body was not in the tomb, though they knew not where He was. This was not enough for Mary; her loyal heart pants to know where He is, and finding Him not, is ready to break with grief. She stands without at the sepulcher weeping, stooping to gaze at the spot where they laid Him. Unperturbed by the angels, disconcerted in no wise, there she lingers, and there her heart must be - beautiful instance of genuine though ignorant affection, and the amazing power of one object when the affections are governed thereby. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.... Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

How was she rewarded? Most surely according to the desires of her heart toward Himself. First, He allows her to hear her own name on His risen lips. Wonderful moment for Mary! Wonderful moment for Jesus! Was not every pulsation of her devoted heart met, and more than satisfied, when His blessed voice caused her to look into His face, her Master and her Lord? I am bold to say that two hearts were made glad that daybreak - hers who could find no home where He was not, and His who gave His life for worthless rebels like us. And I am bold to say further that it gave Him greater joy to own her as His sheep, calling her by name, Mary! than it did to be so owned and called.

But this was not all, for He commissions her now to carry the most wonderful message ever entrusted to human lips (see v. 17) - "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." He sends her forth to proclaim the victory of His love, not only that He had triumphed so gloriously, that every enemy was under His feet, but that He, the risen Man, was Head of a new race, that "both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren." Heb. 2:11, 12. He sends her forth out of the second garden where the mournful history of the first garden (Eden) had been more than wiped out by the glories of His triumph, to say to poor trembling hearts like ours, that He Himself had not only won a new place for them, but that He had positively brought them into it in Himself: "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one," which does not mean that He was degraded to their level, but that He, by His death, His glorious triumph and victory, had elevated them to the heights of His own new place before His Father and God.

What grace! wondrous grace! He passes by angels that excel in strength, and comes down to a poor, weak woman upon earth, owns her as His sheep, and then sends her forth to wipe the tearful eyes and comfort the trembling hearts of His own by announcing unto them the conquests

of His love. Who can say now that Jesus does not delight to reward the devoted heart? And who can deny that in thus rewarding it, He gratifies His own changeless affections?

Let us now turn to Mark 14. It is the only instance recorded in Scripture of anyone having intelligent sympathy with Christ; it is a wonderful scene; everyone is thinking of death. Jesus has the vision of death before His spirit. How must the passover, with its lamb whose blood was shed, have brought death before every mind? There were the type and the antitype face to face as it were; the chief priests and scribes, with a hatred to Christ which nothing but His death could appease, were there seeking how they might take Him by craft and put Him to death. Thus we see how death filled all thoughts, but there was present one, Mary of Bethany, whose heart kept company with all that was passing through His; she alone was in full sympathy with His feelings at the moment, and entered into the thoughts of God concerning the beloved Son.

It has been remarked that the account which Mark furnishes us, of the close of His blessed mission of love, presents Jesus more solitary in it than any other; incidents and circumstances, which are recorded more or less in all the other gospels, are absent from Mark. If this be so, how strikingly significant is the record of this act of Mary's in the house of Simon the leper! Her heart and her affections, in true and genuine sympathy, traversing with Him the dreariness and loneliness of His path, as well as marking her sense of the utter worthlessness of all around in view of His agony and death; on one side intelligently apprehending not only who and what He was in Himself, but likewise His value in the eyes of His Father; on the other, making use of His tomb as a burying place for every valuable thing of hers on earth. For her, if Jesus died, He carries all of hers down into the grave with Himself!

In Matthew and Mark, the blessed Lord is consciously in man's hand, in the closing hours of His life. This indeed characterizes these gospels in their records of His death, His cross, which was both the fruit of the counsel of God in view of redemption, as well as the fruit of Jewish enmity, and man's revolted, reprobate, heart. How blessed it is then to see Mary here at such a moment marking her sense of the glories of His Person in the face of the accumulated hatred of both devil and man! It is a blessed sight, in the intelligent apprehension of faith - the homage of one willing, loving heart, thus laid at His feet - one solitary soul in that rebellious land owning Him Lord of all. All this sheds its light on His own words - "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

Let us now look at the facts, as they are here recorded, a little more in detail. Mary's affection, her intelligent sympathy, takes precedence over the treachery of Judas. Her love to Jesus was of that order and character that it secured for Him that which was suitable to Himself at such a moment, and that which entirely met His heart and thoughts. The "box of ointment of spikenard very precious," answered to all that was around Jesus, in the hatred and malignity of man, in that hour; but it also coincided with all that filled His soul; and it was, as well,

community of thought with the Father concerning the Son of His bosom. It is a sight of surpassing blessedness to gaze at Him as He sits there - to see Him accepting and vindicating too, the affection and sympathy which His own Person had created and called forth - to see her too, fruit as she was of His grace, expending on Him to whom she owed her all, that all. Mary, as it were, says by this action of hers, "While the King sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof."

There is another point of solemn interest in this affecting scene; namely, how opposite the thoughts of men are to what suits the mind of God and His Christ; the most that some could say concerning Mary's act was that it was marked by waste. Oh, how little was He in their eyes, who measured the service rendered to Him after this fashion! For it is the person to whom the service is rendered, that is the true measure of its value. Jesus, the eternal Son of the Father; Jesus, the spotless and perfect Son of God; Jesus, the willing and ready friend of need, and want, and sorrow, stood so low in their estimate, as to call forth the expression of waste in regard to that which was voluntarily expended upon Him. It is the same today; the present is but the offspring of the past; the family character is not wanting in either; the heirloom of indifference to God's Christ, and no sense of who He is or what He is, passes on from generation to generation; and today, with all its boasted light, superiority, and advance, the poor, the perishing, the destitute, and the oppressed, have their friends and allies; but Jesus, the precious, blessed, wondrous Savior, is forgotten and neglected - only remembered to be slighted and despised.

There is a bright spot in this dark cloud; turn your eye upon it for a moment; Jesus vindicates her. How blessed! The eye under which this act was performed discerned its value, and the heart that had caused to spring up affections so suited to Himself her Lord, measures out its appreciation of all that was expended on Himself; and He lets everyone know what He felt and thought of this manifestation of her devotedness to His Person. "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on Me.... She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying. Verily I

say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Oh, the joy of being vindicated by Jesus, and the satisfaction of knowing that, however feebly, we have truly ministered to the longings of His heart!

The Lord give His saints in these last days more genuine affection for, and true sympathy with, our Lord Jesus Christ and His interests, that nothing may be able to divert their hearts from Him, engage their powers but Him, satisfy their souls but Him!

## Man's Responsibility: an Answer to One Who Denied It

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There is a very lovely passage at the close of the book of Revelation to which you have not referred: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17. This is but one of a large number of passages which give us the other side of the subject. Your letter is entirely one-sided. The writer of the article to which you call attention, rejects utterly the notion of man's free will. He believes that man is perfectly powerless; and not only so, but in a state of positive enmity against God, so that if left to himself he never would come to Christ. All who come to the supper are compelled to come, else they never would be there.

Moreover, he most fully believes in the sovereignty of God, and that the names of all who are saved were written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world.

But then, on the other side -for we must take both sides - let us ponder such words as these: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in \_ the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." 1 Tim. 2:1-6.

And again: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3:9.

Now if it be said that in the above scriptures the words "any" and "all" refer to the elect, we reply that this is an unwarrantable liberty to take with the Word of God. If the inspired writer had meant "any of the elect," or all of the elect," he would, most assuredly, have said so. But he says nothing of the kind. It is not according to the desire of the heart of God that any should perish.

But man is a responsible being, although your letter is totally silent on this very important question. In short, you seem to lose sight altogether of two weighty truths: first, the largeness of the heart of God - the fullness and freeness of His grace - the wide aspect of His salvation - that His righteousness is unto all - that the gospel is to be preached to every creature - that God commandeth all men everywhere to repent (Mark 16:15; Acts 17:30; Rom. 3:22).

And second, man's responsibility. Is the sinner responsible or is he not? If he be not responsible, then what mean such words as these: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power"? And again, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2

Thess. 1:6-9; 2:11, 12.

Are men responsible to believe the gospel? Yes, verily, inasmuch as they shall be punished with everlasting destruction for rejecting it. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? People find difficulty in reconciling man's powerlessness with his responsibility. It is none of our business to reconcile things that are revealed in holy Scripture. It is ours to believe. They are reconciled, inasmuch as they are distinctly taught in the Word of God. It is remarkable that we do not see the same. difficulty in reference to the things of this life. 1,,Suppose a man owes you [\$5000], but he has by unprincipled extravagance rendered himself wholly unable to pay you. He is quite powerless. Is he responsible? And are you not perfectly justified, according to worldly principles, in taking legal proceedings against him? How much more will God be justified in His judgment of all those who reject the glad tidings of a full and free salvation sent to them on the ground of the atoning death of His only begotten Son!

## Mark 15:15

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"And so Pilate, willing to content the people." There we get the spring of his conduct. Its fearful enormity does not at first sight appear. It would seem that he could not help it. The people were bent on their purpose. Very possibly; but if they are bent on crucifying, why should I lend myself to aid them? I might not be able to prevent it, but at any rate I could keep myself from being a party to it. Oh, there is need, in this day, of individual attachment to the Person of the Son - need of weighing the worth of Jesus, and deciding to have Him or the world.

## Marriage: an Ancient Institution

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Marriage was instituted in the garden of Eden, and it vividly displays the nearness of relationship into which believers are to be brought, as the Church and bride of Christ, to Himself. Moreover, the familiarity of our minds with this relationship makes us understand better the place to which we are brought in the gracious affections of Christ. There are many things which are the blessed and substantial revelations of God, that we cannot so well understand; for example, the reign of Christ in glory, and our association with Him in that reign, however blessed it may be, can hardly be definitely familiarized to the mind. But everything around the Christian in this world serves to illustrate what this blessed relationship is between Christ and the Church.

Eve was to Adam the companion of his home, and the depositary of his affections. So "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it"; and the fact that she becomes the depositary and witness of His affections, is a thought more deeply touching than all the glory which will be her endowment as allied to Christ.

The purpose of Christ's ministry toward His Church is "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," and the end of that ministry is "that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Just as Eve was for Adam himself, so is the Church to be for Christ Himself.

## Mary at the Sepulcher: Genuine Affection

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In John 20 we have a scriptural illustration of affection for Christ; Mary Magdalene came early when it was yet dark to the sepulcher; she did not wait for sunrise, but while nature was still shrouded in darkness, her affection hastens her to the only spot on earth that had any interest for her - the grave of her Lord. Oh, what a character this stamps upon the earth; it was the grave of Jesus! Beloved reader, has it this character to you?

Now observe the Person of the blessed Lord was engaging the affections of the heart of Mary, and hence, how could she domicile where He was not?

Not so Peter and John; having satisfied themselves that the sepulcher was empty, having carefully examined the empty grave, and seen the garments of death left behind by the mighty Conqueror who had risen out of them, they return to their own home.

But look at Mary; she has no home; and in more senses than one did this devoted woman stand "without"; for not finding her Lord, she was truly without home, or cheer, or solace in her sorrow, a broken-hearted woman whom none could comfort; and yet it is a lovely sight, to see her in all her genuine personal love for Christ, standing, weeping, stooping down, and looking into His grave!

Ah! is not this rare - the spirit of it I mean - in these days? If I were asked what is the characteristic feature of the present time, what should I say? If I spoke the truth, I should say, HEARTLESSNESS AS TOUCHING CHRIST. Is it nothing to you, beloved reader, that Christ is rejected and cast out by man? Oh, is it not very little thought of, and lightly esteemed? The absence of affection accounts for the little loyalty there is to the Lord Jesus. How few hearts are really true to Him! It is not possible -to drill them into it; and mere knowledge cannot secure it. There is no lack of information as to Christ and His interests, yet it is a dry, cold thing, because it is not Christ. The question for the moment is, "What think ye of Christ?"

Another truth of exceeding beauty may be seen here; namely, how genuine affection gauges everything - measures everything. To Him whom she thought was the gardener, she says, "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me were thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." Observe, she does not say who it is, but "Him" - gauging everyone's thoughts by her own, and as she was full of Him in her thoughts, supposing everyone else was like herself. Alas, how little of this we find in ourselves or around us!

But observe too how her affection was the gauge of her ability "I will take Him away." If she had reasoned or calculated, she might well have hesitated ere she proposed such a task; but affection never calculates; its power or ability is itself.

And now the moment has arrived for Jesus to make Himself known. What a moment for Him - for her! He fulfills John 10, and "calleth His own sheep by name," and she answers to John 10, "The sheep hear His voice." He gives her to hear her name from His own very lips - Mary! What a scene it is! The history of the first garden, its blight and sin, all reversed. The history of the first garden,

with a fallen man and woman driven out by the hand of God, is closed at the cross of Jesus; and here in this second garden we find a risen Man and a redeemed woman whose affection for His Person the blessed Lord appreciates at such worth that He commissions her to be the bearer, to His disciples, of the most wonderful tidings that human lips ever announced. "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." May the Lord awaken in the hearts of His people more whole hearted devotedness, at all cost, to His Person, honor, and interests!

## Men Who Talked to Themselves

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This may sound like a strange subject, but people often commune with themselves, especially in times of stress and difficulty. These inward conversations are often much more important than words spoken to others because they express the real truth of a person's thoughts and purposes which may easily be concealed by oral expressions. But there is a scripture which says, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he. Pro. 23:7. Yes, from within proceed the purposes that guide each one, and there is One who knows "the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12), and He who reads the heart can reveal what is there. In His Word He has told us what a number of persons have said within and to themselves - some sorrowful and foolish, others happy and wise. In one of these revelations we read of the

### FOOL

who probably little thought that God could read his thoughts and reveal them to us. It is in the 14th Psalm that we read, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." This man is but the representative of millions who may not have expressed such thoughts with their lips, but their inward thoughts are here exposed by God. One may not have given oral expression to it, but when he endorses such a thought he is a fool. God reads and understands the thoughts afar off (Psalm 139:2). Men can hide nothing from Him. And such conversation within themselves is but the wish being parent to the thought. They fear to meet God, but they love their sins more than they fear God and His judgments; consequently they would like to persuade themselves that there is no God to meet. Such a man is called by God a FOOL.

Young people particularly should bear this verse in mind when confronted by those who deny openly or by implication that there is a God to meet. Those who advance such thoughts may have the greatest intellects and have mastered much of the world's education, but let God be true and every man a liar - God says that such are fools. Now this does not mean that they may not have acquired much secular knowledge; but of what avail is that if they deny the existence of God and the fact that they must give account to Him? We should never allow any other thought about their true state before God than that which He has expressed. If anyone seeks to shake your faith in God and His Word, remember that God has beforehand looked into his heart and given you a true account of that person. It reminds us of a verse in 1 Corinthians: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness." God has already told us that one who laughs at the gospel is one of "them that perish." What a terrible end!

Next we shall consider the case of the

### PROSPEROUS FARMER

in Luke 12. This man was unusually successful, and one year he had such bumper crops that he did not have storage space for them all. Now we all agree that there is nothing wrong with being a farmer, or with having good crops either. They are proofs of God's goodness and a cause for thanksgiving and praise to Him from whom all blessings flow. A man might own a very good piece

of land, be a hard worker, and cultivate the soil thoroughly; but what good would all that be without sunshine and rain in proper proportions? This casts the farmer back on God for the increase.

One night this wealthy man lay in bed and thought over the problem of storing his produce. Not one word was directed to God in thankfulness for the crops, but "he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Luke 12:17-19. Notice how many times he speaks of himself and to himself - I is the center around which all his thoughts travel, and the God in whose hand his breath is is not considered.

This man likewise has many followers - people who are very well satisfied with themselves and their circumstances. They know not God and never consider Him in all their ways. "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever." Psalm 49:11. They look ahead, and plan for the future, but not far enough into the future. The horizon of their future ends this side of the grave. They are what the world calls successful and shrewd. They have a way of turning things into money and of being farsighted enough to secure a future, but the real future is not considered at all. The future they should be concerned about is one that begins when they leave this world, and they can never be sure just what moment that may be. Let us see what God calls this farsighted, worldly man, who was blind to eternity: "But God said unto him, Thou FOOL, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be,

which thou hast provided?" v. 20.

Poor, wealthy man! He planned for a future, that for him did not exist; and for the one that did, he made no provision. That very night God came in and upset the plans that left Him out. The man had said much, but then we read, "But God said" (and that is what counts); what great folly to leave God out of our planning! The world would not call this type of man a fool, but in the divine calculation he was nothing less. If he had gained the whole world and lost his soul, he would still have been a fool and a great loser. The next man we shall consider is the

#### EVIL SERVANT

In Matt. 24:48.51 we read of the man who had the place of being one of his lord's servants. He had such a place among the other servants and, together with them, knew that the lord had gone away and was coming back. These servants were to act for and in his behalf until he returned. Everything they did was to be measured by being done for the one who was momentarily expected. This man represents a lot of professors of Christianity; they know something of the truth that the Lord is coming back and that His return may be expected at any time, but they have no heart for Him and so it is with them as here: "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming." It may not yet have been expressed with the lips but there is no love for the absent Lord, and they talk within themselves and say, "Oh, He will not come for a long time yet." The result of this putting out of their hearts the expectation of the Lord's return is to descend to the level of the world: "And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken." The Lord's coming would interfere with their worldly schemes, so they put far off what to them would be an "evil day."

But let us read further: "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." vv. 50, 51. Yes, he shall end with the hypocrites, for that is all he was. And his conversation with himself betrayed his real state of soul.

Sometimes we hear people say they would not want to be Christians because there are so many hypocrites among them. Well, the Word of God tells us of these hypocrites, but the solemn thing is that the rejecter of Christ shall spend eternity with the hypocrites. A hypocrite is surely a small thing to hide behind.

Next, let us come to a much more happy case of a man who consulted with himself as to what to do. In Luke 15 we read of

### THE PRODIGAL SON

who was indeed in a pitiable plight. He had left father and home, and gone off to have a good time. He used the very means provided by his father to indulge his own lusts, in utter disregard of his father.

He went on and on, till at last he came to the far country where he spent all he possessed. This poor wastrel finally came to the end of his resources and of himself; and while down there feeding the swine for a citizen of that country he thought about his father and home. The Scripture says that "he came to himself"; he had not really been in his right mind before. At this point we find him talking to himself. His companions might have thought that he was losing his mind, but the very opposite was true - he was coming out of great darkness into light. Let us listen to what he said:

"How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." vv. 17-19.

What poignant words - "I perish with hunger." He had been slow to perceive that the road he was traveling would end in his perishing, but now at length he communes with himself and expresses the hopelessness of his case. But in the midst of hopelessness there arises a gleam of hope - he thinks of the resources of the father's house and has some little hope of the goodness in the father's heart.

At last the decision is reached after consultation with himself, not with his false friends; and what a decision it was - "I will arise and go." No sooner had his own plight reached his inner consciousness and the light of the father's house dawned there, than he resolved to go back. Noble decision! What a happy turning point it is in the sinner's history when he comes to himself and reaches the decision to go to God and tell Him all.

This poor derelict decides not to plead any extenuating circumstances, but to frankly confess, "Father, I have sinned." Blessed words, which God is ever listening to hear from sinners who realize their lost condition. The prodigal made the one mistake of thinking that he might get a job as a servant and work for his board, for as yet he knew not the father's heart. Such a condition would never suit the father; he must learn that, and then he will never mention being made a

servant.

Not only did this young man reach a noble decision, but he acted without delay - "And he arose, and came to his father." Plans and resolutions will not do; one must actually go to God and take the place of a guilty sinner and allow Him to act in grace according to His own heart.

It is not our purpose to go into this whole account of the returning prodigal, but only to examine the process of facing the facts with himself, and reaching the right result. Happy man! he was soon in the embrace of his father where there could not be any question of the father's heart, the father's love.

Next we shall go to a case of a

#### DISCOURAGED SAINT

who talks to himself. This saint has become very much downcast; he says, "My tears have been my meat day and night," while others mocked and said, "Where is thy God?" But then he says, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God." This one addresses himself in his discouragement, asks himself why he is cast down, and reminds himself to hope in God. He then adds, "For I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5.

Would we not do well to speak to ourselves in such a manner when discouragement overtakes us? How such consultation should bring us to remember our resources in Him who has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And so we read in James, "Is any... afflicted? let him pray." It brings God into the circumstances, and He is the God of circumstances - One who is superior to all, and who delights to bless.

The last case we will mention is that of a

#### HAPPY SAINT

who is found in Psalm 103. Here one who is enjoying blessings and benefits from God addresses himself, and says: "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." vv. 1, 2.

And is this not one place where we fail? Is not this something we should say to ourselves? These are words that can be addressed to ourselves - "Bless the LORD, O my soul." How many mercies we daily enjoy as the gift of His goodness, and yet how feeble is the response of praise from our hearts and lips. We would do well to speak to ourselves after this fashion, and remind ourselves of all His benefits.

Again going to James, we read: "Is any merry? let him sing psalms." As in trouble we should remember what a God is ours and betake ourselves to Him, so in the manifold blessings, we should render to Him the fruit of our lips, even praise to His name.

How little do we offer the sacrifice of praise to God, and yet the exhortation says to do it "continually." Let us remember the words: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Eph. 5:19, 20.

"When all Thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys,  
Transported with the view, I'm lost  
In wonder, love, and praise.  
Unnumbered comforts to my soul,  
Thy tender care bestowed,  
Before my infant heart conceived  
From whom those comforts flowed.  
Ten thousand thousand precious gifts  
My daily thanks employ;  
Nor is the least a cheerful heart  
To taste those gifts with joy."

## **A Mine: the Bible**

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The Word of God is an inexhaustible mine. Had men been digging and mining at some material ore ever since David, or Job, or Abel, what a marvel would it be considered if the precious vein still remained! Yet this is the fact with respect to the Bible, for the more taken, the more there seems to be left. And again, the deeper the miner in nature goes, the darker it is and the fouler the atmosphere; but the deeper we go into this mine, the greater the light and the purer the atmosphere; and the deeper the miner goes, the more he endangers life, but the deeper we go, knowing God and Christ, the safer we know ourselves to be.

## The Moral Characteristics of Heaven: Air and Scenery

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The air of a place is more important to us than the scenery. If we get both, the refined and tasteful sensibilities will be gratified, and our condition will be the more perfect; but if we must part with either, and do with only one of these, the air of the place we dwell in will be far more important to our good and comfort than the scenery. So not only with our converse with places, but with persons also. Their spirit will be of greater importance to us than their attainments. As brethren dwelling together we find this continually. There is more real refreshment from the gracious, humble, and fervent spirit of another, than from any communications of intelligent ones who are not adorned and filled with that mind and spirit.

In like manner, heaven will have both its atmosphere and its scenery. The place will be instinct and alive with a moral element, as well as furnished with glories; and the former (I speak as a man) will be of greater amount in the aggregate and history of our joy than the latter. There will be a heaven for every sense and faculty - a heaven for the eye, for the ear, and for the heart, through all its pulses - a heaven of light for the intelligent powers, and a heaven for the ardor of love for the affections. I have found it well to ponder this a little. - to gather some notices here and there in the Scriptures of this precious secret - to put, not before the eye, the glories of the place (a very blessed thing at times), but before the heart its moral characteristics. Certain passages have just occurred to me, and I will follow them briefly.

Exod. 18

This meeting between Jethro and Moses and their several companies at the mount of God was, as we know, a type of the correspondence between the heavenly and earthly families in the days of the kingdom. But what are the moral features impressed upon it? Most willing subjection on the part of Moses, the most hearty sympathy in the joy of Israel on the part of Jethro with, at the same time, an assumption of the place of dignity without the least reserve, but in full, easy and conscious title. And how sweet a social scene must be, animated by such principles and affections as these!

2 Chron. 9

The visit of the Queen of the South to King Solomon is properly known to be a type of the intercourse of the royal Jerusalem and the tributary nations in the days of the kingdom. But how unselfish, and how ungrudging, how generous and freehearted was it! How unlike a state of society where we are hateful and hating one another! Solomon answers all her questions, and even exceeds her desires; and she takes the place of a debtor and an inferior, with the praises on her lips of the God of Israel who had given His people such a sovereign; and she goes back to spread his fame, instead of to envy it.

Isa. 40

This chapter is a prophecy of the state of the millennial earth. But it exhibits the fine moral features of that day. The nations delight to do honor to Zion; their treasures are sent up to minister

to her joy and her glory, with all the readiness and the glow of a freewill offering; they fly to Zion with their choicest blessings, as doves fly to their windows. How precious will it be to breathe an atmosphere of such glowing, unselfish love, after the foul and noxious air of this present state

of social life, where principles of envy and malice give such strong characters to all that is around us!

Matt. 17

The holy hill was expressive of the earthly and heavenly families in the days of the glory. And what says Peter, breathing the air of the place? "It is good for us to be here:... let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He was happy, divinely happy; and that cured his heart of selfishness. He was willing to labor and let others even enter into his labors.

Rev. 21 and 22

And so in the holy city, the Jerusalem of the heavens. What is the commerce there between the families of God? All is most blessed. The kings bring their glory and honor up to the light of the city. As it were, they delight to do it reverence - to hold it in honor. They do not lightly approach it, but bring their glory only up to it. And the city - she dispenses her treasures with an unsparing hand. The leaves of her tree, the shining of her glory, the streams of her river are at the full and welcome disposal of the nations. What an atmosphere all these scriptures tell us the atmosphere of heaven and of the millennium will be! If we are wearied with our own selfish hearts, and with the spirit that animates the scene around us every day, we may well long for such a change of air as these scriptures promise us. For what refreshment will it be - the repose of the heart in regions and dwellings of love! If the glories of the place be judged desirable and attractive, what, I ask, will this element, this sweet atmosphere of it be? All the low and miserable workings of selfish nature will be gone in heaven. It is not that they will be triumphed over, but they will be gone; for "the mind of Christ" will be there to perfection.

My heart is bounding onward, Home to the land I love; Its distant vales and fountains My wistful passions move. Fain would my fainting spirit Its living freshness breathe, And wearied steps find rest in

Its hallowed shades beneath. No soil of nature's evil, No touch of man's rude hand, Shall e'er disturb around us That bright and happy land. The charms that woo the senses Shall be as pure as fair; For all, while stealing o'er us, Shall tell of Jesus there. What light! when all its beaming Shall own Him as its sun!

What music! when its breathing Shall bear His name along! No change, no pause, its pleasures Shall ever seek to know; The draft that lulls our thirsting, But wakes our thirst anew.

## No Chance Time or Work

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There is no chance time or chance work with God. There is not a sparkling dewdrop which becomes such by chance; He globes it on the same plan as that by which He binds a planet to its center. There is not a solitary drop of dew falling on a May morning that has not its appointed leaflet, or grasslet, or flowerlet, on which to alight. The winds and the waters have their time for sleep; the sea, with its million hands, its time for storm and death. Every wave has its own commission. "The steps [even each one, day by day] of a good man are ordered by the LORD." Psalm 37:23. And oh, marvelous arithmetic! "the very hairs of your head are all numbered" - not one falls without His notice. And, think you, can there be a single servant of Christ whose time for rest is not appointed? Could such a one as Paul prematurely die? Ah! no; rivers have their rest, and stars their time to set; and he said, "The time of my departure is at hand."

## Our Children in School

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Christian parents who have a godly care for the welfare of their children may well be concerned as we come to another September. This month means the return to schools with all their dangerous influences. There on the one hand stands the divine instruction to "bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4, N. Trans.), and on the other hand is the system of compulsory education which turns them over to the ungodly (generally speaking) for much of their "admonition," or instruction.

We should not under-estimate the evil influences which are brought to bear on our children in the schools and colleges. Instead of the instruction of the Lord, the very Word of the Lord will be called in question, and deliberate attempts will be made to shake their faith in God and the Holy Scriptures. They are taught to reason, and then by that process to reason away divine inspiration and all that it reveals. The statistics of the percentages of young people who come out of schools and colleges with their faith shaken is staggering. (These English-speaking countries feel superior to Russia and her degree of civilization and yet are laying the ground work for the same type of "overthrow of God" by the concerted undermining of the faith of the younger generations.)

Besides this danger to their faith is the influence of the world's teaching which tends to obscure the Christian's hope and calling. The whole system of the world's philosophy is calculated to instill pride, and imbue with the spirit of aggrandizement; or, in other words, it fosters and promotes the idea that each one should strive to be great in this world. There is not the least thought given to the fact that a Christian is called out of this world to live for the Lord Jesus and to wait for Him. Such a thing as a Christian learning in school what he needs to know in order to earn an honest living while he is going through this world is never considered. Of course we should not expect anything else from the world; "they are of the world: therefore speak they of the world" (1 John 4:5); Satan is its god and prince and he makes good use of the whole educational system to further his ends.

Another grave danger that besets the young in schools is the moral atmosphere. In some places this has deteriorated to an alarming degree, and dear young people from Christian homes are thrown into hearing and seeing filth and corruption. As the end approaches, the character of the "days of Lot" will be more in evidence; we know he was daily "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked," and his children were deeply influenced.

But is there no solution for the dangerous and serious problem? Yes, there is. We can always go to Scripture and find precepts and examples that will help us in our troubles. In this instance we cite the case of Moses. As many would have viewed it, he was born at a most inopportune time—the children of Israel were slaves and made to feel it deeply; they were not free to do as they knew they should; they were entirely at the mercy of the ungodly (except for divine intervention); and an edict condemned Moses to death in the river. It was probably the worst time in all the history of Israel for a godly Israelite to bring up children; and Amram and Jochebed must have had great exercises and searchings of heart before God.

Through God's gracious providence Moses was delivered from death and given back to his mother to bring up for Pharaoh's daughter. This was a cause for deep thankfulness of heart to God, and yet it was cause for exercise of spirit also, for soon that dreaded day would come when their son would be taken from them to be brought up according to the royal station of his benefactress. This would call for an education calculated to fit this "proper child" of Israel to be great in the palaces of Egypt, instead of instructing him about the "God of glory" that appeared to Abraham, and of the future for those Israelitish slaves. In Egypt's schools this child of faithful parents would hear all the fantastic stories of creation that a highly developed paganism had invented; and certainly the moral standards of a heathen country would never suit one of that people called unto Him "that is holy." What then could be done?

We believe that the answer is fully given in the divine record of Moses and of his parents. We see the faith of Jochebed in Exodus and have it commended in that great chapter of faith - the 11th of Hebrews. She was not disposed to accept things as they appeared, but went forward in faith. She carefully hid her son as long as she could, and then had her faith richly rewarded by receiving him to bring up for a time in the surroundings of a God-fearing home. What could she do with these precious years while she brought him up? Would she make use of them to instruct Moses in the truth of God and give him a perspective that no college of Egypt could ever erase? It was not that she sought Egypt's wisdom for him, but if he must have it she must diligently use the intervening time to bring him up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord; and she must also count on God to open his heart and make the good seed bear fruit. At last the time came and "when the child was grown, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son." Exod. 2:10 (N. Trans.).

The next word, in point of time, about Moses is found in Acts 7: "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." (And truly the wisdom of Egypt was great at that time; it was not the backward nation that it is today.) But all the influences of the schools and palaces of Egypt could not efface the truth that had taken root - truth about God, about Israel, and about Egypt. So aware of the real facts was he that he deliberately "forsook Egypt" and all that pertained to it. He counted his association with the despised people of God of more worth than the passing glory of Egypt. Read the beautiful account of his faith in action, in Heb. 11 We feel that much credit must go to his mother who evidently had fortified him against all the seductions of an Egypt that was opposed to God and all that was of Him. He was not moved by the dazzling spectacle of Pharaoh's court, but cast in his lot with the oppressed slaves; he was not swayed by the false heathen theories of creation, but under divine inspiration wrote the facts of creation. (Gen. 1) that have withstood a thousand varying notions to the contrary.

Natural prudence might have sought to find an Israelitish school in Egypt which would have the approval of Pharaoh, but which would shield Moses from the evil teaching of paganism and perhaps infidelity, and also keep him from the moral corruption of Egypt's institutions; but such a school, to have Pharaoh's approval, would have had to accommodate the hopes of Israel to the schemes of Egypt, and they were irreconcilable. A school of this type would never have prompted Moses to forsake Egypt, but it would have taught him how to get along and advance in Egypt rather than to leave it. And so with us; if we could shield our children from infidelity and immorality it would seem good, but if in doing so they would receive the world's philosophy of achievement and success, we would probably find they had been drawn into the world's vortex to the loss of

their Christian testimony and happiness, and to the Lord's dishonor.

We might well take a lesson from the building of a great dam or some great wall. Before it is built the engineers carefully calculate the amount of pressure the structure will have to withstand; then the foundations are made sufficiently strong to carry the weight, and the whole is carefully reinforced and buttressed to meet all the demands that will be placed upon it. In like manner we should measure the three-fold influence and pressure of infidelity, worldly philosophy, and immorality that will come against our young people, and then see that we carefully prepare them to meet it. We should not attempt to do it in our own strength, but, confessing our weakness to God, seek His help and guidance. It will be a constant duty to them, and before the Lord, all the time they are in our homes and under our influence - not just the work of a day or a year. And they need to see that these precious things are the principles that actuate us, and that we "are persuaded of them" and that we confess that we are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13). May our dear young people then be fortified and prepared for the threefold evil which they will surely meet.

May they be firmly rooted in the truth of the Word of God and its divine inspiration throughout, that they may stand in the wisdom of God and not of men.

May they ever remember that we who are saved have been delivered from this present evil world, and are waiting for our blessed Lord to come and take us to our inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that all the glory of this world will come to naught, while he that does the will of God shall abide forever.

3. May they be deeply impressed with this solemn truth - God is "holy, holy, holy," and that He has said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," so as to "abhor that which is evil" and turn away from the least touch of that which defiles.

## The Path of Faith Which God Selects: "That Good Part"

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The more we have the sense of grace in our souls, the whole work of salvation being of God toward us, the more we shall seek to draw nigh to Him in the deep sense of our need of being kept in an evil day. The time is short for learning practically what Christ's path was. But in a day of outward "toleration" and indifference, it is more than ever a matter of choice and God gives His blessing with it. "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Ruth chose too; a parting kiss could not satisfy her as it did Orpha. She slave to Naomi in her sorrow, and a full reward was given to her. Caleb pursued a quiet, suffering path of faithfulness to God, walking by faith, and when the time came he used his privilege of choosing Hebron where the field of Machpelah was. Faith works by love and avoids reasoning. The apostle prays "that your love may abound yet more and more in full knowledge and all intelligence, that ye may judge of and approve the things that are more excellent." Phil. 1:9, 10; N. Trans.

In the ordinary matters of this life, as to our circumstances, etc., faith's path is not to choose, but to give oneself quietly over to God's ordering for us. Lot in self-confidence chose for himself,

pitched toward Sodom, and then went into it. The first warning God gave him had no effect upon him; he was delivered at that time by his uncle's intervention, but he had no mind to leave Sodom; and when the wicked city was at length destroyed, he lost everything, and the beautiful plains he had coveted became a burning fiery furnace. Abraham, through humiliating experience in Egypt, learned the first lesson of the wilderness - not to have confidence in himself. And so being consciously incompetent to choose, he was glad that God should choose for him, and he was blessed.

In spiritual things the contrary holds good; God expects us to choose what is most excellent in the path which He graciously opens up to us. We have not to seek anything dazzling, or out of the way, not to put forth any remarkable effort that would attract attention or make other people talk about us. We have simply to walk heartily and joyfully in the Lord's path, and have our hearts set on things above, where He sits, and receive what He sets before us. Ruth had not to go out of her way to leave her country and cast in her lot with Naomi. The link had been formed quietly and naturally, and she held to it, minded not to leave or give up that which God had set before her. "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Nothing could be more unpretentious. There was no self-assertion, no brilliant resolution or vow as to the future, only a quiet settled purpose to cleave to what was already hers through grace, at a time when death seemed to have ruined all her prospects.

So with Caleb; he had been sent as one of the spies, had gone in obedience, and traversed the land from south to north, right up to Lebanon, and he clung to the promise, "Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance." He had then a right to pick and choose his inheritance in all the best of the land given to the fathers. And after forty-five years of patience he chose that city and suburbs where the sons of Anak lived, and where the spies felt with terror their own insignificance. It is the only city mentioned in Num. 13 as being in the land, and was the

home of the giants. During seven years' conflict Joshua and all Israel had left those giants alone, yet Caleb ventures to say that "If so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said." It was simple faith, persevering to the end in the humility and withal boldness which faith gives - no pretension, no boasting, but the quiet confidence of one who walked with God. And the "fields of the city" and the villages thereof were made his forever (Josh. 21:12). The first "lot" given to the sons of Aaron was in the city itself. Such is the choice of faith, working by love; and love must have its object, known to the soul and enjoyed. Without such an object, holiness is not possible for us.

Elisha is another stirring example of the simplicity of faith's choice, showing the soul is held as by a chain of gold in the path of God's ordering and blessing. "As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee," was the simple answer to the test -and no ordinary test - applied three times to him; and it ended in the expression of acknowledged communion, followed by the thrilling sight of the man who went up to heaven without dying, and the reception of special blessing as he gathered up the precious mantle which fell to him.

"Draw nigh to God," James says, "and He will draw nigh to you." May it be increasingly our portion, and the more so as the world is carried away by its talk and vain glory, that we may serve Christ in obscurity, and find our joy in that, content with His approval until He come.

## The Peace of God: Heart's Ease

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"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:6, 7. This is true heart's ease, and our God would graciously give it to us at all times. It matters not what our condition may be, it is our privilege to enjoy heart's ease, inasmuch as we are called to cast our every care upon One who is as willing as He is able, and as able as He is willing, to bear it for us. "Cast thy burden upon the LORD." What then? Is it, "He will remove it"? Nay; but "He shall sustain thee." This is far better. The heart may often long to have the "burden" removed altogether; but it is infinitely more gracious of the Lord to sustain us. This latter is the true secret of "heart's ease." It brings us into closer contact - deeper intimacy - with the Lord, and this is just what we want. He, in His tender love, desires to make a most blessed exchange with us; He takes our care, and gives us His peace. What an exchange! He would not have a single care upon our hearts. He would fain have our hearts as free from care as our consciences are free from guilt. He has given us righteousness instead of guilt, and He would give us peace instead of care.

How gracious of God thus to occupy Himself about us! He occupies Himself about our very failures and follies, in order to deliver us from them; and He occupies Himself about our anxieties in order to relieve us of them, and fill our hearts with His own ineffable peace. He positively says to us in language as plain as language can be, "Give Me your care, whatever it is, little or great, it matters not-personal, domestic, commercial, or whatever else it be - just give it to Me, and I will, assuredly, give you instead, My peace which passeth all understanding." Precious grace! May there be a full response on our part thereto. Why should we keep our cares when God wants to have them? Why should we be careful about ourselves, when God is caring for us? He is ever thinking of us. He has deigned to count the very hairs of our heads. Could care possibly be more minute or tender? Could knowledge possibly be more intimate?

And what is the issue of all this? To what does it lead? Are our hearts thus freed from every care - left without occupation or object? No; blessed be God, His exchange reaches higher still. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."

Here is the blessed issue to which the Holy Ghost conducts our souls. He introduces us to "the God of peace." Having freed our hearts from every care, and given us His own peace, He presents Himself as the Object to be enjoyed by our tranquillized hearts. In other words, instead of care, we have peace; and instead of self, we have God.

It is of all importance for the Christian to remember that he is brought to God now. He has not to wait till he gets to heaven to enjoy God; he can enjoy Him now. "Christ also hath once suffered for

sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." We are as fully brought to God now, so far as title is concerned, as ever we shall be. Christ died to put away our sins; He lives to take away our care, and it is our privilege, with a conscience free from guilt and a heart free from care, to delight in God Himself. This is heart's ease.

"Lord, what a change within us one short hour  
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make;  
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,  
What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower!  
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;  
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,  
Stands forth in sunny outline, bright and dear;  
We kneel, how weak; we rise, so full of power.  
Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,  
Or others - that we are not always strong,  
That we are ever overborne with care,  
That we should ever weak or heartless be,  
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer;  
And joy, and strength, and courage, are with Thee?"

## Prayer and the Word of God: Two Things Mentioned Together

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Prayer and the Word of God are frequently mentioned together in the gospels and epistles. Their importance cannot be too forcibly impressed upon the saints. The writer does not doubt that very many are far more diligent in this respect than himself, but he is encouraged to make the following remarks, being assured that those who are the most earnest in prayer and the study of the Word will be the foremost to approve of and have communion with anything that may tend to remind the saints of the importance, or lead them on to the more diligent observance, of these things.

They are, as remarked above, often mentioned together in Scripture. When the Word of God joins together things in themselves distinct the one from the other, it is not only important to notice the things themselves, but also to notice the connection in which they are found. Thus it is with faith and love - the former to the Lord, the latter to the saints. There may be those who believe they are walking in the path of faith who are aware that their actions are not those which result from love to all the saints. Scripture in joining faith and love together, as in Eph. 1:15, Col. 1:4, 1 John 3:23, and other passages, teaches us the value of having this relationship ever present to our thoughts. The two are set together in the Word, and cannot be separated.

When a person is converted, the fruit resulting from the divine nature is manifested by this love, as in 1 John 3:14; "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." All is simple and happy when there is the first love; Christ Himself occupies the heart, and love to those whom He loves is the result of the heart being thus occupied. The fruit of this love is the service which the believer so joyfully renders to his brethren for the sake of Christ; but after a time when there are trials and sufferings which result not only from our position here as strangers and pilgrims, but also from our relationship with the saints, the believer, while continuing in the service to which the Lord had originally called him, is in danger of losing the freshness of this love to the saints. But love to the saints cannot be separated from faith in the Lord; neither is there danger of the former being confounded with brotherly affection, while 1 John 5:2, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments," is abiding in us.

In like manner as faith and love are joined together, so also prayer and the Word of God are joined together. From among the passages where prayer and the Word thus occur, I quote the three following; namely, Acts 6:4; Luke, end of chapter 10 and commencement of chapter 11; and Eph. 6:17, 18.

The first occurs at a memorable epoch in the history of the assembly of God here upon earth. Acts 6 makes mention of the first failure collectively of the saints. Individual sin had occurred in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, but now the change from the freshness and devotedness of chapters 2 and 4 begins to mark the saints in their collective character. How sad this scene! The blessed Lord had suffered, had been crucified, had risen from among the dead, and ascended on high; thence He had shed forth the Holy Ghost, the power that wrought in His disciples, so as to make them vessels of testimony in Jerusalem, both for the conversion of thousands and also for bringing

home to the consciences of rulers and people that there was a power in these witnesses which was superior to all the power that was of the world; the apostles were faithful, the blessing was abundant, the proof that the Lord was working with them was manifested to the least as well as to the most spiritual (Acts 4:31), and yet, with all this grace and privilege before their eyes, there was murmuring among some as regarded the manner of serving the food. Even in early days how soon thoughts similar to those which influence man in his natural state entered into and had power over the minds of those who were the first fruits of the grace of God and the work of Christ.

The attack of the enemy, as is ever the case, was directed against those who were the foremost in the battle, for from verse 2 it is clear that the apostles themselves were to be taken from their hitherto glorious testimony to Christ in heaven in order to bestow their time and labor upon that which might serve to lessen the murmurings of saints on earth. Wisdom was given to the apostles to meet the danger and to still the murmurings: "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables." v. 2. And again, "But we will give ourselves continually. to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." v. 4. If in these early days prayer and the ministry of the Word was needed for the work, how needful in these days that, although occupied in the daily business engagements of this life (engagements doubtless for the most part necessary), the earnest Christian will, when such engagements are fulfilled, find time for prayer and reading the Word. He is thus refreshed and strengthened, and keeps fresh in his own spirit, while performing that which appertains to his calling to perform; but when the energy of his first love is tested by time, there is a danger of his gradually ceasing this habit of prayer and study of the Word, and at length he may find himself passing day after day, and the Bible hardly looked at; and even where the reading and prayer with the family continues, he is aware that, though the form is the same, the freshness and power is gone. What is the remedy? Let him judge himself, and he will find he will again have recourse to prayer and the Word, the former making him humbly feel his dependence from moment to moment upon God, and the latter ministering to him refreshment and strength in his own soul. Again, as regards the assemblies of the saints: sometimes after years of testimony and blessing, the work in its active form ceases, the older saints leave the world, and their places are not supplied by others; the attendances at the meetings for reading the Word and prayer diminish, and the meetings themselves are at length discontinued. The light is no

longer the same in the village or town. And why is this? The answer given is, "Because there are so few who attend." But this is no reason why the two or more who desire to go on with prayer and the Word of God should not habitually continue to meet together. The failure in such cases is owing to our thoughts being more occupied with the things which are seen than with the things which are not seen. Matt. 18:19 shows us that two are enough for prayer, and experience has often shown the earnest Christian how much blessing can be obtained in reading the Word alone or with but one other Christian.

The second occasion of this joining together of the Word and prayer is in Luke 10 and 11. In Luke 10, while Martha serves, it is her sister Mary, who sits at the feet of Jesus and hears His word. When Martha complains of her sister's leaving her to do all the work alone, the Lord replies, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Immediately afterward,

in chapter 11, the Lord is in prayer, and the disciples ask Him to teach them also to pray; thereupon He teaches them the prayer so well known to all: "Our Father which art in heaven," etc. This prayer commences with the desire for the glory of the Father before any mention is made of the wants of those who are the objects of His love; and thus we have another lesson as regards these things - first, that to listen to the Word is choosing the "good part," and second, that in our prayers the glory of the Father and the Son should ever take precedence of those things of which we have need while here.

The third and last portion of the Word referred to above, is Eph. 6:17, 18. In Acts 6 it was the work upon earth; here it is the combat in the heavenly places. For this contest the Christian requires the whole armor of God; first, to escape the wiles of the enemy (v. 11), and afterward, to oppose him in the combat (v. 13). The different weapons for this warfare are enumerated in verses 14, 15, 16, and 17; all are defensive except the one mentioned last - "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." v. 17. But as soon as the saint, being completely equipped for defense, receives the Word of God, immediately prayer is mentioned. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." v. 18.

Thus we have the Word of God and prayer set before us in close

relationship together again and again in the blessed testimony which God has been pleased to give us. There are other passages where they are joined together, but I give only the number three, being the full number given by Scripture itself for testimony to the truth (2 Cor. 13:1).

I add some remarks, however, as to verse 105 of Psalm 119. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." This is sometimes wrongly quoted as a light to the feet and a lamp to the path. The difference is important, the Word of God being a light for the whole course of the believer, and a lamp for each particular step that he should take. The darker the night, the more valuable the light which a wayfarer sees in the distance, and to which his steps are directed, the more valuable also the lamp which gives him guidance for each step. The lamp warns him of dangers which are between him and the light, and it may be necessary for him to stop or alter the course for a time, to avoid some snare or pit in the path, but as soon as the lamp shows that the direct course toward the light may again be taken, the wayfarer makes straight for the light. But the light and the lamp are not valued except when there is darkness; on a clear moonlight night they may not be needed. But as regards the Word it is otherwise; for the Word is always needed by the believer, and the darkness is always here, whatever light the Christian himself may be given for his own path. Happily for us, the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shines (1 John 2:8), but now is the time when darkness is upon the world (1 Thess. 5:7), and even the Christian may be in a state and a condition very similar to that of those who are in darkness (Eph. 5:14). Hence the value of the Word as the lamp for our feet, and the light for our path.

But for the believer there is another thing needed; that is, dependence. Though he may have the lamp and the light, yet in a pathway full of snares, pits, and other dangers, he needs the aid and strength of Him who knows every portion of the path (Heb. 4:15, 16). Hence the importance of prayer.

Prayer is the expression of our dependence, and the Word is the weapon which overcomes the enemy (Luke 4:1-13 John 2:14).

## Precision

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"What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Rom. 8:3. Mark the marvelous precision of Scripture. It does not say, "In the likeness of flesh," for then He would not have been a real man at all. Neither does it say, "In sinful flesh," for then He could not be a perfect Savior. His humanity was as real as it was pure and spotless. All homage to His peerless name! Universal and everlasting praise to His glorious Person!

## The Queen of Sheba and the Eunuch: Two Notables Made the Same Journey

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1 Kings 10; Acts 8

These two narratives, found in distant parts of the Word, in common illustrate truths which are as dear and important to us in this distant age and place as ever they were, whether in the time of 2 Chron. 9, or of Acts 8.

In the Queen of Sheba and the Ethiopian eunuch, who belonged, it may be, to the same country, though at very different times, we find dissatisfaction in the best things short of Christ, but rest and fullness in Him, whether He be known to us in grace or in glory.

The Queen of the South had all royal honors upon her, and around her. She could command the delights of the children of men, and evidently had health and capacity to enjoy them. The world was at her disposal, but the world had left her with an aching, craving heart, and she found no satisfaction in her royal estate; and, ill at ease, she took a long, untried journey from the uttermost part of the earth to Jerusalem, because she had heard of the wisdom of the king there, "concerning the name of the LORD."

She reached Jerusalem, and there she found all and more than she had heard of, or calculated on. Her spirit was filled; her eyes saw something in everything there that possessed her soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory - for Christ was there. He shone in those days in Solomon, who was His image and reflection, and she was brought into communion with Christ in His glory in the city of the great king, called as it has well been, "The heaven below the skies." The world had left her heart an aching void, and Christ had now filled it to overflowing. She counted this merchandise better than that of gold and silver, better than that of riches; and getting her questions answered, her soul satisfied, her eye filled with visions of glory - of glory according to God - she presented her gold, her frankincense, her precious stones, the wealth of her kingdom, as a small thank-offering.

Acts 8

The eunuch was a great man under Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians; but he had long since, I may say, proved that the vanities of the Ethiopians would not do for him. He appears before us as one who had already cast the idols of that land to the moles and to the bats, and taken up the confession of the name of the God of Israel. In the obedience of this faith he had just gone where first we see him, to Jerusalem - the city of solemnities, where the worship of the God of Israel was conducted - and he had gone there as a worshiper, but he had left Jerusalem dissatisfied. He was on his way home to the south country with a craving, aching heart. He was still an inquirer - as surely so as the Queen of Sheba had been in her day, when she left her native country for this same city, Jerusalem.

The contrast here is vivid. Jerusalem had satisfied the spirit of the Queen, but it had left the soul of the eunuch a barren and thirsty place. These are among the things which show themselves to us

in these most interesting pieces of history. But why this? Why should not Jerusalem do for the eunuch what it had done for the Queen? Christ was not there in this his day as He had been in her day. Jerusalem was not now the city where the King of Glory in His beauty was seen and reflected, and where some image of Him, and some token of His presence and magnificence, might be traced everywhere. It was no mount of transfiguration to him as it had been to her. Religiousness was there, but not Christ; the observances and ceremonials of a carnal worship, the doings of an earthly sanctuary were there, but not the presence of the Christ of God. This made all the difference, and tells us why the eunuch left that very same Jerusalem with an aching heart, which had filled the spirit of the Queen of Sheba with an abounding, overflowing joy.

His heart, however, is to be filled as well as hers, and that too out of the same fountain - Christ - only it is through the prophet Isaiah that Christ is to fill it, and not through Solomon.

In a desert spot, on the journey that was taking him back from Jerusalem to Ethiopia, Philip, the servant and witness of Jesus, is directed by the Holy Ghost to meet him. He addresses himself to him in the aching, craving state of mind to which I have already alluded. It possessed him thoroughly, so that no strange circumstance, such as that of meeting a stranger in that desert place and being addressed by him, has power to move him. The whole scene bears this character. There was the absorbing presence of one thing in his soul. "The expulsive power of a new affection" was there. He was reading Isaiah with emotion of heart, under the convictions and awakenings of the Spirit of God. But Christ was soon to be introduced to Him, and the desert should then rejoice, and in the thirsty land springs of water should flow. "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus"; and the eunuch then "went on his way rejoicing."

Joy did in him and with him now what in earlier days it had done in and with the Queen of Sheba. She trafficked for wisdom and counted the merchandise of it better than that of gold and silver and precious stones, and she was willing to part with the wealth of her kingdom for it. He now can part with Philip, since his spirit is filled with the joy of the Lord, and he has got the Christ of God, as she had got Him in type before.

Precious and beautiful illustrations of these like weighty truths! only we make certain differences. It was the world in all its royal splendor and resources that had left her heart a beggar, as she had tasted it in her own country. It was religiousness which had left his heart a beggar, as he had proved it in the city of solemnities. But whether it be this or that - the splendor of the world or the religion of the world - the heart is but beggary and drought without Jesus.

And then again, there is this further difference - it was Christ in the glory that was introduced to the Queen. it was Christ in grace and humiliation that was introduced to the eunuch. Solomon reflected the King in His beauty to her - Isaiah preached the Lamb in His blood to him. But no matter, both of them were satisfied. Christ in the dispensation of present grace and blood-sealed salvation gives satisfaction and rest to the sinner; Christ in the display of coming glories in the kingdom will give satisfaction to the nations of the world, and to the whole creation of God. It is Christ, whether as the Lamb of God on the altar, or as the King of Glory on the throne. His people are satisfied; their searchings and inquiries are over; the sinner goes away with the Lamb, satisfied and at rest; the creation of God will rejoice in Him of whom it is written, "Glory and honor are in His presence; strength and gladness are in His place"; the whole creation in all its range of manifold

regions shall share in the power of that day; the daughter of Zion, the nations with their kings, the beasts of the forest and the cattle of the hills, the floods and the woods, the hills, the vales, shall then in their several ways taste and witness the universal joy and the deep satisfaction in which the creation of God shall then repose.

But once more, and I will notice another difference. In the day of the glory the King must be sought - the Queen of the South comes up to wait on the King in Zion. In the day of grace the Savior seeks - the Ethiopian nobleman was sought and found by the servant and witness of Jesus the Savior. How fitting! How beautifully correct, though various, all this is! How all commends itself to our souls, telling us something of the perfections which shine in the ways of Him with whom we have to do!

## The Resource of the Remnant: "I Am With You"

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It is commonly held at present that, so far as the Church on earth is concerned, we are in the wreck and ruin of things. But if so, is that to imply that the collective thing is impracticable and impossible? Far be the thought. There is a collective witness still, though it be of a remnant kind or character. We see a witness of this even in the early days of the Church in the address to Thyatira, where a remnant is specially singled out by the Lord. "But unto you I say,... the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine," and so on. Nor was this a new thing in Scripture. When the Lord Jesus was born into the world there were found in the midst of prevailing confusion in that day a faithful few in Jerusalem, such as Simeon, Anna, and others. So also at the close of Old Testament times there was a like residue which the Spirit of God notices in the book of Malachi: "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another."

But in the days of Haggai a remnant is very fully brought before us. Released captives from Babylon had come back to Jerusalem, not only arrangement or mere chosen people of God.. They were a despised generation and the taunt of their adversaries, whose boast it was that a fox could break down the wall they were building - a people with no outward or visible clothing of authority to inspire respect from those outside themselves, Even the outward unity of the nation was broken, for the ten tribes were gone. The temple, the ark of the covenant, and the Shechinah glory - all were gone! So none of those imposing witnesses were there to accredit these people in the eyes of others. But were they left without hope, or help, or divine resource? According to the prophet Haggai they were not.

Allow me to recall a few of the facts, as well as the way in which a ministry of grace wrought on behalf of this remnant.

After they had returned from Babylon, as recorded by Ezra, they had laid the foundation of the temple, and that in the midst of praise and thanksgiving. And here I would pause for a moment to notice something deeply instructive. Before they began the work of the temple they erected

the altar of the God of Israel on which to offer their burnt offerings. That is to say, worship came first, taking precedence over work. Such was the order then, however much departed from today. The Lord Himself came first before their hearts, and they then devoted themselves to His work. Man's order is the reverse, because he attaches so much weight to his own actions.

But to resume. In course of time the adversaries oppose the building of the temple, and finally the work is stopped. The people then seek their own things, attending to their own houses, and

neglecting the house of the Lord. At this time the ministry of Haggai intervenes. He reminds them of their self-seeking and ease, pointing out as the result of this how little they were obtaining from their toil for temporal things, and urging them to consider their ways.

Four things are recorded which are deeply significant.

The first is the important principle of obedience. They were instructed as follows: "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD." And they act upon this - may I not say? according to "the obedience of faith." For we are told they "obey the voice of the LORD their God."

What followed their obedience? Nothing short Of the presence of the Lord. "I am with you, saith the LORD." A plain and precious pledge, and one prized by true believers in every age. As an instance of this see Moses in Exod. 33 Does he want to go up to the land without the Lord? He would rather not go at all than to do so on a condition such as that. So he can say to the Lord, "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." A choice and welcome utterance of the renewed nature!

To the company in Haggai's day what an encouragement this pledge must have been. It was not merely a promise that the grace and goodness of God would be with them. The pledge we know carried that, for "I AM" was with them. All which is included in that great, holy, and excellent name was to be with them as their all sufficient resource.

The third thing is work. "The LORD stirred up the spirit" of the people, and they "did work in the house of the LORD of

hosts, their God." There was in point of fact a general awakening, or as we should say now, a revival.

Fourth, there was an exhortation to "be strong" and "work." And who does not covet strength, and what right-minded Christian is there who does not wish to work for the Lord? But let us notice on what the exhortation is based. "For I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." So here there was a threefold portion - the Lord's presence, His Spirit remaining among them, and the infallible, faithful word of God spoken a thousand years or so before.

Therefore, these obedient workmen had every reason to be sustained and cheered in heart.

All this is surely suggestive at the present time. There is a remnant now, which is also a witness of ruin, and in itself without inherent strength. It may be, as of old, the taunt of adversaries. But the "I AM" of Haggai's day, who pledged His presence then, is Jesus now, and the same who said when here, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" - the same Lord Jesus who spoke these words when parting from his own, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Then as regards the Holy Spirit He has spoken the well-known words, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." And besides, there is the priceless treasure of the whole canon of Scripture which we have in our hands; so that now there is much to encourage the hearts of believers.

But one word more. The remnant in Haggai's day was pointed forward. "The Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts." Their hearts were directed to the coming of Christ, and the glory which is to fill His earthly house.

And are we behind them in this respect? We happily know we are not. The "blessed hope" today is the coming again of Him who loves us, and has given Himself for us. Nor do we fall short of the privilege of casting glances forward to coming glory as we listen to such wondrous words as those

spoken to the Holy Father, "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them."

But a practical word in conclusion. "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood" is uttered in many, though varied, forms in Scripture. There is wood still on the mountain top for workmen, and it is for them to go up there and bring it down to build into the house. Uninstructed effort may busy itself with material got, not on the mount, but on the plain, or other unauthorized place. But why this waste for want of attention to instructions? And these are amply supplied in Scripture. What is needed so much now is truehearted obedience to them. May the words written by Haggai so long ago be suggestive now: "All the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God," bearing in mind as well that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."

## Rightist and the Leftist

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"Right" and "left" are words that have come into common usage to describe politicians and governments in this day of ideological conflicts. Those who lean to the right are those who favor the rights of the individual. While those who go to the left are those who favor state socialism. We even hear of the "extreme right" and extreme left" by which we suppose are meant those who On the one hand would go, in varying degrees, back to a feudal system, and on the other to communism.

The divergence between Russia and the Western Nations has come from this ideological rift. Russia has gone all the way to the left; the Western governments have remained to the right-some some more and some less. In such countries as the United States there is a strong conservative element that leans heavily to the right, but there is also an increasing amount of leftist pressure. This internal conflict of ideologies is growing in those nations that are to participate in the Roman Empire alliance and perhaps will cause in it that lack of cohesion described in Dan. 2 as iron that "is not mixed with miry clay."

These turbulent crosscurrents may well provide the fuel to produce that awful massacre (in those days of trouble after the Christians are taken home) mentioned in Rev. 6:4 - "And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another." This is a description, not of international warfare but, of hand to hand wanton killing - anarchy. The forces of evil are already at work, but we can thank God that there is still that restraining Power who "lets," or "hinders," while He is here. (See 2 Thess. 2:7.)

Christians may also become extremists in their thinking and practice. They may turn to the right hand or to the left from that pathway which God has marked out in His Word. Now God does not want us to become "rightists" or "leftists," for neither is according to His mind. He knew the tendencies of the human heart and warned Israel four times in Deuteronomy (5:32; 17: 11, 20; 28:14) and twice in Joshua (1:7; 23:6) not to turn to the right hand or to the left from all that was enjoined.

It is needful that we should take heed to all the Word of God if we are to be in the ordered path. What heresies! what divisions! have come into the Church on earth through stressing one-sided truth. When part of the truth is emphasized at the expense of the rest it can become positive error.

The Lord Jesus said to the Father, "Sanctify them through Thy truth [not just a part of it]: Thy word is truth." John 17:17. And the Apostle Paul could say to the elders of Ephesus, "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Acts 20:26, 27. Many have been the points of controversy where one part of the truth has been pressed. We might mention a few.

Much confusion has been caused by those who pressed God's sovereignty at the expense of man's responsibility, and vice versa. Both are perfectly true, and when kept in their respective

balance are harmonious. There is no imbalance in the Word of God; all is perfect. The same was true of the Lord Jesus Christ as man down here. He was the fine meal with no one feature more prominent than another. He was "full of grace and truth" - perfectly blended. Here again the imperfection of men comes out - we are apt to show grace at the expense of truth, or to display a decided lack of grace while pressing truth and righteousness. May we learn more of Him, and not "turn to the right hand or to the left."

Then there are those who put all the emphasis on the gospel; they measure everything in terms of getting people saved. These give little or no attention to leading saved souls on in the truth. They forget that Paul was one of the greatest gospel preachers that ever labored for souls, but he said, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may

present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labor." Col. 1:28, 29. And to

the Ephesians he wrote of the great spiritual blessings we have in heavenly places in Christ which go very far beyond the mere knowledge of salvation. Nor was he content with that alone; he prayed for them that they might enter into these blessings (chapter 1), and that they might walk in the good of them - "that Christ may dwell" in their hearts (chapter 3).

We would not say one word to discourage an evangelical spirit, but let us remember that the saving of the soul is only the beginning. Those who are saved should grow and make progress in the truth, and that truth should be reflected in their daily practice. Shallow indeed is that work which rests satisfied with the knowledge of sins forgiven and is remiss about growing in the knowledge of the Savior Himself, or is careless about walking becomingly down here.

We may go to one extreme and lose our interest in the gospel, but to do so is to be out of communion with the thoughts of God, for He is ever interested in the gospel of His Son. Or we may be carried away with evangelical zeal and stoop to use methods that our Lord cannot approve. We may see such methods succeed in others' labors, because God is sovereign and may bless His own Word although mixed with things He cannot sanction; nevertheless we are to follow the rules and turn not from them to the right hand or to the left. Faithfulness, and not apparent success, is the gauge by which our Master measures-"well done,... good and faithful servant."

Paul was careful to communicate spiritual things by spiritual means (see N. Trans. of 1 Cor. 2:13). All that passes for the work of the Lord in present-day evangelism cannot meet such a requirement, nor will it receive a reward. Only that which is done according to the rules will be rewarded (see 2 Tim. 2:5). We are apt to forget that unless the Spirit of God works in the soul, all our human persuasion, eloquence, or pressure will not save one soul.

May the Lord increase our gospel zeal a hundred fold, but may it be balanced with doing it only by approved means, in separation from all that is not of Himself, and by seeking to lead saved souls on in truth. And may we seek out a right path ecclesiastically in which our feet may walk. This is a matter that many ignore as though our connections were of no consequence. May the spirit of our hearts be, Lord, "show me now Thy way," and Lord, "where wilt Thou?" Then we shall be neither "rightists" nor "leftists."

## Rivers of Living Water: the Last Day of the Feast

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"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:37, 38.

The feast referred to in this lovely scripture was "the feast of tabernacles," called at the opening of the chapter "the Jews' feast." This stamped its character. It could no longer be called, as in Lev. 23, "a feast of Jehovah." The Lord could not own it. It had become an empty formality - a powerless ordinance - a piece of barren routine - something in which man could boast himself while God was entirely shut out.

This is nothing uncommon. There has ever been a strong tendency in the human mind to perpetuate forms when the power is gone. No doubt power may clothe itself in a certain form and, so long as the form is the expression of the power, it is all right and good. But the danger lies in going on with the mere outward form without a single particle of inward power. Thus it was with Israel of old; and thus it is with the professing church now. We have all to watch against this snare of the devil. He will use a positive ordinance of God as a means of deceiving the soul, and shutting out God altogether. But where faith is in lively exercise, the soul has to do with God in the ordinance, whatever it is, and thus the power and freshness are duly maintained.

The reader has no doubt noticed that in the opening chapters of John's Gospel the inspired writer invariably designates the feasts as feasts of the Jews; and not only so, but we find the Lord Jesus displacing one after another of these feasts and offering Himself as an object for the heart. Thus at the opening of chapter 7 we read, "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand." Terrible anomaly! deadly delusion! Seeking to murder the Son of God, and yet keeping the feast of tabernacles! Such is religious man without God. "His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world. For neither did His brethren believe in Him."

Near as His brethren were to Him, according to the flesh, they knew Him not, they believed not on Him. They had not one thought in common with Him. They would fain have Him make a display of Himself before the world. They knew not His object. He had not come from heaven in order to be gazed at and wondered after. All the world will wonder after the beast by-and-by; but the blessed Son of God came to serve and to give. He came to hide Himself, to glorify God, and to serve man.

He refused, therefore, to exhibit Himself at the feast. "Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for My time is not yet full come. When He had said these words unto them, He abode still in Galilee. But when His brethren were gone up, then went He also up unto the feast, not openly, but

as it were in secret."

And for what did He go up? He went up to serve. He went up to glorify His Father, and to be the willing servant of man's necessity.

"Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me."

Here his moral glory as the self-hiding servant shines out. "My doctrine is not Mine." Such was His answer to those who wondered where He got His learning. Alas! they knew Him not. His motives and His objects lay far beyond the reach of carnal and worldly-minded men. They measured Him by their own standard, and hence, all their conclusions were utterly false. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him."

The blessed One did not speak from Himself, as if He were independent of the Father, but as One who lived in absolute and complete dependence, and in unbroken communion, drawing all His springs from the living God, doing nothing, saying nothing, thinking nothing, apart from the Father.

We have the same truth with reference to the Holy Ghost in John 16. "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." The Holy Ghost did not speak from Himself, as independent of the Father and the Son, but as One in full communion with them.

But we must turn for a moment to the words which form the special subject of this paper. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." Here we have set before us a truth of infinite preciousness and immense practical power. The Person of Christ is the divine spring of all freshness and spiritual energy. It is in Him alone the soul can find all it really needs. It is to Him we must betake ourselves for all our personal refreshment and blessing. If at any time we find ourselves dull, heavy, and barren, what are we to do? Make efforts to raise the tone? No, this will never do. What then? Let him "come unto Me, and drink."

Mark the words. It is not, "come unto Me and draw." We may draw for others and be dry ourselves; but if we drink, our own souls are refreshed, and then - "rivers of living water."

Nothing is more miserable than the restless efforts of a soul out of communion. We may be very busy; our hands may be full of work; our feet may run hither and thither; the head may be full of knowledge; but if the heart be not livingly occupied with the Person of Christ, it will, it must be, all barrenness and desolation so far as we are personally concerned; and there will, there can be, no "rivers of living water" flowing out for others. Impossible. If we are to be made a blessing to others, we must feed upon Christ for ourselves. We do not "drink" for other people; we drink to satisfy our thirst; and as we drink, the rivers flow. Show us a man whose heart is filled with Christ, and we will show you a man whose hands are ready for work, and his feet ready to run; but unless we begin with heart communion, our running and our doing will be a miserable failure - there will be no glory

to God - no rivers of living water.

Yes, reader, we must begin in the very innermost circle of our own moral being, and there be occupied, by faith with a living Christ, else all our service will prove utterly worthless. If we want to act on others, if we would be made a blessing in our day and generation, if we desire to bring forth any fruit to God, if we would shine as lights amid the moral gloom around, if we would be a channel of blessing in the midst of a sterile desert, then, verily, we must hearken to our Lord's words in John 7:37 - we must drink at the fountain head. And what then? Drink still - drink ever - drink largely, and then the rivers must flow. If I say, "I must try and be a channel of blessing to others," I shall only prove my own folly and weakness. But if I bring my empty vessel to the Fountainhead and get it filled, then, without the smallest effort, the rivers will flow.

## Romans 7: Often Misunderstood

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Rom. 7:7.24 describes the condition of a quickened soul under law. Some would teach us that it presents proper Christian experience. This is a mistake. Surely a Christian is not a "wretched man," crying out for deliverance, but a happy man, rejoicing in being delivered. Again, can a Christian never do good? must he always do evil? To say so is to falsify the whole Christian position. The Christian is one who is washed in the blood of Christ, delivered from the law, from sin, from the world, from Satan - sealed by the Holy Ghost who is the spring of power to avoid what is wrong, and to do what is right. This, and nothing less, is the Christianity of the New Testament.

But, on the other hand, there are some who maintain that Romans 7 does not set forth the exercises of a quickened soul at all. This too is a mistake. Who but a quickened soul could say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man"? What does the "inward man" mean but the new nature? We believe this much misunderstood passage sets before us the experience of a quickened soul not delivered, not emancipated, not sealed. It most certainly was not Paul's experience when writing the epistle. He may have passed through it, as many of God's people have; but to say that it is the proper experience of a Christian, is simply to deny the whole teaching of the New Testament, and to rob the Christian of all his distinctive privileges and blessings as a member of the body of Christ.

## A Few Words on Satan and His Ways

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Satan is a fallen creature, and cannot possess either omniscience or omnipresence - John 8:44 is a distinct testimony. But Satan has a whole multitude of demons under his authority - so much so, that in the poor Gadarene there was a legion. He is the prince of demons.

With respect to the knowledge of thoughts, he does not know them intuitively, as God does; but he, as a spirit full of intelligence and subtlety, discerns with the greatest clearness the motives of the heart, and has gained experience by the practice of many thousand years; but I believe that he understands nothing of the power of love. He was able in his malice to raise up the Chaldeans, through desire of plunder, against Job; but, not knowing the purpose of God to bless him by this means, he did nothing but fulfill it. He did all that he could to get Christ put to death, but he only fulfilled the wonderful purpose of God for our salvation.

However, when he has to do with the evil heart of man, the case is different. He can present objects to awaken lusts. If we (Christians) reckon ourselves to be dead, dead to sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, he is not able to tempt us. At least the temptation remains without effect; but if the flesh is not held as dead, then he can present objects which the flesh likes, and suggests to a man the means of satisfying his lusts. Thus he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus for a little money.

But man is responsible, because without lust Satan could do nothing; he has nothing to offer to the new man, or if he offers anything, it only produces horror in the soul; the soul suffers as Christ suffered at the sight of evil in this world, or else it overcomes as Christ overcame in the wilderness. But, when the soul is not set free, he can indeed insinuate wicked thoughts, and unbelieving thoughts, and words of blasphemy, in such a way that these words and thoughts seem to proceed from the man himself. Nevertheless, if the man is truly converted, we always find that he has a sense of horror at the things that arise in his mind, and we see that they are not really his own thoughts. If he is not converted he does not distinguish between the demon and himself, as we find in the gospels. But if he is converted, it is a proof that he has opened the door to the devil by sin, hidden sin it may be, or by negligence.

Further, Satan is the prince of this world, and its god, and he governs the world by means of the passions and lusts of men; and he is able to raise up the whole world against Christians, as he did against Christ, and so try their faith. He can seek to mingle truth and error, and thus deceive Christians if they are not spiritual; and also, as the demon at Philippi did ( Acts 16: 16-18), he can get Christians mixed up with the world in order to destroy the testimony of God; he can change himself into "an angel of light," but the spiritual man discerneth all things (1 Cor. 2:15).

Satan has but little power over us if we walk humbly, close to the Lord, following faithfully the Word of God, having Christ as the only object of the heart. Satan knows well that he has been conquered; therefore it is said, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Jas. 4:7. His influence in the world is very great through the motives of the human heart, and he acts on men through

each other. Likewise, from the rapidity of his operations and actions, he appears to be everywhere; and then he employs a great multitude of servants who are all wicked; but in fact he is not present everywhere.

But God is really present, and if we are under the influence of the Spirit of God, and the conscience is in the presence of God, Satan has no power. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." 1 John 5:18. However things may be with us, if we are truly the children of God, he will fulfill the counsels of God in respect to us; it may be by chastisement, if need be. But God knows all things. He, in the most absolute sense, penetrates everywhere. He orders all things - Satan's efforts even-for our good; and if we are armed with the whole armor of God, the darts of the evil one do not reach the soul.

## Saved by Water: Preaching to the Spirits in Prison

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(Read 1 Pet. 3:18-22)

There are two great delusions of the present day against which we wish to put all our readers on their guard. The first is, that salvation may be obtained on the other side of death; and the second is, that people can be saved by an outward ordinance such as baptism.

At first sight the well-known passage of 1 Pet. 3:18,22 seems to give some ground for both these thoughts, so that it becomes necessary that we should have a clear and God-given understanding of these verses.

It is important to observe at the outset of our inquiry that it is nowhere said that Christ went to the prison and preached there. This passage gives not a shred of support to the doctrine of purgatory, nor to the modern idea of universal salvation after death for those who have died in their sins and their unbelief.

Verse 18 states the ground of salvation for any who will bow to the truth of the gospel-Christ has suffered for sins. He who knew no sin, He in whom was no sin, and He who did no sin, has taken the sinner's place, borne the sinner's judgment at the hand of a holy God, and suffered for the sinner's sins. This He has done once for all. So perfect was His sacrifice, so infinite in the sight of God the value of His most precious blood, so all-sufficient His atoning sufferings, that the work needs no repetition - "Christ also bath once suffered for sins."

Moreover, He, the just One, has suffered for those who did not deserve such love; He suffered for the unjust.

"Jesus was crucified,

A thief on either side,

For the unjust He died,

Oh wondrous love!"

He upon whom death had no claim was put to death as to His life in the flesh, but, glorious fact! He is alive again; He has been quickened by the power of the Spirit. He has come out from death; He is risen; He is alive again.

But though risen, He was not corporeally present with these few believers from among the Jewish nation. These believers to whom Peter wrote were continually being taunted by their former coreligionists; they said they believed in Christ, but where was He? He was nowhere to be seen. That might be, the believer could reply, but though not corporeally present, by faith we see Him; He has been quickened by the Spirit, and by that same Spirit He went (though not corporeally present to the people of Noah's day) and preached to those now in prison.

Unquestionably the change of subject is here abrupt, and the language somewhat obscure; all the more reason why there should be a careful weighing of the inspired words, and not a hasty conclusion drawn therefrom, at variance with the whole tenor and teaching of Scripture elsewhere.

"Quickened by the Spirit," then Christ had been, "by which [or, in virtue of which] also He went and preached," etc. Mark, it does not here say that "Christ went and preached" - this might indeed have created a difficulty, though no more so than a similar statement in Eph. 2:17. Who that reads this latter passage understands it in any other sense than that since the cross and ascension Christ preaches to both

Gentiles and Jews, not in personal presence but by the Spirit? The Spirit it is who brings home in power to the soul the testimony of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, and believing this, peace takes the place of enmity.

The passage in Peter is guarded still more carefully, even as God has foreseen the evil use that Satan might make of the words. In virtue of that same Spirit that quickened Christ from the dead, did He go and preach to the spirits which are now in prison. And why are they in prison? They are in prison because of their disobedience to the preaching of Noah. Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5), and he patiently and perseveringly sounded forth the testimony of God, but his words fell on deaf ears and stubborn hearts; they were disobedient. The Spirit, the Spirit of Christ (1 Pet. 1:11) in Noah, strove, but they resisted; the long-suffering of God waited, but they slighted every appeal.

Three things must be observed: (1) in the past as living men on earth they were disobedient; (2) in the present their spirits are in prison, there awaiting (3) in the future the judgment of the great day (compare 2 Pet. 2:1.9

and Jude 6). A testimony of an exceptional character they had been privileged to hear but, this being despised, a judgment of an exceptional character overtook them in this world; that is, the flood. But though a judgment overtook them then, they are awaiting the great judgment day to come, "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Heb. 9:27. The judgment that swept their bodies away in the flood was, we might say, a judgment before death; but the judgment after death is that for which these spirits in prison are reserved, along with all who die in their sins-terrible thought! to stand before the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11).

This passage in Peter then does not refer to all who have died in their sins, but only to a class that had been specially favored by the long continued and faithful preaching of Noah (Gen. 6:3). It would be strange indeed if they who had been so specially favored during life should be singled out for an additional testimony after death. When rightly understood, not a shred of evidence is here afforded for the doctrine, whether of ancients or moderns, that Christ descended to hades, there to preach to the spirits in prison.

But further, there are those who imagine that baptism can save. It is ever Satan's effort to turn the heart away from Christ; and ordinances, however important in their proper place, are not Christ. Faith in Christ is the only means of life to the soul, as Scripture abundantly testifies (see John's Gospel and Epistles). Baptism never gives life, nor indeed is it a figure of life, but of death (see Rom. 6:3, 4). But let us turn to the passage before us in Peter.

The subject in hand has been the days of Noah, the flood, and the only means of escaping the judgment; namely, the ark. The unbelieving Jews in the early days of Christianity were constantly taunting the believers because they were so few in number, but this was no ground to reject the truth that Christians believed, for was it not so in the days of Noah? Did not the flood sweep away the mass of mankind, and was it not a few only that were saved? The judgment had been long foretold, and a way of escape had been provided. The waters of the flood were waters of death and judgment; the ark was an ark of salvation; those who, in obedience

to the Spirit's testimony through Noah, entered the ark were saved; they were "saved [not by, but] through [the] water." The ark was a figure of that which saves the soul; it was a figure of Christ and of His death which alone can save from the righteous judgment of God.

In like manner (v. 21) baptism, which was the introductory and initiatory ordinance of Christianity, is a figure of that which saves us. Baptism does not save us, but it is a figure of that which does. The waters of the flood were a figure of death. Baptism also is a figure of death - not so much the death of the believer as the death of Christ Himself. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" Rom. 6:3.

But the death of Christ would avail nothing apart from His resurrection; consequently it is said, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him."

Now notice the parenthesis in verse 21; it should read thus: "Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the demand [not answer] of a good conscience toward God." When once the conscience has been awakened by the Spirit of God, nothing will really satisfy it but a perfect acceptance, and a perfect peace; it demands nothing less, for it has to do with God. A good conscience toward God implies a perfect standing according to divine righteousness, and this can only be found in Christ, dead, risen, and glorified. Now this truth is set forth by baptism which signifies not merely the washing away of the filth of the flesh, but the introduction into all the full results of Christ's work.

We are not saved by water, as though the ordinance of baptism could save us. No, but just as the ark of old saved Noah and his household "through [the] water" and in this sense is a type of Christ who saves His people from judgment by dying for them; so baptism is a figure of that which meets the need of the awakened conscience.

All glory to His name! Christ is the only Savior, and His death and resurrection the firm foundation for peace with God.

## Service Begins With Little Things

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The history of a bird is the history of a believer. First in the nest, served by parents; then when fledged, learning to do for others what has been done for oneself. First served, and then, in the power and enjoyment of it, serving. There can be no question that it is the duty and calling of each, to serve in some way. But it may not be so easy to find out your specific and proper duty or mission; and this is often the excuse for doing nothing. I do not believe it would be found to be so difficult if you were really fit in heart to enter on service. I believe you would find out your mission if you simply occupied yourself with whatever came to your hand for the Lord. It might begin by carrying food to a sick child, or reading to an old saint.

There is a serving of one's time; that is, you will not be entrusted with very great works until you have proved your competency in small ones. It is impossible but that a star must shine, and it is equally so, but that if your eye were single, your whole body would be full of light. The cause of idleness, or ignorance of one's mission is, either that one is not fit for it, or not free and humble in heart enough to begin at the little works appointed for one to do. It is a universal principle-"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

## Should a Christian Make a Vow?

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What is commonly called a vow (that is, pledging oneself without or with penalties if it is broken) is, in itself, the fruit of self-confidence and energy of the flesh - two things which mark fallen men, and which God abhors.

Conscience is a natural thing, and came in with the fall in Eden; for till then all in man was right, and he could not think God had anything against His own unmarred handiwork -which man was. I notice conscience here because with it comes the question of honesty and uprightness which are of great moment to the Christian. But if conscience is the knowledge which man has before God, as to God's thoughts of this or of that, the unconverted man has no light of revelation in his soul; and the light which comes in at conversion makes everything manifest. A conscience must be placed in the light and have the teaching of God ere it can rest satisfied that it knows what is right.

Many men have vowed to commit a sin, and used the vow as the excuse for doing it; and yet had anyone said to them, Dare you say to God, "Thou wouldst that I should commit this murder," or whatever the sin be, they would reply, "Certainly I cannot. Even nature tells me it is sin." If a man vowed to be an apostle, or to convert many people, or not to marry, etc., let him confess his sin, and leave himself in God's hand. He has assumed power to be in himself, and it is not there.

## History of Simon Peter

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Simon Peter's history is deeply instructive and portrays in the main that of every Christian, from the first step in acquaintance with Christ to the state - alas! so rarely attained or maintained - in which the Holy Ghost can without hindrance show forth His power. During this interval the full energy of grace is unfolded, bringing the soul into the knowledge of Christ and of Christian privileges. We see also the breaking down of soul necessary to enable the believer, after having lost confidence in self, to realize his privileges and follow the Lord in the path marked out by Him.

Peter's history in the Word of God divides itself naturally into two parts, one of which we find in the gospels, and the other in The Acts of the Apostles. The first part corresponds with the

truths mentioned above; the second - at which, God willing, we shall look later on - is filled (though not without failure on the part of the instrument) with the activity of the Holy Ghost in the ministry of Peter, and with that divine power which sustains him as a witness for Christ amidst obstacles and conflict.

"I am a sinful man." Luke 5:1.11

The way in which Peter comes in contact with the Lord in Luke's Gospel is worthy of note. (I purposely omit noting what is of interest in Peter's first interview with the Lord in the other gospels. In John's Gospel - chapter 1:42, 43 for instance - Peter knows Him through the instrumentality of his brother Andrew, who had already found in Him the Christ.) Simon's wife's mother (Luke 4:38, 39) was taken with a great fever which rendered her helpless. Jesus heals her and fits her to serve Him. It is often thus that the soul meets Christ for the first time. It comes in contact with Him by means of the blessings bestowed by Him on others. When the moment comes for Him to reveal Himself to our own hearts, we find that He is not altogether a stranger. The Lord uses this preparatory knowledge to shorten the work by which our consciences are awakened to a sense of sin, and our hearts to a sense of grace. In this Gospel Simon Peter knew Jesus from having seen Him at work in his house.

The son of Jonas was a fisherman by trade; he possessed what was requisite for catching-fish - a boat and nets. He had used them to obtain what he wanted, and (in chapter 5) had worked all night for this purpose, but without any result. Thus the natural man employs his faculties and the means placed at his disposal, to obtain something which will fill and satisfy his heart; but it is in vain; the net remains empty. His labor yields nothing which can answer to the deep need of his soul. The night passes, and the day is about to dawn when even as a fisherman he will no longer be able to labor in pursuit of happiness. Simon and his companions, having taken nothing, quit their boats and wash their nets. They set about washing them, for they had taken up nothing but the mud from the bottom of the sea; and when this is done they will recommence fishing. Is it not thus with a man of the world? His labors to attain a desired end are renewed every day without success.

But when man's powerlessness has been made evident Jesus appears, seemingly otherwise occupied than with Peter. He teaches the multitudes, but in the midst of His ministry His heart is with Simon, and He does not lose sight of him. Entering into one of the ships which was Simon's, He prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. He separates Peter with Himself from the crowd, and thus he hears all the Lord says. Jesus had been no stranger to him previous to this; now he listens to His word, and his position of isolation with Him only contributes to render him the more attentive. Still, from verse 5 we may infer that the conviction of the authority of the Word was all that he retained.

After this we find the Lord more specially occupied with Peter. "Launch out into the deep," said He, and let down your nets for a draft." Peter had done that all night, but up to this it was by the will of man; now it is at the word of the Lord. Peter believes this word, and submits to it. The first result of God's Word is to produce faith, and faith accepts its authority and obeys. The Lord has spoken; that is enough for faith. But Jesus addresses Peter in a yet more powerful way, and shows him in whose presence he is, thus reaching his conscience. He, the Creator who disposes of everything, collects the fishes in broad daylight, when there had been none at night, and fills Peter's net with them. He fills the human vessels with blessings such as they are unable to contain without breaking, and which surpass the needs of the disciple. His companions arrive with a second ship, which begins to sink likewise - so abundant are the riches given by the Lord of glory.

Peter sees (v. 8) all this blessing, but it places him for the first time, as he is, in the presence of Him who is its source and administrator. Thus it is not only the word of Jesus which strikes him, but Jesus Himself, and the glory of His Person. A revolution takes place in his soul. The blessing, instead of producing joy, causes conviction of sin, and fear, because it brings him into the presence of the Lord of glory. On the other hand, the sense of his condition, while giving him the terrible certainty that Jehovah ought to repulse him, yet casts him at the feet of Jesus as his only resource. Similarly in Psalm 130:1-4 we see the soul calling for succor from the One whom it has offended. If He marks iniquities it is all over with it; it is lost if the question of sins is not settled. But the God who has been sinned against pardons. God is known in His love.

It is blessed for the sinner to know his real condition, the judgment which is his due, and the holiness of the Lord. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man." Peter judges himself to be a sinner and unfit for the presence of God. He trembles before His holiness and righteousness. As yet he only knows half instinctively what grace is, and is ignorant of how God can be just in justifying him that believes in Jesus; but he is at His feet and he does not flee away because if there is any hope it is there. As long as he was occupied in washing his nets he knew neither God nor himself; but now he knows both, and it is a remarkable thing that he does not judge what he has done, but what he is. Many souls acknowledge that they have to repent of their guilty acts, and judge them; but they have not been brought to see the source of these acts. Underneath the sins there is "a sinful man." The sense of God's presence opens our eyes, shows us what we are, and makes us see that our only refuge is with the One who could condemn us.

Fear had laid hold of Peter, but the Lord never allows fear to exist in His presence. He speaks and banishes the fear because He is the Lord of grace. He allows everything else to remain - weakening in no wise the effects of the work in the soul - but He removes the fear. "Depart from me." No, the Lord will never depart. He says, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men"; or,

If I had not met thee to save thee, I could not save others by thy instrumentality. He does more than make Simon Peter happy; He bestows a fresh blessing on him, promising him service; so that, instead of remaining a sinner, Peter becomes a servant, able to leave all and follow Jesus.

Peter going to Jesus on the water

Matt. 14:22.33

Jesus had just satisfied the poor in Israel with bread, according to the prophecy in Psalm 132:15, fulfilling His character of Messiah in the midst of a people who did not receive Him. After having done them good, He sent away the multitudes, separating Himself in figure from Israel whom He was

about to abandon for a time. Evening being come, the Lord had gone up alone into a mountain apart to pray. Then the night had come for the twelve whom Jesus had constrained to get into a ship. His connection with the people was over, but He had a remnant for Himself who were sailing to the other shore. The disciples were sore troubled, alone during those hours of darkness on the tempestuous sea, when in the fourth watch of the night, toward three o'clock in the morning, the Lord set out to go to them. His coming was the signal for the renewal of His relations with those whom He will again call His people. He came to them on the angry sea amidst difficulties which were nothing to His blessed feet, but which were their pathway for learning to know Him. It is thus that He will make use of "Jacob's trouble." It is a touching scene, and one from which we Christians can draw a moral lesson, though what concerns us more personally is the scene which takes place between Jesus and Peter.

Peter's first act had been to cast himself at Jesus' knees, acknowledging his sinful condition; the second, to set out to meet Him. One cannot insist too strongly on this point. To go forth to meet the Savior follows conversion, and precedes service. Peter, having as yet only the promise of being made a fisher of men, was already impelled to go to meet Him. He turned to look at the One who descended from the mountain-top, and this was but the beginning of the glorious revelations he was to receive as to the Person of Christ. Dear reader, have you gone out to meet Him? If you have not done so since your conversion, you are not yet beyond the knowledge of salvation; and you cannot pretend to the deeper acquaintance with Christ, which was Peter's later on, if first of all the Savior from heaven has not become your object and filled you with the desire to go to Him.

Peter's knowledge at first is very superficial. "Lord, if it be Thou," he says. But it suffices for the start. Everything depends for him on the identity of the person, and if it be He, His word is sufficient to make Peter quit the ship: "Bid me come unto Thee on the water." It was a serious thing to leave the place of apparent security to walk where there was no way, but, as I said, the word of Christ sufficed him. He knew its power. At His word he had let go the net; at

His word he sets forth. It enables him to walk on the water even as it had brought him to know the Savior. "Bid me come unto Thee." In asking this favor Peter had no thought of making an experiment, or showing off his cleverness in overcoming obstacles; what he wanted was to go to Him. Christ attracted him, and for the moment he thought not of wind or waves. If the natural heart ignores the path which leads to Christ, faith finds a way amidst difficulties of all kinds, in the night as in the storm, and makes use of them to get nearer to the Lord. Faith quits the boat, the only apparent shelter, not esteeming it to be the true place of safety and, according to a remarkable

saying of one of the ancient philosophers, "embarks on a divine word" to reach Jesus, whose presence is worth more to him than getting to the other shore.

We often begin well; the first faith and the first love, the simplicity of a heart filled by an Object, sustains us, and then, alas! we allow the eye to be diverted from its Object. Satan had sought to trouble the disciples by making them afraid of Jesus (v. 26), but they soon learned from His lips to be of good cheer.

Then the enemy alarms Peter with difficulties. What folly to listen to him; for do not difficulties lead us to Christ? Poor unbelieving creatures that we are! In our trials, as in our needs, the only thing we forget is the very thing we ought not to lose sight of - divine power. In the preceding scene (v. 17) the disciples had not forgotten to count their loaves and fishes, nor to reckon the resources of the villages, but they had not counted on the Lord's presence. Peter also, after having set forth, began to think of the violence of the wind, and to look back on his own strength, forgetting that he had before him a power of attraction stronger than the polar magnet which would infallibly bring him to Jesus. And he begins to sink.

Who has not, like Peter, been on the point of sinking? Have not the Church and individuals shared the same fate? But a cry bursts from the lips of the disciple, "Lord, save me"; not "Depart from me," for the believer knows the Savior, and that His character is to save. Peter calls for help just as he is on the point of attaining his object, and Jesus has only to stretch forth His hand to draw him to Himself. One moment more of

faith, and the disciple would not have sunk. Shall we still doubt, dear readers? We may with regard to many things, but never of Christ. Let us trust Him who is

able to save us to the end; for the storm will not cease until the Lord and His own are definitely united.

## History of Simon Peter: Beholding Christ in Glory

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Matt. 17:1.8; Luke 9:28.34; 2 Pet. 1:16.19

We have reached a new event in the spiritual life of Peter. Having learned that blessing could only be acquired by the death and resurrection of Christ, he and his two companions were privileged to behold from this earth the Lord Jesus coming in glory. They were favored to see where the painful pathway closes which begins at the cross, and to enjoy the vision. It left a deep impression on Peter's spirit, and later on he learned its full meaning. In chapter 1 of his second Epistle, after placing before the saints the conditions of entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, remembering the transfiguration, he explains to them of what the kingdom consists.

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." 2 Pet. 1:16-18.

All the truths which referred to the kingdom were summed up in the Person of Christ. It was His power and coming; His majesty was seen; honor and glory were given to Him there by God the Father from the heart of the excellent glory. It was above all Christ who filled the scene of the transfiguration. The disciples had to learn here below who this Christ was who had been speaking to them of His humiliation and cross. Peter needed to know Him, not only as Son of the living God, dispenser of all heavenly blessings to His own, but as a man declared the beloved Son of the Father in glory. He had to behold Him as the center of this glory, a Man from whom not only every blessing flowed as in Matt. 16, but to whom all honor and glory were given as the unique Object of earth and heaven. A supreme voice sounded in his ears which declared that all the affections and thoughts Of God were centered on this Man. Outside Him there remained nothing. When the voice had said, "Hear ye Him," they saw no man save Jesus only.

The second truth revealed to Peter on the mount was that men, subject to the same infirmities that we are, were associated with the Son of man in His glory. It was a remarkable fact that Moses and Elias each failed in his responsibility, and neither pursued the path of faith to its close. The blessing belonging to it was taken from them; at any rate, it was for Elias in his prophetic office (1 Kings 19:16).

It was worthy of note that these two men were very great, for they represented the law and the prophets in the eyes of the disciples. However, Moses struck the rock twice, forgetting to sanctify the Lord in the midst of the people; and he had to die on Mount Nebo within sight of the promised land. Elijah lay down under a juniper tree, requesting to die; he then pleaded against Israel before God, and had to deliver up his office of prophet, anointing another in his room. What marvelous grace which sets them nevertheless in the same glory as Jesus- glory due to Christ, and conferred

on His own in virtue of His work! Moses and Elias do not adore here; they talk with Him—a sign of perfect intimacy. The subject of their discourse was His death. The glory is the result of His death, and His death is the subject of their intercourse in glory.

In the third place, Peter had on the holy mount a complete vision of all that constitutes the kingdom—a glorious Christ, saints raised or changed, appearing with Him in glory; earthly saints associated in this blessed scene, all well-known prophetic truths, which I merely touch in 'passing, and of which the Apostle could say, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." 2 Pet. 1:19.

We have seen the disciples permitted to enjoy the glory of Christ before the moment of His manifestation. They did not then understand the bearing of the scene which later on served to support their apostolic authority. Not having been called to behold it from this point of view, we only know it on their testimony; but we are also in present possession

of a scene of glory, for it is said, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3:18....

Peter forgot the pre-eminence of Christ as long as he saw Moses and Elias. He said, "Let us make here three tabernacles." He wanted to put the law and the prophets on a level with Christ by associating them with Him; and there are many Christians who unconsciously do the same. Poor Peter! How unworthy he showed himself of the vision! His language, his sleep, and his fear, betrayed the state of his soul; and the more the perfection of Jesus shone out, the more Peter's imperfections were evidenced. We find it so at every turn, until he has fully judged himself... The Spirit directs his gaze to the glory of the kingdom, the flesh lowers this glory to the level of failing man. The same thing comes out in the scene of the tribute money, at the supper, in Gethsemane, and in the court of the high priest, until Peter learns what the flesh is, and receives power from on high.

The excellent glory, far from repelling the disciples, attracted them to Christ, and set them at His feet as disciples, saying to them, "Hear Him." Thus Peter, with the rest, was brought to enjoy the thoughts of the Father toward the Son of His love... The disciples, as we have said, heard one word, the brief expression of what the presence of the Son called forth from the Father's lips, but it is a word which lets us into the secret of His heart: "This is My beloved Son... hear ye Him."

Such is our present blessing. We have been allowed to share the secret of the Father. He has brought us now into intimacy with Him which cannot be exceeded even in the eternal state, although, of course, it will be more perfectly enjoyed. We shall there see all the display of Christ's glory; but we shall be seen in this glory; but now we are the depositaries of the Father's thoughts revealing the Son, the Father revealed by the Son. "When the voice was past, Jesus was found alone." As we listen to this voice we shall learn more and more what the Father is to Him and to us.

## History of Simon Peter: Personal Acquaintance With Christ

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Matt. 16:13.23

Peter had learned to know the Lord as the One who could meet his needs as a Savior for his sins and for his weakness. Now he had to learn something deeper and more marvelous - what the Lord was in Himself.

It is always so; the believer advances step by step in the knowledge of Christ. Still it was not by his faithfulness that Peter acquired this new blessing, but by the faithfulness of God who had separated him from men to give him such a revelation. It was the Father, not flesh and blood, who had revealed these things to him (v. 17). Introduced by the Father to the center of blessing, Peter was set in the presence of the living God. He recognized Christ in the Son of man - the object of all the promises, and the One to whom all the counsels of God were attached - but this Christ was the Son of the living God. He was not only the Man born into the world whom God had declared His Son in saying, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee"; but He was the Son of the living God. He possessed a power of life which belonged to God only, and all the fullness of which was found in Christ.

Those from whom Peter had been separated [the Jewish people] for the reception of this glorious revelation were utterly ignorant of the majesty of Jesus. For them He was only Joseph's son, or at the most, one of the prophets. They found themselves in the presence of this majesty which was unknown to them; for there must be a revelation from the Father for that. Henceforth Peter knew the Savior in His personal glory, the source and center of every blessing; moreover, Simon son of Jonas was pronounced "blessed" by Jesus Himself. Heaven was opened to him, and he possessed happiness with which nothing could compare. (I would here remark that this paper does not deal with the way in which Peter laid hold of the things revealed to him, but of the scope of these revelations. In reality Peter and his companions only understood and enjoyed these things after the gift of the Holy Spirit.)

But the Father could not reveal the personal glory of His Son to Simon without the Son revealing how this glory was connected with the individual and collective blessing of the redeemed. "And I also say unto thee." R. V. Christ also made known unto him what flowed from His character as Son of the living God.

First, "Thou art Peter"; as the Father has revealed My name to thee, I will make known to thee thine own name. Individually and collectively (together with all believers) thou hast a place in the edifice which is to be founded on this revelation.

Second, the foundation of this edifice being henceforth known (it was to be laid later in the declaration of the Son of God with power, fruit of the resurrection from among the dead), the Lord declares that He will build on Himself this Church of which Peter is a living stone. "I will build My church." It was to be the Church of Christ, to belong to Him, the object of His interest and affection.

For us it is an accomplished fact; the Church exists and belongs to Him.

And you, dear readers, do you share in some measure the interest and the thoughts of Christ for His Church? There are, thank God, Christian hearts which enter into them, if feebly, and which, in spite of its ruin, are capable of comprehending its beauty, because they see it as the Savior sees it, and estimate it at the price with which He acquired it, saying, as the Spirit of old said of Israel, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel."

This foundation, a Christ risen and exalted in heaven, gives to the Church a heavenly character. Built without doubt on earth, her foundation is in heaven, beyond the gates of hades. She is there already. The power of death, destroyed by a risen Christ, who holds the keys of death and of hades, cannot and never shall prevail against her.

Third, in virtue of this declaration, a new dispensation was to be inaugurated. Israel was to be replaced by the kingdom of heaven, of which Peter was to have the keys; he was to be called to introduce Jews and Gentiles into a new sphere of blessing on earth. In virtue of the revelation of the Son of the living God, there was to be in this world a ground on which there would be a profession of belonging to Him. Peter was to be, as we shall see in the Acts, the instrument for the introduction into this blessed profession. He would have, so to speak, the external and internal administration of the kingdom, the keys, and the power to bind and loose. Personal acquaintance with Christ opens Peter's eyes to every circle of blessing; he is placed in the center of blessing, which is Christ, to contemplate the immense domain depending on it. Israel's connection with an earthly Messiah was over (v. 20). Later on this relationship will be renewed, but from this moment the Lord revealed to His disciples a total change in their hopes and position, which from being earthly were to become heavenly.

What glorious truths and precious privileges were contained in the revelation made to Peter! But here we find a new and unexpected revelation; these privileges are consequent on the death of Christ, which acquired them for us; and in order to have them, we must accept the cross. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must... suffer many things... and be killed, and be raised again the third day." v. 21. Peter could not accept the fact that Christ must needs undergo such reproach. Could He not accomplish His glorious ends without dying? The disciple took his Master aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." There was natural affection for Christ in this speech, but it also showed that Peter had not understood or appreciated the revelation imparted to him, and which is only ours at this price. More than this, his words denoted that he would not have such a degradation either for a Christ who promised him such advantages, or for himself who, with the twelve, formed the retinue of the Messiah.

But if in some measure we perceive the human motives which actuated Peter in rebuking Jesus, he did not suspect that Satan was making use of him to endeavor to put a stumbling block in Christ's pathway. Satan's most dangerous instruments are believers who, possessing the truth and perhaps enjoying it, yet fear the reproach and enmity of the world.

To shun the cross is to deny Christianity, and it is the tendency of all our hearts naturally. Our intercourse with the world proves it only too well. It tolerates us when we venture to speak of future events, or of those truths which do not touch the very sources of Christianity; but if we speak of the

cross and the blood of Christ, it despises us. We do not like that, for we want to escape reproach, and so we deserve the Lord's severe rebuke.

What a humiliation for Peter to fall from the height of such revelations, to be convicted of playing the part of the enemy toward Christ! He who had confessed the Son of the living God, who was a future living stone of the Church, who was invested with the authority of the kingdom, had to hear it said to him by the Master whom he loved, "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

But what folly too it was to come and rebuke the Son of the living God, and suggest to Him what He had to do. Ah! Peter little knew himself or Him whom the Father had just revealed to him.

The whole of this account unveils what the flesh is in the believer, seen in its best light and with its best intentions. It shrinks from reproach; it is an offense to Christ; and Satan can be identified with it. After having been brought into the presence of the living God, Peter learns that his natural thoughts are not on the things of God, but on those of men. The things of men are those over which Satan has the upper hand. Man and Satan are in perfect unison.

"Come after Me" Matt. 16:24.28

The disciples are here called to come after Christ. In order to come after Him there must be the two things which we have just considered—personal acquaintance with Christ and the knowledge of the cross. Peter had received the first, and he shunned the second. But the cross alone removes every hindrance to following Christ. It is our starting point, our first step

in the Christian pathway; for the believer cannot take a single step unless he starts from the foot of the cross. This upsets all our natural thoughts, all the religious teaching of the day, which amounts to this: Take the first step toward Christ, give up your sins, consecrate yourself to God, and His grace will help you. God never framed such language, as the outset of Peter's history proves. Scripture teaches us that God has taken the first step toward man, and that this first step led the

four to the cross, by which alone man can begin to be pleasing to Him.

Such then is our starting point for following Him. Let us see under what conditions we can walk in this path. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." Most Christians translate the words thus - "We must give up certain sins and lusts." The Word tells us we must deny ourselves. This we can only do in the power of the new man, for the old man cannot put off itself. There must be a new man in order to be able to put off the old, and say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The flesh has no more rights or place for the new man; he reckons himself dead. The consequence is that only the Christian can give up all. What are fleshly habits and lusts to the new man? For remark, it is no question of making an effort over oneself to get rid of one's chains. What delivers us is the knowledge of a judgment passed on us at the cross, and of the new place of a man in Christ. The struggle between the two natures follows. To deny oneself is to do what Christ has done, only to us in a different way; for in Him there was no old man to judge. He walked in the absolute power of the new man; for He was, like the heifer, without spot, upon which never came yoke (Num. 19). But Christ as man had a perfect will. He gave it up entirely. He said, "Not my will, but Thine, be done." Christ had rights, and He gave them up. He had all power, and He was crucified in weakness. Having entered the scene surrendering Himself,

He left it with the same absolute surrender, consummated in the gift of His own life.

"And take up his cross." This is the consequence of self-surrender. He who has completely given up self would find no attraction in what the world offers him, but rather a subject of grief. Christ met temptation, not with indifference, but in suffering. "He Himself hath suffered being tempted." Thousands of Christians think they are bearing their cross when they are tried, or when the hand of God presses on them in discipline. This is not the cross. Notice the words, "Take up his cross." It is not receiving afflictions from God's hand, but taking up of one's own will - willingly, I might say - the burden of suffering that the world offers. This burden is the

more real and heavy inasmuch as in following Christ we walk more in the power of the new man, who having no link down here, finds nothing in the world but enmity against the Savior and against that which is born of God.

"And follow Me." Following is consequent on the two preceding conditions. To follow Him is to imitate Him. To imitate Him is to form our acts and thoughts by Him.

These three things are necessary to coming after Him. Where is the power to realize them? Peter deluded himself as to this in Luke 22:33. He thought that this power lay in his good intentions and resolutions, in his love for the Savior. How many Christians think the same. They would readily say, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death."

But this power is not of man (we shall take up this subject later on); it is essentially connected with two things - the gift of the Holy Ghost (the power from on high for our walk), and the loss of all confidence in the flesh. Simon Peter learned with Satan, by a fall, to mistrust himself; Paul with God by acquaintance with Christ in glory. When Peter is thoroughly broken, the Lord says to him definitely, "Follow Me." John 21:19. And the disciple, following Jesus, sets forth through death to reach Christ in the glory.

Brethren, let us follow Him to the end. We shall have the present blessed reward of learning here below to know Him in glory, as we shall see in chapter 17 of our Gospel.

## History of Simon Peter: Service and Food of the Lord's Servant

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John 21:1.14

We have in this passage some instruction with regard to the service and food of the Lord's servants, which we will examine in detail.

After Peter's many experiences, it would seem as if he were henceforth qualified for service. He went forth, followed by six other disciples, to fish in the Sea of Tiberias. What characterized this undertaking was that Peter took the initiative himself of setting to work to obtain the results of his labor. It was in vain, and the night waned before he and his companions had seen their

efforts crowned with any success. Peter employed the same means as on a corresponding occasion, previous to his conversion. How often when God entrusts us with active service we set about it like men in the flesh, and our work is barren. It is important to understand that in ministry all, absolutely all, must be of God, and nothing of man.

The scene changed as soon as Jesus stood on the shore; His presence ushered in the dawn of a day of blessing. His presence was what was most needed. As long as they had toiled without Him, their efforts were fruitless. It was daybreak when this scene took place. There is a special moment determined of God for service, and the disciples, unmindful of it, had lost their time during the whole night. They found the fish at the right side of the ship, in a special place only known to Jesus, and Peter had to trust to this knowledge before his activity could be crowned with success. The disciples cast their net at His word having nothing else to depend on, and they captured one hundred and fifty-three great fishes; their fishing in this place closed with a number determined and known only by the Lord. From this moment they had something else to do; they brought the result of their labor to Jesus (v. 10). They did not fish for themselves or others, but for the Lord alone.

O that our hearts, dear servants of Christ, might all learn this lesson! When, where, with whom, by whom, and for whom, are we working? Does our life consist of one long night of human activity directed by the will of man? or is it like an aurora illuminated by the Lord's presence? and do we see our nets filled because we work in dependence on Him?

As to the food, Jesus stood on the shore and said, "Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No." Doubtless they thought that this stranger, whom they had not yet recognized, was in need of food. But the question forced them to avow that until now all their labor had given nothing to Christ. Then came the words, "Cast the net." It was as if He said to them, "If you would give Me something, you must receive it from Me." From that moment John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, could no longer be mistaken; for to him the Lord was One who gave, and to whom nothing was given.

Here another point comes out; the disciples themselves had nothing to eat. Labor does not nourish; it causes hunger. Even fruitful labor, a miraculous catch of fish, left the disciples a prey to

hunger. How many souls there are in the present day of activity who remain barren, in spite of their work, because they delude themselves as to the profit accruing to their spiritual life from their activity! It was not on the sea amidst all the surrounding effort and agitation, but on the shore where all was still, that the disciples heard the Lord saying unto them, "Come and dine." The meal was not prepared with fish taken from their net, but provided by the Lord Himself, who distributed it to them. They fed on the result of Christ's work - what He alone had done for them.

May it be so with us, beloved. When we have brought the result of our service to the Lord that He may do as He thinks best with it, let us sit down, invited by Him to feed on Him in the retirement of the shore. Let us return not only for others, but above all for ourselves, to the holy Word which reveals Christ. Having eaten, Peter was led on a step farther in his service, and enabled to feed the lambs and sheep of the Lord.

### The Soul Restored

John 21:15.19

"Lowest thou Me more than these?" Peter had said that he loved Him more, and yet had denied Him. The Lord takes him, so to speak, by the hand, and leads him back to the spot whence' his fall originated - confidence in his own strength and in his love for Christ. Three times during the Savior's last interviews with his disciples before He suffered, Peter clearly manifests his state of soul. "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Matt. 26:33. "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death." Luke 22:33. And "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." John 13:37. The Lord takes up these three words, beginning with the first, "Though all men shall be offended." "Lovest thou Me more than these?" All, alas! had forsaken Him, but Peter only had denied Him, and can therefore no longer rely on his love compared to that of others. Thus humbled, he appeals, not to his feelings, but to the Savior's knowledge. He knew. "Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee." He does not add "more than these"; for he compares himself with Christ, and in humility he esteems others better than himself.

Then Jesus said to him, "Feed My lambs" (N. Trans.). Pastoral care for young souls springs from humility, together with love for the Lord. Where the Lord finds these things in His people He can trust them with His service. Other gifts are perhaps not so absolutely connected with the inner state; but one cannot really take up the needs of tender souls without self-abnegation and much love, not only for them, but for Christ.

"Feed My lambs." This one word shows us what they are for Jesus, and the value of what the Lord entrusts to Peter. They are His property. The heart of Christ had not changed in regard to Simon, and He entrusted him with what He loved as soon as his first step was taken in the painful pathway leading to restoration. Peter's heart was broken, but sustained by Christ in the breaking. Jesus did not probe it three times to give him an answer only at the third; He gave it already at the first. What delicate affection and care in the discipline! If the three questions had been put without the encouragement of a promise with each, Peter's heart, distressed by his failure, would have been overwhelmed with sorrow; but the promise sustained him each time under the stroke intended to break him down. It was like the burning bush, which grace prevented from being consumed. Jesus probed Peter three times; he had denied Jesus three times. The last time nothing remained but

what the Lord had produced and could approve. Sorrow was there too, no doubt, but joined to the certainty that the love which was the fruit of His love, though buried to the eyes of all by manifestations of the flesh, the all-seeing eye of Christ was alone able to discern. "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." After the second and third questions, the care of the sheep and the feeding of the whole flock (see N. Trans.) were confided to Peter. It was when, through grace, he had seen himself, and been obliged to appeal to the Lord to discover what he gave up discovering in himself - it was then that he found himself possessed of full and unreserved blessing.

## History of Simon Peter: the Knowledge and Judgment of Flesh

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Luke 22:31-62

Peter had learned (John 13) what was necessary in order to have communion with the Lord. Recalling the blessings which had been unfolded to him since the beginning of his career, it would seem as if the circle were complete, and there remained nothing more to learn. But there was one thing without which all these blessings would be of no effect—the knowledge of and judgment of the flesh, and of its absolute incapacity before God; and this we have in Luke 22:31.

Satan had desired to have the poor disciple that he might sift him as wheat. As in Job's case, the enemy had presented himself before God to accuse him. Availing himself of the moment favorable to his designs, when the Lord would be taken away from them, and they would be externally unprotected, he asked to put him into the sieve, in the certainty that nothing would remain which God could accept. In this way he thought to wrest him from Christ, but he was mistaken. No doubt not much of Peter would remain in the sieve; but what God had wrought in the disciple must remain. In his enmity Satan forgot that if he had all power over the flesh, he had none with regard to God and what came from Him. God granted his request because He had purposes of grace and love toward Peter, as He had of old toward Job. Peter was to be left in the enemy's hands that he might learn himself. Such dealing was needful for his blessing.

But if the enemy had displayed his activity, Christ had been at work before him, and had anticipated the moment of the sifting. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." v. 32. He had interceded for Peter even before anything had passed in his conscience. The first act, that which regards God, had taken place unknown to Peter, and in view of his fall, which had not yet occurred. The second act came after the fall, when "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (v. 61), and reached his conscience. One look from Christ was the starting-point of all the blessings which followed, recalling his heart to the love which had been in exercise to prevent his falling, and assuring him that this love, inexhaustible in its supply, was not changed by his unfaithfulness, and at length reaching his conscience, caused him to shed bitter tears of repentance in the presence of such grace.

Then only, when truly restored, would Peter be able to strengthen his brethren (v. 32), and to deal with the hearts and consciences of others. Ministry can only be exercised in self-judgment.

The Lord (v. 33) allowed Peter's self-confidence to be plainly manifested. "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and into death." "I am ready." This was the flesh, ready to face everything. The flesh, even when warned, is always self-confident. If it had had even one atom of strength, the Lord's solemn warning should have hindered it from falling. But now the moment came when Peter, left to his own resources (vv. 35,38), accompanied the Lord to Gethsemane, and the Master was left alone. Not one of His disciples could watch one hour with Him. "Watch and pray," said He, "that ye enter not into temptation." Matt. 26:41. "Watch and pray" - that was what Jesus did. If Peter, had listened (he slept in presence of temptation as he had done in presence of

glory) he would have been on his guard against the temptation, and in dependence on God, and he would not have entered into it. To enter into temptation as a man in the flesh was to succumb to it. Christ alone could enter into it and come out divinely victorious, obtaining the victory in dependence. He could have used His power to deliver Himself. At the sight of Him His enemies went backward and fell to the ground. He could have asked for legions of angels; but He submits, endures the treachery of Judas, yields all His rights (and what rights!) into the hands of men, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, without a protestation or murmur. Peter did not watch or pray. He entered into temptation, and succumbed at once. He drew the sword with impatience, he followed afar off, and entered into the high priest's court.. The flesh could take him thus far, but then all its strength came to naught at the word of a servant.

## The Sepulcher

John 20:1-18

The cross could no longer hold its victim. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were God's chosen instruments for giving the Savior a place with the rich in His death, and the passage preceding that which we have now read takes us up to that moment.

It was not indeed all, to know a love which had brought the Lord down to death for them; there remained a capital point to be learned. What did the sepulcher contain? What had death done with the Savior? or else, What had the Savior done with death? If the grave had held Him, His work was vain, and not one of those for whom He had given Himself was acquitted or justified.

Mary found the sepulcher open. Peter and John ascertained that it was empty. Peter went in and saw. The attributes of death were there, testifying by their presence that death had been unable to hold its prey, and that, without struggle or conflict, the victory over it had been peaceful. The napkin was wrapped together in a place by itself, as one does with a garment when preparing to go out. The "It is finished" was proved. The love which had undertaken the work had completed it; and the disciples, who as yet knew not the Scripture, were convinced by the testimony of their eyes. They believed, and went away again unto their own home.

This was a great step no doubt, but, shame be to these two disciples, it was little in comparison to what a poor woman found at the sepulcher. Mary Magdalene - witness in person of the love of Christ who had delivered her from the seven demons - loved the Lord with an affection which sprang from the greatness of His love, and which far exceeded her intelligence. Happy woman after all; for while the intelligence of Peter and John could be engaged and satisfied with a work, Mary's affection could not be. She needed more; she wanted the Person who was her object. Peter who had gone into the sepulcher had seen only the linen clothes and the napkin; Mary seeking a Person, as she wept stooped down into the sepulcher and saw the angels. The linen clothes had sufficed for the disciples, but the angels were not enough for Mary. Even in their presence, and without awaiting their answer, she turned back; for she wanted her Lord. At first her utter ignorance of the things that were to come to pass hindered her from recognizing Him; but Jesus said to her, "Mary" - one single word,

"Mary."

Was it surprising that there should be a link of affection from Mary to Jesus, that the Savior in the perfection of His Person should win all the thoughts and love of a failing, ignorant creature, and above all when she had been the object of such goodness and such a deliverance? But that there should be a link of affection from Jesus to Mary - that was the wonderful thing. Among thousands of thousands He knew her by name as His sheep. He remembered the most wretched. She said unto Him, "Master." He replies, not, "Go to My servants," but, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." Mary's affection clinging to Christ received a revelation greater (in some ways) than all those which Peter had had up to this. Love which is set on His Person becomes the depository of further knowledge. Knowing only His work the disciples had gone away again to their own home; Mary Magdalene, with love which clung to His Person, had learned at the Savior's feet the most glorious results of His sacrifice. This is why Peter and John are so in the shade in this scene; a weak woman in all the modesty of her position outstrips them. Their feet were swift, no doubt, to lead them to the sepulcher. Mary was the first to know the path which leads straight to the Father, and, retracing her steps with this marvelous revelation, to carry the message to the disciples.

## History of Simon Peter: Washing of Feet and Communion

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### John 13

A fresh aspect of the character of Christ and His work is revealed to Peter at the supper - His service in connection with communion. On the holy mount Peter had been brought into the actual scene of this communion, and had heard the Father's expression of delight in His Son; but he had to learn what was necessary in order to enjoy this communion, or maintain it, or he restored to it if it had been lost. We may, like the disciple in Matt. 17, enjoy some measure of intercourse with God without real communion with Him. Communion is being in thought and heart one with the Father, and with the Son. The Lord explains it in our chapter when He says to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." v. 8. Have we part with Christ unreservedly in His estimate of things, His thoughts and affections? Have we God's judgment concerning man, the world, sin? Have we His thoughts as to the work of Christ and the value of His blood? Have we the same affections as the Son for the Father, and the Father for the Son - common enjoyment with God as to the perfection of Christ, common thoughts with the Son concerning the Father to glorify Him, to please Him, to do His will, to trust in Him, to enjoy to the full His presence?

Alas! when it comes to realizing these things we are indeed forced to own that we know but little of such communion; for in reality the moments spent in heavenly communion are, as it were, submerged in the rest of our Christian life. And yet there is nothing to hinder its being continual; for we have the eternal life which brings us into it. (1 John 1.) But if our communion is so feeble, let us not be content with our measure of it, and on the other hand, let us not be discouraged. God has made provision for all our failures and short-comings in the advocacy of Christ, and by washing of the feet, which is the counterpart.

The basis of this service is the love which has been manifested once, but not exhausted, at the cross; for it remains, and will remain, the same to the end. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." John 13:1. It was not enough for the Lord to save us; His love would purify us from all defilement; and it is for this that He takes the place of a servant. Nothing can stop or hinder this service for His own. He girds Himself to wash the disciples' feet at the very moment of Judas' betrayal of Him (13:2). The possession of all things, His own dignity as coming from God and going to God, do not deter Him from this service; on the contrary, He makes use of His power in humbling Himself to serve His beloved ones. Such is His love manifested in the washing of the feet.

In connection with communion we find in this chapter the Advocate coming in to cleanse us; when Jesus says later on to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32), it is advocacy in exercise with the Father for the disciple's restoration. Here we see the Lord placing us in contact with the Word (the water of purification) which He applies Himself by the Spirit to our consciences concerning our walk, in order to give us, not a future, but a present part with Him. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." This is what we see with many blessed details in the type of the red heifer (Numb. 19).

But Peter as yet understood nothing of Christ's service so presented to him, and was unable to enter into what would thereby have been his part. Two things were lacking, expressed in these two words: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (v. 7), and "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterward." v. 36. These two things were knowledge and power.

Peter had real affection for the Lord; but this affection could not preserve him from the gravest of falls. He lacked what was indispensable - knowledge - as was proved in the hitherto most striking acts of his life. When he said (Matt. 16:22), "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee," it was his affection which spoke; and yet at this very moment Peter was a Satan, who, for want of knowing the heart of Christ, dared to think that the God of love would consent to save Himself. When on the mount he said, "Let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias," it was again

his affection for Jesus; but the knowledge of the glory of His Person was totally lacking, although with his eyes he beheld the manifestation of it. He put divine grace on a level with the "law" which "came by Moses" to condemn, and prophecy which announced judgment.

In the scene of the tribute money, Peter's "Yes," in answer to the question, "Doth not your Master pay?" denotes once more affection for his Master, whom he thought to honor in the presence of his compatriots, but without the least knowledge of the dignity of Him who was God, Creator, Lord of the temple, Son of the Sovereign on His throne. In one sense knowledge precedes affection; for in reality it is no other than the apprehension by the Holy Spirit of the work, the love, and the Person of Christ. It follows it too, for affection for Christ is the best way of growing in His acquaintance.

In the chapter before us, Peter's words, "Thou shalt never wash my feet," denote again his affection, joined to a sense of the dignity of Christ, but also ignorance of the Savior's love, which found its satisfaction in devoted service. Then, when the Lord says to him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me," he asks to have not only his feet washed, but also his hands and his head. Truly this was affection for Christ, for he esteemed it most precious to have part with Him; but this affection was accompanied by complete ignorance of the work which had already accomplished purification once for all. (I say "accomplished" because from chapter 13 to the end of 17 the Lord is seen as if on the other side of the cross, His hour being come\_ to depart out of this world to the Father.)

The secret of our intercourse with our brethren is also found in this knowledge of the work and the love of Christ. As the Lord had loved them (v. 34), the disciples were to love one another; as He had washed their feet, they were to wash one another's feet (v. 14). And here let us observe in passing, that when we are in need ourselves of feet washing in order to be restored, it is not the moment for us to attempt to wash our brethren's feet. The man himself must be clean who would sprinkle the water of purification on one who had been defiled by a dead body (Numb. 19). If we lack vigilance in our walk, we lose not only the communion consequent upon it, but the great privilege of service toward others.

As we said before, the second thing which Peter lacked was power. Humanly speaking, he was characterized by an energy which led him to face difficulties, but which, being energy of the flesh,

did not enable him to overcome them. "I will follow Thee." "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." "I will not forsake Thee." Such is his usual language. It was always affection, but without divine power, and an affection which did not hinder the disciple from denying his Master. What was lacking was the power of the Spirit, which is exactly contrary to that of the flesh, and which is only displayed in the measure in which the flesh is judged. For its full manifestation there must be the sense of utter powerlessness.

Peter could not have either this knowledge or power previous to the death and resurrection of Christ, or before the gift of the Holy Spirit; but what he had to pass through when he was not yet in possession of these two things was profitable to him, and is, and will be so, to others. In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter's career completely changes. Knowledge of Christ, power, self-forgetfulness, blessed service for others, are met with at every step. Old things are passed away, and we have the new career of a new man.

## Simple Faith: Manoah's Wife

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### Judges 13

It may sound a little strange and harsh at first, but I believe, on a little meditation, it will be found that while reading the epistles of the New Testament, we might seasonably, and profitably, and to the great comfort of our souls, keep in mind the words of Manoah's wife to her husband in Judg. 13

Manoah himself, at the time, was in fear, for he had seen God, and as he said, he thought he would die. But his wife said to him, "If the LORD were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these."

A very simple, beautiful, and convincing piece of reasoning. Faith is always the best reasoner, because it uses the arguments which God Himself suggests, as in this case. The simplicity of this woman is apparent all through the narrative. Her husband was rather a devout and good man, who walked more in a praying than in a believing mind; but she was more simple and confiding-inapt, I can suppose, to reason at all, save when the Lord, as here, supplied her with arguments.

Now this has struck me, that this very same believing reasoning, as I may call it, may well and suitably and comfortingly be ours when we read the epistles. For in them we find (as Manoah's wife found in the words which the Lord had spoken to her) such wonderful secrets communicated to us, and such wondrous grace shown to us, that we can do nothing less than rest, as she did, in the blessed certainty of this, that our God has no purpose against us. In the epistles we find ourselves brought into such near relationship to God, made acquainted with such deep secrets of His bosom, so encouraged to bring ourselves and our offerings to Him in a sanctuary of peace, that His purpose to pardon and save us finds no room to be questioned. The Lord would not, He could not, after the manner of the epistles, have set us in the place of children, and friends, and worshipers, and heirs, had He not set us in the place of safety and peace. The less is surely included in the better, as this simple hearted woman reasoned for the encouragement of her husband.

And according to this, I may say, God Himself in the epistles, treats pardon and acceptance very much in that way. It is rather assumed than taught. If the Spirit of God in the Apostle Paul be recalled to the subject, it is because the heart of man is so disposed to return to the law, and to the elements and rudiments of the world - the religious ordinances.

The question of pardon and justification suits the presence of God as a judge. It is before God in that character that such a question is to be argued and disposed of. But in the epistles God speaks to us, His saints, rather as a Father; or as from a sanctuary where He proposes to meet us as worshipers; or face to face, as a man would speak to his friend; or as the One who has set us with Himself in heavenly places. Surely He would not thus deal with us if He purposed to "kill us," or to put us under law and in the fear of judgment.

Indeed, the reasoning of the Apostle at the close of Rom. 8 has exactly this character in it. Like Manoah's wife, the Apostle reasons on what God has supplied, and he concludes (of course, I know under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost) that the less is included in the greater. He challenges the inferior thing in the name, and in the certainty, and in the authority of the superior; and this is what that simple-hearted woman did. She said, God will not kill us, because He has accepted our worship, and spoken to us. The Apostle says, He who spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things. Who can lay anything to our charge, since God has justified us?

This is quite of the character of the word in Judg. 13 And our place and privileges, as we read them in other epistles, entitle us to be bold after the same manner.

Had Manoah any answer for his wife? To accept the rebuke at her hand was both his wisdom and his consolation; and it is ours. If Deborah strengthened the arm of Barak for the fight; if Abigail, by godly counsel, turned the erring purpose of the soul of David aside; if Priscilla helped to teach

Apollos the way of God more perfectly; we may rejoice and be thankful to accept from the Lord, at the hand of this obscure, unnamed woman of the distant tribe of Dan, this fitting and happy encouragement of our souls. She says, in her way, as the great Apostle of the Gentiles, under the Holy Ghost, says, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

## Social Gospel

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In recent years many professed ministers of the gospel have relegated "the gospel of God concerning His Son" to the archives as out-of-date and only suitable for a place among the records of the past. In its place they have evolved what they call a "social gospel." Now "the gospel of God concerning His Son" is just exactly suited to the needs of lost people who are sinners on the road to death, and then to judgment, and who are in themselves helpless; but this innovation - the social gospel - offers no such remedy. It is plainly infidel in spirit for it denies the fall of man, God's just retribution for sin, and the atoning sacrifice of Christ as the only avenue of escape.

Let us speak plainly; this "new" gospel, which is not good news at all, is the devil's lie. It is but a variation of the serpent's lie in the Garden of Eden; there he called in question what God had plainly said, and insinuated that God was not good in withholding a certain fruit from man; now he says that God would not be good if He punished the unrepentant sinner, and so he undermines (in the minds of men - not in reality) the fact of judgment to come. His lie tells people that they are not lost and ruined, but basically good, and that the atoning work of Christ is of no value. Thus Christianity is falsified and made only a means of improving a doomed world and concealing the corruption that underlies what men call civilization. But as Eve listened to his lie and fell, so thousands upon thousands are doing likewise now and, although calling themselves Christians, are hastening onward to that place "prepared for the devil and his angels."

Recently a noted Jewish rabbi - a man who does not accept Christianity, nor believe that Jesus was the Christ - looked over present day Christianity, as commonly understood by the social gospel, and compared it with the New Testament account of the words and deeds of the Lord Jesus. His conclusion was that Jesus did not preach such a gospel for He did not try to reform the world or to correct the corrupt practices of the Roman Empire, but instead devoted His efforts to the salvation of men. His opinion seemed to be that Jesus was not what Christendom understands Him to be, and that His teachings were incongruous with the present day concepts of Christianity.

Surely this rabbi, an opponent of Jesus, sees more clearly than the "blind leaders of the blind" in Christendom that the widespread modernism of the day is incompatible with the gospel as found in the New Testament. But it is "wolves in sheep's clothing" who are out of step with the truth of God, not the reverse. This brings to mind what God said about conditions in Israel in the days of Jeremiah:

"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" Jer. 5:30, 31.

## Spiritual Decay: Gray Hairs

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"Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." Hos. 7:9

"Sin's hurtful when perceived;  
When not perceived 't is worse;  
Unseen or seen it dwells within,  
And works by fraud or force."

The gray hairs primarily regard what is national and historical in Israel, and are sadly true to this hour, as seen by their long spiritual decay, of which they are ignorant. The principles involved apply to us.

Gray hairs appropriately mantle the brow of age, and in the way of righteousness are a crown of glory. They tell us that our earthly days are passing away, that the spring time and, it may be, the summer of life are gone. Men vainly seek to alter them, and for a time may seem to succeed. But it is only for a while; the development of artificial color may indeed tamper with the appearance, but cannot arrest the years, the mark of whose fingers lies silvered at the roots. How happy the thought - there need be nothing answering to this in our spiritual life. Grace is ever above nature. Hence, nature speaks of stones, but grace of lively or living stones. Nature shows how the outward man may perish, but grace tells of the inward man being renewed day by day.

When God speaks to the heart and tells us what grace is, as with penitent and restored Ephraim, a divine renewal comes, so that away go the gray hairs, the idols, and all the other things that have come between us and God, and we can say, Our "youth is renewed like the eagle's." "He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Oh, what obligation are we under that we should live to Him who so speaks to us, and that we should abhor everything that would grieve Him or draw from Him this tender flow of lamentation - "Gray hairs are here and there" (literally, sprinkled) "upon him, yet he knoweth it not."

But note, it is evil which these words indicate. It is a moral decay which comes imperceptibly, even as the source is quite unseen. All such decays begin in the inner man. It is in the heart that there is departure from the living God.

It may root, at its beginning, in a want of dependence on God. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." David in all probability was never more satisfied with himself than previous to his sin; and Peter was never more confident with a fleshly confidence than before his fall. The decay sets in before the effects become visible.

Many things will produce it; and first, as reminded by our history, an undue mingling with the world will bring it on. What brought on this decay in Israel was mixing with the heathen, as we may say, mixing with the world. God had told Moses that they were to keep separate. If not, they would intermarry, and if they intermarried they would have introduced among them the gods of those to

whom they were married, all which took place till they themselves became "joined to idols." It is the same now; voluntarily mixing with the world is sure to bring evil. The springs of

life become dried up. Could you have a worldly scene and prayer? No! A worldly company and the Word of God - the Savior the theme? No! Could any child of God have the courage of his opinions and be courted by the godless ones of this world? No! Could such a one retain his peace and joy as a child of God? No; he may glide along the current of these new worldly circumstances with a conscience seared as to his sin, like Ephraim. "Gray hairs are... upon him, yet he knoweth it not" - but he has no peace, no joy.

Second, some sin may cause this decay. It may be a thing, or it may be a person, but it is sin, and it cleaves to us, comes between God and our souls, and is an idol which divides our affections from God. It may be unbelief or a temptation ever seeking to succeed. If either of these be allowed, the result must be decay in the spiritual life. The idol of our fancy may be something lovely some habit which has taken the place of God - some attraction or attainment on which pride sits, or some satisfaction of self.

Third, a neglect of the Word will produce it. No one can slight it even without suffering loss. Backsliding most frequently has its beginning here. Decay must come where there is want. Hence, take the nourishment from the new-born babe, and it will die. Can the oldest or strongest live without their necessary food? How, unless fed by the Word, are we fitted for service, or trial, or conflict with the enemy? A friend now with the Lord, was wont to say, "I must have two breakfasts every morning-one for the body, the other for the soul." Did you ever know a man who could work his day's work without his breakfast? When the soul is not fed, we are more fitted for the hospital than for the battlefield. The Word is the only true aliment for the soul, made such by the Spirit of God, whose delight is to use it for our own good. "If I would be filled with the Spirit," said the devoted McCheyne, "I must read my Bible more, pray more, and watch more. In the morning I must see the face of God before I see the face of man, or undertake any duty." It is the noblest science to know how to live in hourly communion with God in Christ. Why need we pine in want when the supply is so vast? The Word leads to Christ, Christ to God. Hence the supply is infinite, and joined to Him, how available it is as well as infinite. Fourth, neglect of communion brings decay. Are you saying with Job, It is not with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon me? (Job 29:2, 3). Or with Cowper- "Where is the blessedness I knew

When first I saw the Lord"?

Confession there may be, but not blessedness, not communion; communion is more than simple prayer. It is that which we enjoy in common between ourselves and God; we speak to God of His grace and righteousness, His holiness and love; He tells us, in His Word, of the same. We speak to Him of what Christ is - our beloved Savior. He tells us of His beloved Son. It is through His Word by the Spirit that we can enjoy such communion. If it be broken or lost, the result is decay.

How often, alas! may our very feelings tell of this decay. We essay, as in days past, to pray; but cold and lifeless, we utter words only; we do not pray. Compared with former unction there is only helplessness. We take up the Word, but where is the quick discernment of the truth we once so sweetly enjoyed? the readiness of soul by which we had only to see or hear in order to receive? It was said by the blessed Lord, that "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to

hear as the learned." Isa. 50:4. He was thus of quick understanding, had an aptitude to know and receive that law of the Lord which was His delight. Truly such an understanding He had, so that He grew in wisdom and in all else that formed His holy and perfect life.

Are there not times when we too, in our measure, have had such an understanding - a mind quick to perceive, and capacity to retain, what we receive of the Word, and to follow the light which it gave? Failing this, and in times of spiritual declension, the spiritual understanding becomes dull, and the mind closed, as if it had come to pass that which is written, "From him shall be taken even that which he hath." Ah, then the state is darkness, when the wild beasts come forth, especially the roaring lion, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. On the other hand, when the soul is restored, He pours into us grace and all good. It will be thus with Israel. It was so with Peter when restored - the love, deep and unchanging, of the Lord filled his heart. David also, and so with us. When iniquity is gone the Lord will give in its place the quick understanding, and a conscience happy and at rest in His presence. But oh, meanwhile, what an anomaly - a child of God under decay! One who is an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ under decay!

## State of Soul: Seasonal Words From an Old Letter

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When souls feed upon the Word of God with evident relish it is a good sign, whereas if they are occupied with questions which gender strifes, it is just the opposite; and when fanciful interpretations are sought after, we may be sure the mind is at work, rather than the heart subject to the Word and feeding on what is divine. It is a great mercy when we find in the saints a healthy spiritual appetite. We may then look for growth, and well directed energy. Now I think I found a real relish for the simple ministry of Christ from the Word; energy also in getting together over the Word for mutual benefit, as well as in reaching out to others.

On my way home from\_\_\_\_\_I stopped at\_\_\_\_\_, where five brothers have got free from association with false doctrine. Three others were exercised, but I have not heard if they have made any progress. In the first of these cases, deliverance came with loss of both health and property. Our brother had been ill for a year, and was scarcely expected to recover, but the Lord had mercy on him, and he is much better than he was, though still feeble, and suffering. I trust the Lord may be pleased to use him for the deliverance of others also.

God only can work real deliverance; no mere work of man will suffice. Had not the Lord laid His hand on our brother, I dare say he would still be just where he was. Our brother himself says his sickness was necessary. The Lord had a controversy with him, and He took this way to break him down. I speak of this because we might suppose it is merely a question of understanding the bad doctrine. I am sure it is not that. I have long been convinced that the going wrong in these questions is connected with a state of the soul which is not pleasing to the Lord. And as long as this state is not reached and corrected, no good could come of souls being put right in a mere ecclesiastical way. This does not prove that we who are right ecclesiastically are necessarily in a good state of soul. We may be far from that, and still have been preserved as to our position. But I believe it to be a fact that those who have gone wrong in these great questions, had first got wrong as to their spiritual state. And it shows the importance of seeing to our own state, or rather seeing to it that Christ and His glory govern our hearts. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" is a solemn word of warning for us all.

May the blessed Lord keep us very near to Himself. If we abide in His presence we are safe. How blessed to be able to look on to a scene of rest and peace where no storm and no sorrow shall ever enter. If humble, dependent, and obedient, we shall be kept, and shall find the Father and the Son making Their abode with us even here, and giving us to realize the sweetness of the divine affections, of which we are the objects.

## A Striking Contrast

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There is a very striking and solemn contrast between the close of Luke 15 and 16. In the former, our Lord draws aside the curtain and shows us the interior of the Father's house; and there we see a returned prodigal at the father's table, feeding on the fruits of a father's love. In the latter, our Lord draws aside the curtain and shows us the interior of hell [or hades, here]; and there we see a soul tormented in the flames. Awful contrast! And how very near they are to each other on the inspired page! It is just the same in Rev. 20 and 21. The former closes with "the lake of fire." The latter opens with "the holy city." What a contrast! And how very near they are to each other on the inspired page! And how very near to each other in a man's life! At one moment a sinner on the way to hell, but as soon as he accepts Christ as his Savior he is bound for the "holy city."

## Suffering for Christ

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A laborer in the Lord's vineyard who recently returned to Bolivia from a visit in this country has written that eight Protestant Christians have just been murdered. He personally knew those who were brutally killed by a mob and knew them to be real Christians, so for them it is to "be with Christ which is far better," but how sad for their loved ones who are left behind! This incident is but another in a long and constantly growing list of atrocities committed against believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in many Latin countries. These things are seldom reported in this country, but from time to time information reaches us of some such cases. Not long ago a popular magazine in Mexico dared to expose some of the many murders of Protestants in that country.

We who live in lands of religious liberty and outward toleration are apt to forget that true testimony to the Lord Jesus is still unwanted and hated in this world. Ever since the Lord Jesus suffered at the hands of wicked men, His followers have often been subjected to ill treatment. This world, is not only stained with the blood of Christ, but it is stained with the blood of millions of the true followers of Jesus. Just think of the blood of the early saints that was shed by infuriated and misguided Jews, then of all the thousands upon thousands who were martyred by pagan Rome (under the Caesars), and later the millions put to death, because of their testimony, by fanatical zealots of religion, beginning at the city of Rome and reaching to every quarter of the globe. And in the book of Revelation we are told that the great religious system that is to be dominant in the revived Roman Empire is "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Rev. 17:6.

Fellow-Christian, even though we ourselves may have liberty and protection (for which we should thank God) we should not be unmindful that we are part of that body composed of all true believers, many of whom have given their lives for the truth, and many are still suffering and dying, for His name's sake. The realization of this would make us more conscious of the fact that we are followers of Him who was cast out, and then the world would bear more of its true stamp in our minds. There is danger for us in the easygoing, indifferent Christianity of the day in this and some other countries. The Church has flourished most spiritually in days of persecution, but has always been wont to settle down and forget its own heavenly character and the hatred of the world when things were pleasant and easy. We are apt to forget the truth expressed in these words of the poet:

"Heirs of Thy shame and of Thy throne,

We bear Thy cross, and seek Thy crown."

If, however, we are left in this scene much longer it is possible and even probable that faithfulness to Christ will incur real persecution in all lands. May the Lord ever keep us mindful of His rejection, the present state of the world (although gilded and veneered), our connection with those who suffer for Christ, our own heavenly character, our proper testimony in the world, and give us a more hardy faith and

faithfulness wherever we are. Soon we shall be at home in the Father's house and find that every bit of faithfulness has been carefully noted, and we shall see it all duly rewarded.

Satan is still the god and prince of this world and he uses whatever character is best suited to his purposes of opposition to Christ in each land.

He is still the wily serpent, and we need the whole armor of God to protect us from his wiles. His wiles are the evil seductions that are set to trap our feet as we pursue the heavenly road. And how many wiles he has in this country! How easily we are attracted to the things of the world!

He is still the "angel of light" who brings false doctrine. He has all the cults and evil doctrines dressed up to trap the unwary.

But where it suits his purpose, he is still the roaring lion attacking the truth and all who faithfully maintain it.

"Should we to gain the world's applause,

Or to escape its harmless frown, Refuse to countenance Thy cause,

And make Thy people's lot our own, What shame would fill us in that day, When Thou Thy glory wilt display."

## A Suggestion

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A letter from a reader refers to the article, "THE GOSPELS - Why Are There Four? Why Do They Differ? Are They Fully Inspired?" as published in the September issue. On page 229 this article gives a very simple explanation of the variations of the records of the inscription on the cross. Our correspondent suggests that there may have been variations in the way it was written in from a Reader

Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, or even in the amount of space required for writing it in the different languages, thus causing abridgment in some cases. We certainly are not prepared to say emphatically which explanation of the variations is the correct one, but suffice it to say that there is no real difficulty in the fact that the Evangelists record slightly different parts of the inscription. Ed.

## Tracts: Do You Use Them?

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Tracts can go everywhere. Tracts know no fear. Tracts never tire. Tracts can be multiplied without end by the press. Tracts can travel at little expense. They run up and down like the angels of God, blessing all, giving to all and asking no gift in return. They can talk to one as well as to a multitude, and to a multitude as well as to one. They require no public room in which to tell their story. They can tell it in the kitchen or the shop, the parlor or the closet, the cottage or the mansion, on the broad highway or in the footpath through the fields. They take no note of scoffs, or jeers, or taunts. No one can betray them into hasty or random expressions. Though they will not always answer questions, they will tell their story twice, or thrice, or four times over if you wish. And they can be made to speak on every subject, and on every subject they may be made to speak wisely and well. They can, in short, be made vehicles of all truth, the teachers of all classes, the benefactors of all lands.

## True Worship: a Line of Worshippers

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All knowledge of God must flow from revelation, for man by wisdom knows not God (1 Cor. 1:21). True worship has the same source. Each of these - knowledge of God and worship - is always to be according to such revelation as He has at the time, or in the dispensation, given of Himself.

Understanding this, I might instance shortly a line of true worshipers from the beginning.

Abel was a true worshiper, for he worshiped in faith, or according to revelation (Heb. 11). The firstling of the flock was according to the promise of the bruised Seed of the woman, and according to the coats of skin, with which the Lord God had covered his parents.

Noah followed Abel, and worshiped in the faith of the woman's bruised Seed. He took the new inheritance only in virtue of blood (Gen. 8:20). He was therefore a true worshiper also.

Abraham was a true worshiper, worshiping God as He had revealed Himself to him (Gen. 12:7).

Isaac, precisely in the track of Abraham, worshiped the God who had appeared unto him, not affecting to be wise, but like Abraham raising his altar to the revealed God (Gen. 26:24, 25).

Jacob was a true worshiper. The Lord appears to him in his sorrow and degradation, in the misery to which his own sin had reduced him, revealing Himself as the One in whom "mercy rejoiceth against judgment"; and he at once owns God as thus revealed to him; and this revealed God of Bethel was his God to the end (Gen. 28 and 35). Here was enlarged revelation of God, and worship following such revelation; and that is true worship.

The nation of Israel was a true worshiper; for God had revealed Himself to that nation, and established His memorial in the midst of them. They knew what they worshiped (John 4:22). But in the midst of this worshipping nation there might still be true worshipers who did not conform to the divinely established order, provided their departure from it was also according to new revelation from God. As for example, Gideon, Manoah, David, who were all true worshipers, though they offered sacrifices on rocks or in threshingfloors, and not in the appointed national place just because, by a new and special revelation, the Lord had consecrated those new altars. (See Judg. 6 and 13; 1 Chron. 22.)

The healed leper, in Luke 17, exactly on this principle, was a true worshiper, though like Gideon, Manoah, and David, he departed from the usual order, just because he apprehended God in a new revelation of Himself. The healing which he had felt in his body had a voice in the ear of faith, it being only God who could heal a leper (2 Kings 5:7).

The Church of God is now, in this dispensation, a true worshiper on exactly the same ground, worshiping according to enlarged revelation, having fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And this is still, like the other cases, worship "in truth" because according to revelation. But it is "in spirit" also, because the Holy Ghost has now been given as the power to worship, enabling the saints to call God "Father," and Jesus Christ "Lord" (1 Cor. 8:6). There is

now communicated power, as well as revelation, for the purpose of worship.

This subject of worship is indeed a blessed one for further meditation for us all. The faith of the Samaritan leper, who turned from the priest at Jerusalem to lay his offering at the feet of Jesus, thus using Him as God's anointed altar, has suggested it. He heard the voice of healing - he owned the God of Israel in the mercy that had met him. This was revelation to him, and he believed it, and was led by it into the sanctuary. And this that had happened to him is the only ground of worship from creatures such as we have been, live we in what age or under what economy we may. He had been healed, and he knew that he had been healed. On what ground can we stand to worship but this? We may cry out in the bitterness of a surprised conscience; but that is not worship. It may be the way of the drawing of the Father, and end in the sanctuary; but it is not worship. The blood of Christ purging the conscience from

dead works alone leads to the service or worship of the living God (Heb. 9:14). As in the very heavens, and so forever, the saints, in their glories, worship while standing on this ground, as the floor of their temple (Rev. 5:9). "Our calling," as one has beautifully said, "is to consecrate our life as a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the mercy of God's redemption; our whole life is to be a continued priesthood, a spiritual serving of God, proceeding from the affections of a faith working by love; and a continued witness of our Redeemer." It is mercy, as the Spirit Himself teaches, that opens the temple doors and leads us in to exercise our priesthood before God (Rom. 12:1). And that mercy is ours, we know, only by the hands of our wounded, stricken Redeemer.

J. G. B.

## The Two Altars

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"An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record My name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee."

If aught could enhance the value, or add to the interest of this passage of Scripture, it is the context in which it stands. To find such words at the close of Exod. 20 is something which must strike the thoughtful reader. In the opening of this chapter we find God speaking from the top of Mount Sinai and laying down the law as to man's duty toward God and his duty toward his neighbor. This law is published amid thunderings, blackness, darkness, and tempest. Thou shalt do this, and, Thou shalt not do that - such are the terms in which God speaks from the top of the fiery mount. Thus is He compelled to erect around Himself, and around His rights, certain barriers in order to keep man off. And in the same way has man to be kept from infringing the rights of his fellow.

Thus much as to the opening of Exod. 20 There are no such words here as, "I will come unto thee." Quite the reverse. The warning was, beware lest thou come unto Me. (See Exod. 19:12-24.) It was impossible for man to get to God by way of law. The barriers that were placed around that palpable mount were insuperable to man. "A man is not justified by the works of the law." Under the law there is no possible way of access to God. Keep off is the stern utterance of the entire legal system-the expression of the very spirit and genius of the whole Mosaic economy. Nearness and liberty are unknown under the law, and cannot possibly be enjoyed by any one on legal ground.

Hence then we may safely say - and we say it with reverence-Jehovah was not at home on the top of Mount Sinai. It was not natural to Him to surround Himself with barriers. He was, as it were, forced into the position by the legality of the human heart. Israel had taken upon them to say, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do." Exod. 19:8. It was this that caused Jehovah to place Himself at a distance in order that man might be tested, and the offense might abound. He had just said to the people, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine."

Jehovah could say to Israel, I have "brought you unto Myself," but the very moment that Israel undertook to say, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do," we hear the command issued to "set bounds about the mount," that the people might be put at a distance.

However, as we have said, all this was not according to the loving heart of the God of Israel. It did not suit His nature and character to place Himself at a distance from His people. They had compelled Him to retire within the narrow enclosures of Mount Sinai, and to surround Himself with clouds and darkness, thunderings, lightnings, and tempest. Man had undertaken to do, and he must be put to the test. ' "The law entered, that the offense might abound." And again, "By the law

is the knowledge of sin."

But it is not our intention in this short article to dwell upon the subject of "the law." We have merely referred to it in order to bring out the striking contrast between the opening and the close of Exod. 20. It would seem as though God were in haste to come down from the top of that dreadful mountain in order to meet man at "an altar of earth"- the place of grace - the place where man's doings are displaced by God's. "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me, and shall sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

What a contrast! It is as though He had said to them, "You cannot come to Me if I remain on the top of this mountain; but I will come to you. If I remain here, I must curse you; but I will meet you at an altar of earth and bless you." Blessed be His name! He delights not in cursing; and hence He would not record His name on Mount Sinai, the place of distance and darkness, where He could not come to His people and bless them.

How blessedly all this tells out what God is! This teaching about the altar is like a ray of divine light piercing through the gloom which surrounded Mount Sinai, and shining on the spot where God would record His name, and where He could meet His people in all the fullness of blessing.

And let the reader note the character of the offerings referred to in verse 24. We have "burnt offerings" and "peace offerings." Not a word about sin offerings and trespass offerings. Why is this? Surely this is the very place in which we should expect to find this latter introduced. But no. We have the burnt offering-the type of Christ surrendering Himself, in life and death, to do the will of God. And we have the peace offering-the type of Christ as the Object on which the worshiper feeds in communion with God. And not a word about the sin offering or trespass offering. Why? Is it that these are not needed? Far be the thought! They lie at the very foundation of that altar where God and the worshiper meet. The sin offering is the type of Christ bearing the judgment of God against sin. The trespass offering is the type of Christ bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. These, we repeat, form the foundation of all worship. But they are omitted in Exod. 20:24, because we have here the nature and character of the worship in which God delights -a worship in which the soul is occupied with Christ, in the very highest aspect of His Person and work; for this is what we have in the burnt offering, wherein Christ is seen making atonement, not merely according to our need, but according to the claims of God- not merely according to the measure of the hatefulness of sin, but according to the measure of the preciousness of Christ to the heart of God.

What a striking contrast then between the opening and closing lines of Exod. 20! What lessons are here for our hearts! What a rebuke to all our legal tendencies! We are all prone to be occupied with our doings, in some shape or form. Legality is natural to our hearts; and let us remember it was this that forced Jehovah-to speak after the manner of men- to take up the position in which we find Him in Exod. 19 and 20.

Abraham did not know God in such a position. It was not as a lawgiver that God revealed Himself to the father of the faithful- but as a God of grace, a God of promise. There were no thunderings and lightnings, no blackness, darkness, and tempest surrounding the Blessed One when He appeared unto Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees; nor yet when He partook of his hospitality in the

plains of Mamre. It was ever God's delight to have His people near Him, enjoying the precious fruits of His grace, and not far off, reaping the bitter fruits of their works. This latter was simply the result of man's legal utterance, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do." Up to the fatal moment in the which these words were spoken, God had been speaking and acting in the same unqualified grace toward the seed of Abraham as He had toward that favored patriarch himself. But when once Israel undertook to do, it was needful to put them thoroughly to the test; and this was done by the law.

But it may be asked, was it not always God's purpose to give the law? Was it not necessary? Is it not designed to be the abiding rule of man's conduct- the statement of his duty to God and man-the divine summary and embodiment of his righteousness? To all this we reply, Most surely God knew from the beginning what He would do; and moreover, He, in His infinite wisdom, overruled man's legal folly and made use of the law to raise the great question of righteousness, and prove whether it was possible for a man to work out a righteousness which could be accepted. But what was the result? Did man ever get righteousness by keeping the ten commandments? Never. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3:20. And again, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." Gal. 3:10, 11.

What then was the object of the law? Why was it given? And what was its effect? "The law entered, that the offense might abound." Rom. 5:20. "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions." Gal. 3:19. "The law worketh wrath." Rom. 4:15.

Thus Scripture answers our three questions in the plainest possible manner; and not only so, but it settles the entire law question in such a way as to remove every difficulty and every cloud from the mind that will only submit absolutely to the authority of the Word.

However, when we sat down to pen this brief article, we had no thought whatever of entering on the domain of theology. It was merely our purpose to present to the heart and mind of the reader the striking lesson taught by the two altars in Exod. 20-the altar of earth and the altar of hewn stone. In the former, we have the very spirit of the dispensation of grace; in the latter, the spirit of the dispensation of law. God wanted man to be near Him; and therefore He would have an altar of earth. In other words, man was to approach God without any efforts or doings of his own. "If thou wilt make Me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone [or as the margin reads, "build them with hewing"]: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto Mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon."

Oh that men would only consider these things! How little are they understood! Man will be doing. He will lift up his tool in the building of his altar; and the result is, pollution. He will ascend by steps; and the result is, discovered nakedness. Thus it is, and thus it must be, because man is a sinner, and his very best works can only issue in pollution and nakedness.

But one thing is certain, God does not record His name in any place where man's doings are set up as a basis of worship. This truth shines with heavenly luster on every page of the sacred volume; and it shines where we should least of all have expected to find it; namely, at the close of

Exod. 20 It is something perfectly wonderful, amid the thunderings of Mount Sinai, to catch such heavenly accents as these: "In all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." These are words of purest grace- words flowing from the very heart of God - words expressing the very nature and character of God. "I will come unto thee." Precious words! May they sink down into our hearts and there abide! May it be our aim and object ever to be found worshiping in that place where God records His name, and where, instead of the nakedness and pollution which ever mark the efforts of man, we have the infinite preciousness of the grace of God, and the fullness and excellency of Christ in His Person and work! '

## The Two Natures: the Old Nature and the New Nature

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The believer has two natures and not one. All teaching that sets forth the [old] nature improved is false. The old man in the saint is always bad. While we are living men here below, the will of the flesh is opposed to God; there is that which God does not improve, and which does not in the least degree admit of improvement.

Our old man is not extinguished, but crucified. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." It is not gone, but the allowing of it to reign over you is exhorted against. It is like a wild beast which you are to keep under lock and key; but the wild beast does not become tame by merely locking it up. And the overlooking of that point quite accounts for a Christian falling into what is wrong. He sins when he is careless or off his guard.

There is in the believer on the one hand that old nature of the flesh which is always prone to evil; and on the other, the new man, or the new nature (that which loves God and His will), and it is in virtue of this that the man is said to be sanctified. He has got a nature he never had before. He is set apart to God, and being brought by faith under the power of Christ's work, he is said to be washed, sanctified, justified.

## The Two Thieves: One Expelled From Eden, the Other Received Into Paradise

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There were two thieves. One was driven out of the earthly paradise for stealing - the other was received into the heavenly paradise in spite of his stealing.

In the expulsion of the one we have the display of the government of God, and His judgment, so far, of sin. In the reception of the other we see the grace of God toward the sinner.

I need not say that Adam was the former, nor that he who is known to us as the "dying thief" is the latter.

I do not pronounce on Adam's eternal state. There are grounds of hope that even he, albeit his transgression was so gross, was clad in a covering more significant than was the fig leaf apron wherewith he sought to hide himself. Be that as it may, I am looking at the ejection of Adam from Eden, or the evidence of the temporal judgment of a holy God against sin - the plain declaration of God that sin cannot be tolerated in His presence; nay, more, that the sinner himself must be made conscious of this moral government of God.

That Adam was a thief is only too plain. God had reserved to Himself one tree in the garden, and had distinctly forbidden Adam to eat of it. The command was most intelligible, unmistakable; "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," said the Lord God, "thou shalt not eat."

Could words have been plainer? Was there the least possibility of misapprehension on Adam's part? Impossible! And yet, alas, in the face of such a command he took of the fruit and did eat. He stole what God had reserved, and became a thief and a malefactor. But this was known to God. Nothing can escape His eye. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." It is impossible to touch what belongs to God without His knowledge, or to break His commandments with impunity.

God therefore interferes - sifts the matter to the very bottom, shows to Adam his moral sin, and at length drives him, a wanderer, from the garden.

Well might he cry, as the brand of thief is stamped upon him, and as his soul is deeply conscious of his shame, Unclean, unclean, banished from the presence of God!

Deeply would he learn the lesson of the shamefulness of sin.

And there, too, at the entrance

of the garden, but closing it against his approach, stood the angel with the gleaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life, so that but one word would sound in Adam's ear - death, death, death!

Such was the government of God against the former thief.

But now for the story of the second. He went to the cross, a malefactor, and one who was justly condemned, and who suffered the due reward of his deeds of wickedness. He was, moreover, a blasphemer and reviler of the blessed One who was suffering by his side. His guilt was evident. Guilty of crimes against the law of the land, and of hatred against the Son of God, he there hung over the brink of hell. No law could extricate him from his doom. He deserved it fully. It was but proper that he should be banished from the presence of God, as his predecessors of old. Both were guilty of the same sins. Yet this thief went to paradise! And on what grounds? Not that of law! but of grace - rich, abundant, triumphant grace! But how? Ah! dear reader, He who occupied the central cross was there, forsaken of God, but not for any sin He had committed. He was ever holy and precious to God, but for our sakes

He suffered thus.

"He took the guilty culprit's place,

And suffered in his stead,

For man, Oh, miracle of grace!

For man, the Savior bled."

Wondrous, precious truth! Jesus bore the penalty at the hand of God that was due to the "dying thief"; yea, bore it all, exhausted all the judgment due to him from God because of sin, so that the demands of divine justice were fully met, and the chains of Satan completely broken, and the poor, penitent "dying thief" could listen to the amazing tidings of grace, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

Accordingly, on that day, a thief was welcomed into paradise; and the blood of the Lord Jesus was the perfect ground of his reception there.

Judgment had fallen on the guiltless that mercy might rescue the guilty. Mercy and truth had thus met together; sin was punished, and the sinner saved.

## Two Warnings and an Example: Peter and Judas

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We have here an example in the case of Jesus, and two warnings - in Peter and in Judas.

In Peter we may learn the weakness, and in Judas the dreadful wickedness, of the flesh. We get in Jesus what we should aim after.

In Judas we see the mere professor - in Peter, the saint sifted. All three are before us in a time of searching trial, and the result of trial is seen in each.

We ought to remember that we have received the Holy Ghost, which Peter had not when he denied the Lord; yet, having the Holy Ghost, we may still learn a lesson from Peter's flesh. And is not the entire worthlessness of the flesh among the last things we learn? In Peter we see what the flesh is.

There is no real living upon the hope of the glory, except in measure as the flesh is mortified and brought under subjection.

I would dwell, first, upon Judas's apostasy. He had all the appearance to men of being as the other disciples; he had companied with the Lord, he had been one of those sent forth to preach the gospel and work miracles; but his conscience never was before God. He might have truth in his understanding (and, indeed, the understanding does not generally receive truth so readily where the conscience is affected). Again, Judas could not have walked three years with Jesus, and seen His grace and love, and not have had his affections moved. But then his conscience had never been brought into exercise before God. So it is with many. If we watch the saint receiving truth, we shall often find him slow of apprehension. There is something to be judged before God- something which condemns him, and which involves sacrifice. For instance, we see most clearly that the precious blood cleanses from all sin; but only let us commit sin, and how slowly do we apprehend that blessed truth so as to get the comfort of it! In the latter case the conscience is at work. In like manner the affections of the unconverted may be moved - a great company of women followed Christ at the crucifixion, bewailing and lamenting Him! So we read of "anon with joy" receiving, and "by and by" [or anon, for it is the same word], when tribulation arises, turning away.

The natural man wants something to satisfy self before God; until he has done with himself, he will be looking for a certain measure of righteousness before God. He may have been, in connection with this want, instructed in the gospel, and thus the understanding may be clear and the affections moved; but, unless the conscience be bare before God, there is no life.

Here was Judas betraying his Master! After all, what was this? Nothing more, at the bottom, than what was in every heart. Judas loved money - no uncommon lust. And the love of money in a saint nowadays is as bad, or worse, because it is being done more in the light.

There was sin in Judas's nature - which sin showed itself in the shape of the love of money. The next thing was Satan suggesting a way of gratifying this lust, for he loved money more than he loved Jesus. And now we find the result of outward nearness to the Lord while the conscience is

unaffected - it was to make Judas reason upon circumstances. He thought, probably, the Lord would deliver Himself as He had done before; for when he found it not so, he threw down the money and said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." He continues in this nearness to Christ until we read that "after the sop Satan entered into him." In the condition of hypocrisy he gets his heart hardened; and then Satan gets between his conscience and all hope of pardon.

Many a natural man would not betray a friend with a kiss, as Judas soon after did. His nearness served to harden him; and he actually took the sop from the hand of the Lord! Even natural feeling was silenced. So it is when the unconverted man gets into a similar position. He becomes more vile than ever. His heart is hardened. Hypocrisy, and at length despair, ensues. Such is the flesh and its end. And the flesh cannot be bettered by ordinances, even where Christ Himself is. Such is the flesh I can hardly say, when left to itself, for man is never left to himself, never really independent. He has the will to be so; therefore he is perfectly a sinner, but if disobedient, he is servant to his lust, "disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures," and slave to Satan. A natural man has a conscience and shame. He will not do in the

light what he would do in the dark. But the outward form of Christianity, where it has not touched the heart, only makes this difference, that his conscience is seared, and he is only more subtly the slave of Satan.

I turn now to the contrast afforded by what is seen in Peter with what we see in our blessed Lord. In Jesus we see the obedient, the dependent One, expressing His entire dependence by His praying. And there was seen an angel from heaven strengthening Him. He felt the weakness which He had given Himself up to bear; He was "crucified in weakness." "All My bones," He says, "are out of joint: My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels." "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me." So in the earlier temptation we hear Him answering the devil out of the Word of God. Jesus might have sent Satan away by divine power, but this would have been no example to us. So in this chapter we see the Lord praying.

If you compare what Peter is doing with what the Lord is doing, you learn the secret of Peter's weakness and the Lord's strength. What was the effect of trial upon the weakness of Peter's flesh? He had said, "I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death"; but the Lord had to say to him, "could ye not watch with Me one hour?" They were sleeping for sorrow. Here was neither prison nor death! "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (not merely that there be no transgression). Peter entered into temptation; Jesus never did at all. Yet the trial was far greater to Jesus. Jew and Gentile were against Him, and behind them the power of Satan. "This," said He, "is your hour, and the power of darkness"; and again, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Where does He take all this? The Lord does not sleep and seek to forget His sorrow. He goes and prays to the Father. His eye rested not on the circumstances to think of them. He looked to His Father. Not that He did not feel, for He said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." It was weakness here as man, and that is real strength.

Remember, if we are in entire dependence, the temptation does not meet us at all. Jesus does not say, "Shall I not go through all these trials?" but, "the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I

not drink it?" He does not see Pilate or Judas in it; it was not Satan that had given Him the cup, but His Father. So with us; if in a frame of entire dependence, temptation does not touch us at all! Trial comes but, like Jesus, we can say of it, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Every trial becomes a blessed occasion for perfecting obedience, if near God; if otherwise, a temptation! Jesus was walking with God. It was not that He did not feel weakness. "Tarry ye here, and watch with Me" shows the weakness of human nature fully, felt. As in Psalm 22:14, referring to the cross, He says, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels." And yet He shrank not from suffering alone when love to His disciples called for it. "If... ye seek Me, let these go their way." But being in an agony, He prays the more earnestly; it drives Him to His Father, and that before the trial comes. Then what is the next thing? When the trial actually comes, it is already gone through with God! He presents Himself before them saying, "Whom seek ye?" as calmly as if going to work

a miracle. Whether before Caiaphas or Pontius Pilate, He makes a good confession, owns Himself Son of God before the Jews, and King before Pilate.

How comes this difference? In the first place with Peter the flesh is sleeping; he goes to sleep to get rid of the pressure of circumstances. Peter has not gone through the trial with the Father. At the moment when Jesus is going to be led away, the energy of the flesh wakes up, and Peter draws the sword. The flesh has just energy enough to carry us into the danger where it cannot stand that energy deserts us then. How little real communion is here! When Christ was praying, Peter was sleeping; when Christ was submitting as a lamb led to the slaughter, Peter was fighting; when Christ was confessing in suffering, Peter was denying Him with cursing and swearing. This is just the flesh - sleeping when it ought to be waking - in energy when it ought to be still - and then denying the Lord when the time of trial comes. With Christ it was agony with the Father, but perfect peace when the trial came. Oh, if we knew how to go on in all circumstances in communion with the Father, there would be no

temptation that would not be an occasion of glorifying Him!

The great thing was, Peter had not learned what the flesh is; he did not keep in memory the weakness of the flesh, and thus the condition of dependence was hindered. He seems to be sincere in wishing to own the Lord Jesus and not deny Him. There was more energy of natural and very true affection in Peter than in those who forsook the Lord and fled. He really loved the Lord. Peter fails, not from self-will, not from willing to sin, but through the weakness of the flesh. In Christ there was no possible moral weakness, because He always walked in the place of weakness in communion with His Father. Jesus goes - through agony itself - with the Father. Peter fails, though but the shadow of temptation comes to him. All Peter's fall began by want of dependence, and by neglecting prayer. We must be watching "unto prayer" - not merely ready to pray when temptation comes, but walking with God, and so meeting it in the power of previous communion and prayer. Without continual prayer and constant sense of entire weakness in self, the more love to Christ and the more good will to serve Him are in a saint, the more certainly will he, by that very good will, be led into the place in which he will dishonor Christ. The other disciples that fled did not so much dishonor the name of their Master as Peter did.

It was thus Peter had to learn the evil of the flesh. Jesus, on the contrary, ever walked in the confession of dependence - always praying. And what use did the Lord make of His knowledge of

Satan's purpose to sift Peter? He prayed for him! The more knowledge, dear brethren, the more prayer! "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." As the result of this intercession, Peter learned the evil of the flesh more deeply than the others, and was

able to strengthen his brethren. We are incapable of ministering truth to our brethren unless we are conscious of weakness in ourselves. Without the prayer of Jesus, where would Peter have been? He was running nearly like Judas. Oh, what a blessed thing to be kept in entire consciousness of weakness, instead of running on like Peter into a place where we cannot stand. How good to be afraid to take a single step without the Lord's guidance! The flesh is ever playing us false-

it is good for nothing. The effect of keeping it in the Lord's presence is to have done with it - to be cast on the Father. There is no wisdom that will stand us in any stead but the wisdom that is from above. The Lord knew what the flesh was, and what Paul needed, when he had been caught up into the third heaven. To be taken up to a fourth? No, but a messenger of Satan to buffet; that is, he needed to be brought down. There is the thorn in the flesh given him; there is to be the consciousness that the flesh is worth nothing.

We may notice that there are three ways of learning the powerlessness and wretchedness of the flesh: (1) prior to peace, often in desperate struggles (for knowledge and conscience are distinct things); (2) when we have peace, before the Lord in prayer and communion, not daring to take a step till He leads us, and then He is glorified in us in grace and obedience, whatever the trial; (3) or in the bitter experience in which Peter learned it when the flesh is not judged in communion with God. This last will be the way so long as we are judging of things instead of judging ourselves. When we are faithfully judging ourselves and walking with God, we shall enter into no temptation: Trial may come, but there will be full preparation to meet it not that we may be able to say, Now I am prepared for this or that temptation. We are in no certainty from one moment to another as to what trial may be coming; but we shall have the strength of God with us in it. Therefore our only safe place is watching and prayer - yes, prayer before the assault - prayer that may amount to agony, for so Jesus prayed.

We must expect to have our souls much exercised; often, it may be, when trial is there, casting about as to why this trial is sent. It may be for a fault; it may be for some careless or hard state of soul. It may be, as Paul's, to keep down the flesh; it may be preparatory to some coming conflict. But in these exercises of soul we must keep before the Lord; then when the trial comes for which He has been training us, there will be perfect peace. The Lord will make you bear in spirit with Him, when exercised, the burden which He will make you bear in strength in the battle. Do not shrink from inward exercise; settle it with Him. There is no

limit to our strength for obedience when our strength is the Lord's.

"If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." None of our souls can estimate what that cup was for One who had dwelt essentially in the Father's love; but the most spiritual will most acknowledge it. Then holiness itself was made sin-no one gleam of light on the soul of Jesus. At the thought of it, when pressed by Satan on His soul, we see Him sweating as it were great drops of blood. He did not think lightly of sin! The Prince of life was brought into the dust of death - "all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me." At the cross Jesus bore what you will never be called to bear.

Beware of denying Him. Many do so in detail who in the main acknowledge Him. Our happy privilege is, not to be occupied with the trial as a trial, but to see in every trial an opportunity to obey God, and to say of each, as Jesus did, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory."

## Understand of the Times: Keeping Rank

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"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment." 1 Chron. 12:32.

That is something to be coveted - to have the understanding of the times. That is the privilege of every child of God. It is not the mind of the Spirit of God that we should be unwise. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Eph. 5:17.

We are living in strange and stirring times. I suppose from one viewpoint the people of God never lived in a more fascinating time or a time of greater privilege than the very present time in which we are living. Things are happening around us at a terrific speed; there are changes all about us. The world is becoming overwhelmed and confused, and there is a babel of voices on every hand. But, dear Christian, it is your privilege and mine to sit quietly by and have the mind of Christ in the midst of all that is going on.

Here were some men that had "understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." It is your privilege and mine to understand what all the confusion is about that exists in the world and in the Church today, to understand the end to which all tends, and to see behind the scenes, and to see the hand of God ruling these scenes.

The only way you will get to know these things is by familiarizing yourself with the Word of God. I do not mean in a "heady" way, simply that you might become a biblical encyclopedia, but seek in the pages of the Word of God, the mind of Christ, that you may be wise. God does not intend us to be overwhelmed by what is taking place in the world; He intends us to be wise - to have His mind about it - to find a pathway, through the confusion, that is in His secret.

The 33rd verse of this chapter is also instructive at this time: "Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart."

That is a good lesson to learn -to "keep rank." If you are going

to keep rank, you will have to be with those who are marching under the commands of the great "Head-general"; you won't be keeping rank with the "stragglers," but with those in the battle line.

Isn't it a sad thing to find Christians dropping out of the ranks? lagging behind? joining the stragglers? getting out of step?

Fellow-Christian, are you, in your local gathering, keeping rank? keeping step with those who are going on with God, or are you a hindrance? Are you lagging behind? Are you, by your example, discouraging those that would keep rank? Thank God! here are some that were men of war that could keep rank. They didn't learn to do it all in a moment.

They learned that by careful, energetic effort and experience; they set themselves to it; they learned to keep rank.

There is something wrong when we cannot keep rank with our brethren - when we find ourselves superior to all the rest of our brethren. There is something wrong with a condition like that. God expects us to go on with our brethren; not of course in what is wrong - never - but there is such a thing as being found going on with the saints of God. When we find ourselves going off to ourselves, taking the ground of superior holiness - all our brethren are wrong and we alone are right - there is something fundamentally wrong with us.

## The Virgin Mary

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The nature of the Lord Jesus was holy and in no wise sinful. He was therefore born in a manner altogether singular. Without doubt He was born of the virgin, but not this made Him sinless, for the virgin was in herself sinful like any other. She was, however, a believer of remarkable simplicity and purity of character; yet she needed a Savior, and she had the same Savior as we in her own

Son. But well she knew that her Son was unlike any other son in the way in which He became flesh. It was by the power of the Holy Ghost. He, not she, was therefore immaculate. It is well to adhere to the truth. For in daring to add to revealed truth, superstition only invents a falsehood which gives Christ's unique place to another; and God will surely judge the blasphemy.

## Waiting Upon God

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Isa. 40 is a wonderful chapter which refers to God's people, Israel, and is a message of comfort unfolding His purposes of deliverance and blessing concerning them. It furnishes a graphic description of the greatness and majesty of God. The closing words, however, although addressed to God's ancient people, are equally applicable to us today.

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Isa. 40:31.

Have we not all felt the preciousness of this passage in times when life's burdens and difficulties weighed heavily upon us? These promises recur most readily to our minds, and yet the blessings of which they speak are not often experienced in the lives of many Christians. As a matter of fact, we run and are weary, we walk and do faint. The wings of our souls do not habitually beat the upper air. On the face of it, it is very simple. The condition stated is within the reach of every child of God, and four resultant blessings are made sure by the "shall" of Almighty God. This being so, the absence of the blessing proves we do not fulfill the condition. Have we ever stopped to study the condition carefully? What is it to "wait upon the LORD"? Everything depends on this. It is not simply petitioning God for something; neither is it "worship" exactly. Worship includes the ascription of praise, the worship and adoration of the soul. In order to really ascertain what is meant by "waiting upon God," it is well to note that there are three Hebrew words translated "wait" in this connection, each with a distinctive significance; then by bringing them together we get the answer to our inquiry.

In Psalm 62 we read, "Truly my soul waiteth upon God." In the margin it is, "Is silent to God"; that is, there is no feeling of resentment to God's dealings in providence - no uprising of rebellion. It is as if, in perfect hush and quietness, the soul casts itself upon God. Silence implies waiting. But if I am restless, impatient, struggling, resisting Providence, shirking duties, I cannot expect the peace which brings strength, or the strength which brings peace, to come to me.

In Psalm 104:27 we read, "These wait all upon Thee; that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season." Here the words are the same, but they imply dependence and expectation - a faith that knows no anxiety, but silently reaches out to take hold upon God, and which has its expectation from God, as in Psalm 62:5, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him."

Once more, in Pro. 8:34 we read, "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." The servant here is waiting on his master. He has nothing to do at the moment, but he waits at the door. The master does not open the door immediately, but there the servant waits with his ears open - waits for the slightest sound from within, knowing that at any moment the door may be swung back and the master may say, "My servant, go do this, or do that." There can be no true waiting on God without willingness to obey.

By putting these passages together we learn that to wait upon God is to be silent that He may speak, and to remain so, in an attitude of dependence and expectation, ready for instant unquestioning obedience to the slightest indication of His will.

Now a rich and fourfold promise of blessing is declared to rest upon the fulfillment of this condition. Are we waiting upon God? Are we silent to Him? Is our expectation from Him? Do we yield instant obedience to His will as it is revealed to us? If these questions can be answered in the affirmative, then the four blessings of the rest of the verse must follow, because God says they shall.

Let us see what they are.

1. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. In the margin we see that the word rendered "renew" is "change" - they shall change their strength. It is a word used to denote change of garments. They shall lay aside the garment of their own strength and put on a garment of strength from God.

In the passage before us, a striking contrast is drawn between the unwearied God and the wearied man, and then the inspired writer goes on to say that He that "fainteth not, neither is weary... giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." He bestows strength and increases it as the circumstances demand. What a comforting assurance to know that in all the vicissitudes of our lives, whether at home or on God's errands abroad, amid difficulties, discouragements and disappointments, we may be strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory (Col. 1:11).

2. Then "They that wait upon the LORD... shall mount up with wings as eagles." Why

wings as eagles? Why not wings as doves? I think it is because the eagle is the only bird that goes very high. No bird can stay still as long as the eagle; there is no restlessness in him; his is the repose of perfect power, and, as I have said, he has to do with immense heights. His eyrie is in the rocks among the mountains, and we are told that when the sun rises and his eye catches the first ray, you may see him stretch his mighty wings, launch out over the abyss and begin that tremendous spiral flight up-up higher and higher until he is lost to sight. The eagle mounts to immense heights, and it is even so with those who wait on God; and as the various needs arise, they are enabled to change their strength. In this connection there is a most illuminating word in Exod. 19:4, where in a message God gave to Moses for the children of Israel, He says, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself." And as with Israel, so with us. All who wait upon Him shall be brought as on eagles' wings unto Himself.

The two remaining blessings, "They shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and

not faint," sound like a strange anti-climax. After these eagles' flights above the cares and anxieties of this dim spot which men call earth, are we to descend to the lower plains to run and walk? Yes, precisely. The eagle's flight is to this very end. We ascend to the high altitude of communion with God that we may learn to serve down here according to His will. The psalmist said, "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart." Psalm 119:32.

Then in the crises of life calling for special, though brief exertion, whether in times of danger or distress, we shall prove that "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into

it, and is safe." Pro. 18:10. "Shall walk, and not faint" - what is the walk? It is the everyday life, which is undoubtedly the severest test of all. Far easier is it to gather one's energies for a swift "run" than to "walk." They that wait upon the Lord shall find that notwithstanding the wear and tear and the monotony of the daily round and common task, they are not only kept from fainting, but on the contrary are enabled to find in these very things room to deny themselves and a road to bring them nearer to God.

In view of all this, well might the psalmist say, "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart." And then as one who has put his own advice to test and proved its value out of the richness of a wonderful experience of blessing, he repeats the exhortation and says, "Wait, I say on the LORD." Psalm 27:14

## The Way of the Love of Jesus: Perfect Love and Imperfect Love

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The more perfect love is, the more entirely and without distraction will it regard its object; and this will give it at different times a very different bearing because its ways will be determined by the condition and need of its object. Its ways, therefore, at times may appear harsh and decisive, as when the Lord rebuked Peter in Matt. 16, or when He reproved the two disciples in Luke 24. But this is only because love is perfect, and therefore is undistractedly considering its object.

Imperfect love will show itself otherwise - more attractively at times, but far, far intrinsically less true, because imperfect love will not in this way unmixedly consider its object, but itself. It will be set upon enjoying its object rather than serving it, and this will give it a more considerate and tender bearing at times, and get for itself great credit, while perfect love has all the while forgotten itself and its enjoyments, and ordered its course and its actings in more undistracted concern and desire to have another blessed and profited.

Where do we see the perfect love, but in Jesus, in God! A mother has it not, but will at times enjoy her child; but Jesus had it. He considered His disciples when He was with them; He ordered His way with them to their profit, and not to His own gratification. He will gratify Himself with them in that coming age, when He need no longer care for them as in a place of instruction and discipline. He will then have no occasion in the exercise of perfect love to consider only their profit; for their profit will have been brought to its accomplishment in that place of their Lord's delight in them.

## Where Does Your Compass Point? to Live With Christ or Without Christ

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All is utter vanity here beneath the sun. Solomon, the wisest of men, with more wisdom than all others have possessed, learned it long ago (Ecclesiastes); but men are very slow to believe him in our day. What can be clearer than that to live without Christ, and to die in our sins (John 8:24) is loss for eternity. And to live for self, or with selfish motives and objects, when we are His (1 Cor. 6:19, 20), is just a wasted life.

Christianity, in one word, is "Christ" displacing "I" (Gal. 2:20). "I" rules in the world. "Christ" should rule in all in the Christian. "To me to live is Christ," said the Apostle (Phil. 1:21). It is not merely a question of denying self in this or that, but occupied with Christ and the things above, self is forgotten, and we become unselfish, and then all is simple and easy. Neither is it a question of giving up for Christ, but having Christ, we are infinite gainers now and forever (Phil. 3:4-15). In Him we have all, and it becomes a positive hindrance and weight to hold to things here. A Christian that is really singleeyed, living Christ, is the most independent man in the world. Loving God, all things work together for his good (Rom. 8:28). And dependent on God alone, he becomes independent of men. He walks by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). A thousand things that the natural heart loves and craves for lose their attraction. He is already satisfied with Christ, and has no room for them. But as sure as Christ is not the one Object, all-absorbing, the heart turns to something here. Alas! have we not all to mourn more or less that this is often the case?

If the compass does not point to the north, there is something wrong, and the ship will go astray on the wild waters. And if the compass of our hearts, so to speak, does not point to Christ, depend upon it that sooner or later we shall drift with some current in the world to our sorrow. A beloved Christian once said, "The world is not big enough for the heart of man, but Christ is too big." This witness is true. Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon are the proofs.

It is the superior attraction of the Person of Christ, rejected here and glorified above, that draws souls truly to an outside place on the earth in faithfulness to Him; and the mixed religion and ways of professing Christendom are left in the rear.

## Wisdom From Above

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"I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil."

Such is the divine remedy, even as our Lord Himself put it figuratively in Matt. 10:16, combining the prudence of the serpent with the harmlessness (or simplicity, for it is the same word) of the dove. Human wisdom seeks to guard itself by a thorough knowledge of the world and of all evil ways. This is not the wisdom that cometh down from above, but earthly, natural, devilish. The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, yielding, full of mercy and good fruits, uncontentious and unfeigned. It needs not to cultivate acquaintance with evil; it knows good in Christ; it is satisfied, and adores. It hears and loves the Shepherd's voice; a stranger's voice it knows not, and will not follow. And this, as it suits the simplest soul brought to the knowledge of God, it may be today, so it alone becomes the wisest, because it alone glorifies the Lord, as indeed it is the only path of safety for us, being such as we are and in such a world. For in it evil as yet has the upper hand, though the believer has the secret of victory over it, already vanquished in the cross of Christ.

## A Wise and Safe Thing to Do: "Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart"

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"Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:11.

This truly is a wise and a safe thing to do. Let us ponder it. Let us understand it. Let us imitate it. There are three special points suggested; namely, What have I hid? Where have I hid it? Why have I hid it?

1. What have I hid? "Thy word." It is not man's word, but the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever. This is the thing to hide. It is a treasure worth hiding. No thief can steal it, no moth corrupt it. It increases by being hidden in the way here spoken of. We cannot set too high a value upon the Word of God.

So the psalmist thought when he "hid" it. This expression sets forth how intensely he prized the Word. I have hid it. He placed it out of the reach of every one and everything that could deprive him of it. May we ponder it - may we imitate it!

2. Where have I hid it? "In my heart." It was not in his head or in his intellect, but in his heart

the seat of his affections - the center of his moral being - the source of all the influences that swayed his entire career. This is the right place to hide the Word. It is not hiding it under a bed, or under a bushel, or in the earth. It is not basely concealing it, through a slavish dread of men, lest they should sneer at us or oppose us. No, my reader, this will not do. We must hide the Word where the psalmist hid it, even in the heart. May we ponder this - may we understand it - may we imitate it!

3. Why have I hid it? For a very weighty reason - a most important reason. "That I might not sin against Thee." It was not that he might have a rich fund of new ideas to talk about and parade. Nor yet was it that he might be able to confound in argument all his opposers, and silence them. The psalmist did not care about any of these things. He had a horror of sin - a holy horror. He knew that the most effectual safeguard against sin was the Word of God, and therefore he hid it in his heart. May we ponder this - may we understand it - may we imitate it!

## The Workers at Antioch Called Christians

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Very fair and very beautiful is the history of the time of awakening and refreshing that took place at Antioch. The agents in the work were not the apostles, but young converts who had come from the scene of the first outpouring of the Spirit - undaunted by the martyrdom of Stephen. What a glorious vigor is there about the faith of young converts! - they went everywhere preaching the Lord Jesus. The secret of their power over their fellow men was that God had recently given them to know the saving energy of His truth in their own souls. So full a Christ did they get to know, and to speak of, and so wonderfully did the Gentiles receive Christ - a Christ so vivid and so defined - that they, along with the disciples, were called "CHRISTIANS" first at Antioch!

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