

# CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 23

by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan

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*A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 23, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

118 Chapters

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## Christian Truth Volume 23

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## Occupy Till I Come: the Word to All Servants

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Luke 19:11-27

Few portions of Scripture contain fuller instruction as to God's present ways than this parable. Its object is disclosed in the opening verse where we learn that Jesus spoke it "because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Just afterward, as He entered Jerusalem, His disciples hailed Him as King, saying, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord" (v. 38). They expected, as the two disciples on the way to Emmaus declared, that He would at that time "have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21), and that the kingdom of God would thus be manifested. We see from Luke 17:20, 21 that the kingdom had already come, but it was not yet with outward show or "observation." It was even then "among" them, but neither then, nor now, as a visible kingdom recognizable by the world. The real "children of the kingdom" may recognize it in its present hidden form; others in Christendom may acknowledge it as a kingdom in word, but with no true sense of God's sovereignty. The rest of the world can see in it nothing but a religious profession, with no character of a kingdom about it.

While the kingdom of God, in its veiled form in which it now exists, had already come, it had not then, nor indeed has yet, appeared, or been manifested; and it was to check the eager anticipations of the disciples as to its immediate appearance that this parable was spoken. In it, therefore, the Lord details what is to happen before that appearing for which they were looking should take place. He Himself, seen here under the figure of the nobleman, was to go into a far country-in fact, to leave the world for heaven-there to receive the kingdom, and having received it, to return. Meanwhile, those who denied His rights-the Jews especially, but also the world as a whole-not only rejected Him in Person while here, but "sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us" (v. 14). Such a message was the stoning of Stephen, and the persistent refusal to hear the testimony of the apostles and of the Holy Ghost after Christ's departure. This is, and has been, the attitude of the world as a whole, and of the Jews in particular, toward Jesus since He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"; and this will be their attitude as a nation till He comes again. He will then return, having had the nations given Him as His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession; and those who would not that He should reign over them will be dealt with in judgment.

But between His departure and His return there is, besides the citizens who rejected Him, another class of persons called His servants. These, though left among the citizens, are clearly of a different class. They are in the city to care for their Lord's things entrusted to their charge. While the citizens reject Him as their King, these own His authority; while the citizens have no thought of His return, these occupy till He comes. These servants represent Christendom-those who, in name at least, acknowledge the authority of the rejected Lord. Is it not startling to contrast this picture of the responsibility of the Christian professor with the thought which even true believers commonly cherish as to their place in the world? What is spoken of here is no limited class specially set apart as ministers or servants. The responsibility pointed out is the common

responsibility of Christendom; and surely it is impossible to look at Christendom in the light of the responsibility here disclosed without a sad sense of its utter failure to execute the charge with which it has been entrusted. Nevertheless, the responsibility of the Christian profession is to occupy for Christ till He returns; and according to this responsibility it will be judged.

By the mass of nominal Christians the charge is simply disregarded. If the pound is not thrown away, or the very name of Christian abandoned, this is all that can be said. Hard thoughts of God are entertained, His gifts forgotten or despised, and His demands regarded as unreasonable exactions. He is looked upon as "an austere man," taking up what He had not laid down, reaping what He had not sown. And yet man, with his usual inconsistency, while judging God as exacting more than is due, has taken no pains to earn, as it were, anything for Him. He is therefore judged out of his own mouth, and condemned as an unprofitable servant.

Leaving the sad case of mere professors, let us ask to what extent we answer to the view here presented of the believer's responsibility. To how many true Christians is the thought present, "I am here for Christ, in His interest in the scene where He has been rejected"? What would the world appear to one who had this conception of the place he was called upon to occupy?

The cross, as the means by which sins were put away, is of course valued by all real believers, and in this sense they can and do glory in it. But Paul gloried in it for another reason, and saw in the death of Christ another aspect. To him that death was not only deliverance from sins, but deliverance "from this present evil world." To him that cross was not only the place where sin had been judged, but the means by which "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." He saw in the death of Christ the death of all, "and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." What complete separation from the world, what complete devotedness to Christ, do we see here! And yet this is only what becomes one who, in the light of Christ's own words, realizes the place he is responsible to occupy in this world. For must there not be a complete separation of heart and feeling between the servant who is truly occupying for Christ, and the world which has rejected Him? "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion bath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14.)

It may be urged that the citizens here do not represent nominal Christians who constitute the world around us. This is true; but if nominal Christians have become just as much "of the world" as the heathen, if Christ's lordship is just as little practically admitted among them as in the rest of the world, is the call for separation any the less urgent? Is the world any more allowable because it takes the name of Christ, while practically it disowns and rejects Him? If there is one rule of separation in Scripture more stringent than another, it is the separation from those who, while called by Christ's name, are walking in an ungodly fashion. If there is one scene over which judgment is impending with more fearful gloom than over any other, it is over this very Christendom which, on account of the privileges it has enjoyed and the sad use it has made of them, is held as especially guilty in God's sight. The principle of separation, therefore, applies even with greater force to the believer in the world of Christendom around him at present than to the believer in the midst of Jews and heathen.

What the Lord desires in His people is wholeheartedness for Himself. This does not imply separation from the ordinary occupations of the world. But the question is whether these

occupations entangle the heart and become our objects; or whether, while pursuing these occupations, the heart is still free for Christ. Is getting on in the world what fills our thoughts? or, are we, while providing all things honest in the sight of all men, really living among men and before men as those who are not their own, but bought with a price—as those who, being constrained by the love of Christ, are seeking, however feebly, to live not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again?

Few, of course, are called upon to preach Christ, but all are called upon to live Christ. And to live Christ involves taking His place in relationship to the world. "They are not of the world," He said, "even as I am not of the world." It is easy to imagine cases, and to ask where the line is to be drawn. The heart that is in communion with Christ, though it may not know how to lay down principles, will distinguish readily enough what will suit Him, and what would grieve His Spirit. Indeed it is only Christians who are anxious to mix with the world that have any difficulty in the matter. The world quickly enough discerns what is consistent and what is inconsistent in a Christian, and estimates without difficulty the value of the testimony given by a worldly believer. If the heart is really true to Christ, it will unconsciously bear witness to Him, and separate from the world which knows Him not. The spirit and objects of the world cannot have a place in the soul that is filled with Christ. The pursuits and riches of the world will appear worthless to him whose affections are set on things above.

The character of the true servant will show itself in various ways. If to serve Christ is really the object, His own Word and directions will be the rule of service. Who could suppose the servants of the absent Lord taking counsel with the citizens that had cast Him out, as to how they should care for His goods? Is it any better when believers go to the world, or resort to worldly principles, worldly wisdom, and worldly alliances in the hope of furthering the cause of Christ? The power is of God who does not need our wisdom as to the mode of carrying on His work, but who requires our obedience as servants. No truth is more needed at the present moment than that of the all-sufficiency of the Word of God. Whatever, under the name of service, is not built on this foundation, is not service such as the Lord owns. There may, of course, be earnestness and truth of heart, which the Lord does own even where much is added which He could not sanction; but in these cases His blessing is on what comes from Himself, not on what comes from the flesh and the world.

There is another thing which will mark the true servant. He will be waiting for the coming of the Lord. If the heart is really estranged from the world and set on heavenly things, what expectation will bring such blessedness as the thought of the Lord's return? The idle servant, whose heart was full of hard thoughts of his lord, could of course entertain no bright hopes in connection with his coming again. To him the thought must necessarily be unwelcome. But what joy would the prospect bring to the heart of the faithful servant who had been living and laboring for him during his absence! Are our hearts thus waiting and longing? Are we occupying for Christ during His absence, seeking to act in obedience to His Word, waiting in joyful anticipation for His return?

## The Saviour Known and Loved: More Than Salvation

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Read Luke 7:11-50

In this passage two scenes are brought before us. In the one we find the Lord enters the city of Nain, and in the other He is a guest in the house of the Pharisee. The meaning of the word Nain is "beautiful."

It is a beautiful place to which the Lord comes; but what is then presented to Him? The saddest picture which earth could offer! He meets at the gate of the city a widow who had lost her only son. This was the filling up of sorrow. Greater you could not find. We can hardly estimate the desolation of a widow in those days. There was no provision made for them as now; and here was one, not only a widow, but one who had lost her only son, on whom her heart naturally fastened, and who had grown up to be her stay. He was dead, and she was left utterly desolate. What a commentary on the beautiful things of this earth! Here was a beautiful place, but what misery of heart in it; and the Lord comes to it only to find there the greatest human sorrow!

Elisha had found the same terrible contrast at Jericho. The "men of the city" say to him, "Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren." There was a positive attraction in the place itself, but then there was death and barrenness in it. The earth is like Jericho and Nain. That there is beauty in it I do not deny, but I say also there is death in it; "the water is naught, and the ground barren." 2 Kings 2:19.

The blessed Lord came to declare God's thoughts about man, and here we find Him in this place called "beautiful," before a case of sorrow that, humanly speaking, was irreparable. What could you or I do in such a scene? What was all the beauty of the place to the widow when her last link to earth was gone?

But God had visited His people. Here was One who had come to destroy (not death only, but) "Him that had the power of death,... and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14, 15). Well, it is He who comes to relieve the sorrow and desolation of this scene at Nain. His word is, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up.... And He delivered him to his mother."

Let us look now at the other scene. The Lord's fame had gone abroad. The "rumor of Him went forth throughout all Judea." And in verse 36 we find Him a guest in a Pharisee's house. He is now revealed as the Savior. In this day we hear a great deal about salvation, but I want more than salvation; and I have more; I have a Savior!

What is the difference? you may ask. Why this-even that I have the Person who wrought the salvation. Many a one who is not yet sure of the forgiveness of sins is more devoted than some who say they are. One is theoretically right but practically wrong; the other is practically right but theoretically wrong. Not one of the apostles, before the death of Christ, would speak with assurance of the forgiveness of sins; and yet how devoted they were. And why? They had got the

Person.

It is the Lord's Person that is left out in the preaching of this day, while His work is proclaimed. If any sovereign of a country gave himself for me, would it not be far above any benefit he could confer?

Well, in Christ I have got the blessed One Himself-not salvation only, but a Savior. Simeon had the Savior in his arms (Luke 2). Nothing really satisfies the heart but a knowledge of the Person who has conferred the benefit. It is this that gives rest to the soul -security. I have love itself, the whole of His heart; and my necessity becomes the opportunity for the display of the love. Love is not exhausted by giving expression to itself, and GOD'S love is not happy till it has removed every hindrance to the expression of itself, and met my every need. Then only can it fully enjoy itself. The woman who touched His garment was made whole, but she had no sense of security till she knew the heart of the One who had healed her-till He made her to know, as it were, "I have done it, and with all My heart." Then she got the knowledge not only of salvation, but of a Savior (Luke 8).

Now it is just this which we get in this scene in the Pharisee's house. The report of the Lord had gone abroad, and this poor woman, when she knows where He is, comes to Him; for she says, I have got a Savior. Then mark! she comes to Him; she is drawn to Him; she was a sinner; she wanted a Savior; she knew that He sat in the Pharisee's house, and she was awakened to the sense of what He was in Himself.

How different was it with the Pharisee! He too had heard the rumor of this wondrous One who had brought in life when there was death, and he invited Him to his house. But mark the reception! Thus it is with many of the religious people of this day; they accord Him a certain reception, but there is no real link to Him. But this woman, who was a sinner, feels the magnitude and gravity of what He has wrought; and it is Himself, the Savior, that is before her mind, though she knows nothing about the extent of the blessing.

The Lord knows all about her history and state; and He says, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much."

Now, this is just what characterizes a true reception of Christ. She has found out that He is the Savior; and how does she come to Him? Prepared to make the most of Him. She can do nothing else; she is taken up with the Person of the Lord; she is indifferent to the sneers of the Pharisees, and undeterred by her own wretched condition; she thinks only of making much of this blessed One. She was very ignorant, and as yet knew nothing of the forgiveness of sins; but she was regardless of everyone but Himself. He is her Savior, and her heart is so captivated with Him, that the one purpose of it is to make much of Him, at the expense of herself and everything else. Great love can make no account of self. To make much of its object is its one thought, and there is no effort. She "stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment."

The Pharisee received Him into his house, but had no thought of all these attentions, and in his heart he condemns her; but no matter what might be said of herself, her purpose was fixed; there was One before her to whom her heart was bound.

By an unseen process this woman is led to Christ; she is absorbed with Him. Like Jonathan to David, her soul is knit to Him, and the Lord takes it into account because He knew it was love. It is not a question of the amount done; it is the manner of the attention, the minuteness of it; and He marks the contrast between her and the Pharisee, and says, "Thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment."

You may know the forgiveness of your sins, and yet your heart may not be bound to Him as it should be; and you may never have stepped out of your way for a moment to declare that He is the object of your heart, One so worthy in your eyes that the very thing that would distinguish you, is the very thing you would give to distinguish Him. Ah! if your soul has apprehended what Christ has wrought for you, your whole life will declare it. The order and depth of conversions are proved by the measure of the apprehension souls have of Him.

It is one thing to be saved, to have salvation, and another for your soul to be in immediate contact with your Savior. He has been lifted up as the brazen serpent. Have you looked and lived? If you have looked at Him, you cannot help loving Him; and, like Jonathan, your heart requires of you that its love should find expression without an effort.

We meet with conversions in the present day in which there is little evidence of affection to Him, no sense of who He is, or of His being personally an object to the heart. It is merely a question of happiness, or rather, rest of conscience. People are asked, "Are you happy?" I ask, "Have you found Christ?" And if you have, the distinguishing mark of your possession is that you delight in Him.

Neither do I believe it can be a happy conversion where forgiveness is everything. It is the one who is forgiven much that loves much; and where there is but little devotedness to Christ, there is little sense of what He has done. How often we are allowed to get into doubt, trouble, sorrow, just to bring to our souls the wonderful blessing of finding Christ our Object; when we have found Him, it is easy to give up everything for Him, nay it is pain to keep anything back from Him. Simeon, with the Babe in his arms, says, Everything for me is bound up in this Child; I do not want anything more. Peter forsook all to follow Him. Was it sorrow to him? It would have been far more sorrow if the Lord had forbidden him to do so. The man that was delivered besought Him that he might be with Him (Mark 5:18). Zacchaeus wanted to see Him, and so this poor woman went straight to Him; He is her Savior. Paul says, He "loved me, and gave Himself for me." Can you say, He has done it for me? This is what occupies you with the Person; this is the mark of a true reception of Christ. If you have believed the testimony to His work, your heart ought to be occupied with the One who wrought it.

A devoted heart is only one that has discovered the worth of Christ, and no one can be devoted until he has discovered it. It is not a question of time or attainment; the immediate and necessary consequence of this secret being divulged to your heart is to make it true to the One to whom it is so deeply indebted. Love makes much of its object, and counts it not self-sacrifice. Self drops off when my Savior becomes the one Object of my heart.

## The Scriptures: Divine Authority

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2 Tim. 3:14-17

The Lord Jesus Himself said (speaking of Moses), "If ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?" John 5:47. His words were the words of God; He does not contrast the authority of what He said with that of the written Word, but with the means of communication. God has been pleased to employ that means as a permanent authority. Peter says, "No prophecy of the Scripture..." (2 Pet. 1:20). There have been many prophecies which are not written; they had the authority of God for those persons to whom they were addressed. For the Word speaks more than once of prophets-who must therefore have prophesied without communicating their prophecies to us.

A multitude of things spoken by Jesus Himself are not reproduced in the Scriptures (John 21:25); so that it is not only a question of from whom we have heard a truth, but also of the character of that which has been communicated. When it is for the permanent profit of the people, or of the assembly of God, God caused it to be written in the Scriptures; and it abides for the instruction and the food of His children in all ages....

The Scriptures are the permanent expression of the mind and will of God furnished as such with His authority. They are the expression of His thoughts. They edify, they are profitable, but this is not all-they are inspired....

They teach, they judge the heart, they correct, they discipline according to righteousness, in order that the man of God may be perfect; that is, thoroughly instructed in the will of God, his mind formed after that will and completely furnished for every good work. The power for performing these comes from the actings of the Spirit. Safeguard from error, wisdom unto salvation, flow from the Scriptures; they are capable of supplying them....

Does this perfect and supreme authority of the Scriptures set aside ministry? By no means; it is the foundation of the ministry of the Word. One is a minister of the Word; one proclaims the Word - resting on the written Word which is the authority for all, and the warrant for all that a minister says, and imparting to his words the authority of God over the conscience of those whom he teaches or exhorts.... That which the Word says silences all opposition in the heart or mind of the believer. It was thus that the Lord answered Satan, and Satan himself was reduced to silence (Luke 4:1-13). He who does not submit to the words of God thereby shows himself to be a rebel against God.... The Old Testament left untold the history of Christ, the mission of the Holy Ghost, the formation of the assembly, because these facts being not yet accomplished could not be the subject of its historical and doctrinal instructions; and the assembly was not even the subject of prophecy. But all is now complete, as Paul tells us that he was a minister of the assembly to complete the Word of God (Col. 1:25). The subjects of revelation were then completed. God's Word speaks of grace as well as truth. It speaks of God's grace and love, who gave His only begotten Son that sinners like you and me might be with Him, know Him-deeply, intimately, truly know Him-and enjoy Him

forever, and enjoy Him now, that the conscience perfectly purged might be in joy in His presence, without a cloud, without a reproach, without a fear. And to be these in His love, in such a way, is perfect joy. The written Word will tell you the truth concerning yourself; but it will tell you the truth of a God of love, while unfolding the wisdom of His counsels....

Let me add, to my reader, that by far the best means of assuring himself of the truth and authority of the Word, is to read the Word itself.

## Jacob Was Left Alone: Jacob Have I Loved

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Genesis 32:24-32

In tracing the history of Jacob, and in contemplating his natural character, we are again and again reminded of the grace expressed in those words, "Jacob have I loved." The question why God should love such a one, can only receive for an answer the boundless and sovereign grace of Him who sets His love upon objects possessing nothing within them; and who calls things that be not, as though they were; "that no flesh should glory in His presence." Jacob's natural character was most unamiable; his name indeed was at once the effusion of what he was, "a supplanter." He commenced his course in the development of this, his disposition; and until thoroughly crushed, as in these verses, he pursued a course of the merest bargain-making.

On leaving his father's house, Jacob makes a bargain with God. "If God," says he, "will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee." Gen. 28:20-22. Here we find him making a bargain with God Himself, the full evidence of what his real character was. Then again, mark him during the period of his sojourn with Laban; see there what plans, what deep-laid schemes to promote his own ends. How plainly it is seen that self was the grand object before his mind, in all that he put his hand to. So it is in the course of this thirty-second chapter. He is deeply engaged in plans to turn away the dreaded wrath of his more manly, though badly treated, brother Esau.

But there was one circumstance with regard to Jacob in this chapter which deserves attention. He is seen laboring under the painful effects of a bad conscience with regard to his brother; he knew that he had acted toward him in a way calculated to call out his anger and revenge, and he is therefore ill at ease at the prospect of meeting him. But God had a controversy with Jacob. He had to lead him through a course of education that was to teach him that "all flesh is as grass." Jacob thought only of appeasing Esau by a present. True, he turns aside in this chapter to offer up confession, and prays; y e t, notwithstanding it is manifest that his heart was engaged about his own arrangements for appeasing Esau, more than anything else. But God was looking at him in all this, and preparing a salutary course of discipline for him, in order to teach him what was in his heart. For this purpose was Jacob left alone. All his company, arranged according to his own plan, had passed on, and he himself was awaiting this much-dreaded interview with Esau.

There is peculiar force in the words, "Jacob was left 'alone.'" Thus is it with all who have been trained in the school of God; they have been brought in the stillness and solitude of the divine presence, there to view themselves and their ways where alone they can be rightly viewed. Had Jacob continued amid the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen, he could not by any means have enjoyed the same calm and sober view of himself and his past course as he was led to in the secret of the presence of God. "Jacob was left alone." Oh, there is no part of a man's history so important as when he is thus led into the solitude of the divine presence! It is there he

understands things which were before dark and inexplicable. There he can judge of men and things in their proper light; there too he can judge of self, and see its proper nothingness and vileness.

In Psalm 73 we find a soul looking abroad upon the world and reasoning upon what he saw there-reasoning to such an extent that he was almost tempted to say it was vain to serve the Lord at all.

In Psalm 77 we find a soul looking inward, and reasoning upon what he saw within - reasoning to such an extent as to question the continuance of God's grace. What was the remedy in both cases? "The sanctuary." I went into the sanctuary of God; and then understood. So it was with Jacob; his "sanctuary" was the lonely spot where God wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. The careful reader will find that this passage, when taken as it stands, affords no foundation for the popular idea, namely, that it furnishes an instance of Jacob's power in prayer. That no such idea is set forth will at once appear from the expression, "There wrestled a man with him"; it is not said that he wrestled with the man, which would give an entirely different aspect to the scene. I believe that so far from its proving Jacob's power in prayer, it rather proves the tenacity with which he grasped the flesh and the things thereof. So firmly indeed did he hold fast his "confidence in the flesh," that all night long the struggle continued. The "supplanter" held out, nor did he yield until the very seat of his strength was touched, and he was made to feel indeed that "all flesh is as grass." Such is the obvious teaching of this very important scripture. Instead of Jacob's patience and perseverance in prayer, we have God's patience in dealing with one who needed to have his "old man" crushed to the very dust ere God could make anything of him.

This momentous scene gives us the grand turning point in the life of this extraordinary man. We are here reminded of Saul's conversion: Jacob, with the hollow of his thigh touched, like Saul, prostrate in the dust between Jerusalem and Damascus. We observe on the one hand the broken fragments of a "supplanter," and the elements of God's mighty "prince"; on the other hand, the fragments of a persecutor and injurious one, and the elements of God's mighty Apostle. And we may ask, What means the expression, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me"? What but the utterance of one that had made the wondrous discovery that he was "without strength"? Jacob was let into the secret of human weakness, and therefore felt that it must be a divine struggle or nothing. He thinks no more of his goodly plans and arrangements, his presents to appease "my lord Esau." No; he stands withered and trembling before the One who had humbled him, and cries, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." Surely this is the gate of heaven! Jacob had, as it were, arrived at the end of flesh; it is no longer "me," but "Thee." He clings to Christ as the poor shipwrecked mariner clings to the rock. All self-confidence is gone, all expectations from self and the world blasted, every chain of self-devised security dissolved like a morning cloud before the beams of the sun. All his bargains availed him nothing at all. How miserable must everything that ever he did have seemed to him; yes, even his offer to give a tenth to God, when thus laid in the dust of self-abasement and conscious weakness!

The mighty Wrestler says, "Let Me go, for the day breaketh." What a striking expression, "Let Me go." He was determined to make manifest the condition of Jacob's soul. If Jacob had without delay let go his grasp, he would have proved that his heart was still wrapped up in his worldly plans and schemes; but on the contrary, when he cries out, "I will not let Thee go," he declares that God

alone was the spring of all his soul's joy and strength; he in effect says, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee" (Psalm 73:25); or with the twelve in the sixth chapter of John, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

"I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." Such will ever be the happy effect of a thorough acquaintance with our own hearts. Jacob now gets his name changed; he must not be any longer known as the "supplanter," but as a "prince," having power with God through the very knowledge of his weakness; for "when I am weak, then am I strong." We are never so strong. Peter never displayed selves weak, even as "water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again" (2 Sam. 14:14); and, on the contrary, we are never so weak as when we fancy ourselves strong. Peter never displayed more lamentable weakness than when he fancied he had uncommon strength; had he felt somewhat of Jacob's happy condition when his sinew shrank, he would have thought, acted, and spoken differently.

We should not turn from this passage without at least seeing distinctly what it was that gave Jacob "power with God and with men"; it was the full consciousness of his own nothingness. Who that hearkens for a moment to those precious words, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me," and beholds the humbled patriarch clinging closely to the One who had broken him down, can fail to see that Jacob's "power" consisted in his "weakness"? There is nothing here of Jacob's power in prayer. No; all we see is, first, Jacob's strength in the flesh, and God weakening him; then, his weakness in the flesh, and God strengthening him. This is indeed the great moral of the scene. Jacob was satisfied to go halting on his journey, seeing he had learned the secret of true strength. He was able to move along, using the words afterward uttered by the Apostle Paul, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9). Yes, "my infirmities" on the one hand, and "the power of Christ" on the other, will be found to constitute the sum total of the life of a Christian.

## The White Stone and the New Name

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Rev. 2:17

The "white stone" seems to mark the individual approbation of Christ; the "new name," peculiar intercourse between Christ and the individual, different from that which all shall share alike - different from the public joy. There is a public joy. All saints will together enjoy the comforts of Christ's love, will enter into "the joy of their Lord," and with one heart and one voice sound His praise.

There will also be joy in seeing the fruit of our labors; as it is said, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" 1 Thess. 2:19. And again, there will be another joy in seeing the company of the redeemed, all according to Christ's heart, in holiness and glory. But besides this public joy, there will be Christ's peculiar, private, individual recognition and approval - the "white stone," and the "new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

Our souls must value this personal approval of Christ, as well as think of the public approval. The latter will be great blessedness; but there is no peculiar affection in it, nothing that stamps peculiar love on the individual. Glory will be common to all, but glory is not affection.

This "new name" is a different thing; it is the proof of Christ's value for a person who has been faithful in difficult and trying circumstances, for one who has acted on the knowledge of His mind, and overcome through communion with Him. There is the public joy and approval in various ways, and the manifestation of our being loved by the Father as Jesus is loved. But this is not all that is given for our encouragement in individual conduct through trial, failure, and difficulty; there is also this special, private joy of love.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Practical Righteousness

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In the first of this series of papers we spoke about our standing in righteousness and sanctification before God. We saw that, by the work of Christ, as brought out in Romans, we are made the righteousness of God, so that we are justified from all things through our Saviour's death and resurrection. We also saw that in Hebrews the same work is presented as perfectly sanctifying us and fitting us to worship within the sanctuary in the presence of a thrice holy God. We must, however, carefully remember, as we noticed at the time, that in both cases we were only considering our standing before God, and not our state. And having thus briefly considered the former, and subsequently spoken of the new life within us, we may now look at the two ways in which that life flows out of us, leading us to practical righteousness, and holiness, or sanctification.

### Two Righteousnesses

If we look at Romans 3 we find the righteousness of God is the constant theme; but if we look at chapter 6, although we find righteousness continually spoken of, it is never the righteousness of God; the reason of the difference being that there are two righteousnesses perfectly distinct. One is God's, the other is the believer's; and while in chapter 3 the former is the theme (connected with our standing), in chapter 6 it is the latter (connected with our state). For an instance of these two, let us look for a moment at the first person who is clearly said to have both. We are repeatedly told that Noah was a just and righteous man, and also that he was a preacher of righteousness. We know that he was not a preacher of what we call "the gospel," but that his preaching and practice were characterized by righteousness of walk and ways. This is analogous to the righteousness of Romans 6.

### Noah Had One and Was Heir to the Other

If we now turn, however, to Hebrews 11, we there find that Noah "became heir of righteousness which is by faith." Mark the language well. In the first place, he is an heir to it, which implies two things—the one, that he has not got it yet, and the other, that he has not worked for it—no man can work for what he inherits. Second, this righteousness is by faith. Turning to Romans 3:22 (so perfectly does Scripture explain itself), we see clearly that the righteousness which is by faith is the righteousness of God. We thus see that Noah lived in one righteousness, and became heir to another. The reason he was only heir to the righteousness of God is explained in Romans 3:25, where it is shown that God could not declare His righteousness, in passing over Noah's sins, until an adequate propitiation had been made by the death of Christ.

By considering this case, we see that the righteousness in which Noah stands (or will stand) before the throne, is the righteousness of God, as seen in the perfect work of Christ; whereas that in which he lived and glorified God on earth was his own practical righteousness.

In Ephesians 4:24 we read that the new man is created anew in "righteousness and true holiness," or practical RIGHTEOUSNESS and SANCTIFICATION. Walking in newness of life (Rom. 6:4) includes these two things (see Luke 1:75), as is seen in the end of Romans 6, when both are

connected as the result of a godly walk (Rom. 6:19,22).

### Practical Righteousness

Taking PRACTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS first, we will briefly consider what Scripture says on the subject. In 2 Corinthians 6:14 we notice this remarkable fact: that it is the first thing mentioned in separation from evil. It is also the very first thing that we are called to follow after (1 Tim. 6:11 and also again in 2 Tim. 2:22). Thus on three separate occasions it occupies the first place. Nay, more, it is the first of the three things of which the kingdom of God is said to consist practically (Rom. 14:17). In 2 Corinthians 6:7, it is generally described as the Christian's armor (consider this expression well), in Ephesians 6 as the breastplate, or that which protects the vital parts. Practically, it is said to give a good conscience (1 Pet. 3:16), which is also of all importance. God's eyes are over the practically righteous man (1 Pet. 3:12), and that His ears are open to his cry, is seen not only here, but also in James 5:16, where the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Not in one of the passages that have been alluded to does the word "righteous" refer to our standing before God (or what is common to all Christians, and what each possesses in full perfection), but to the individual acts and character in which none is perfect, and no two are alike. Turning to Ephesians 5 we find further that this righteousness is the fruit of the light (Eph. 5:9, according to the best versions), an important point to which we shall refer again. In 1 John 3:7, we find that Christ only, is the standard of it, and in verse 10 that it is a proof of the new birth.

### Righteousness in Daily Life

Such then is a brief review of the way in which Scripture speaks of this quality of the new nature. In what then does it consist? In perfect uprightness of walk and ways. How is it obtained? By living daily in the light of God's presence. It is the fruit of light.

Do you suppose for one moment, that the man who walks to his daily business, and transacts it before God, can stoop to any of the thousand tricks of trade that pervade every calling — practices that are either commonly winked at or openly allowed, but which are not according to God's standard of right? Impossible. He must do one of two things: he must forego all such ways and buy and sell and transact his business according to the perfect light in which he stands as a Christian, or, turning his back on the light and shutting his eyes to it, he must descend to the level of this world's morality, and allow many a thing to pass in his business life that he would shrink from allowing privately. Alas, how few are found in all things to carry out the former practically! How many dwarf their souls, check their spiritual life, and grieve their Lord by slipping into the latter. O beloved reader, weigh for a moment your daily life as you read these pages; consider how it will all look before the judgment seat of Christ. Think not, because it may be you are not actively employed in business, that this has no voice for you. All have their temptations to unrighteousness, and often in most insidious forms. Live as Paul did, in the light of God's presence and the nearing eternity, and do not allow yourself to stoop to any action, however advantageous to yourself, however commended and advised by false friends, which will not bear that light.

### Be Righteous in All Things

It is fearful to think how many of us live in daily unrighteousness in what we call little things, and then venture to approach God in prayer, and the Lord's table at His supper, without confession. His ears are open to the cry of the righteous. Do not forget that. Nothing so arrests the attention of

the world, and makes it believe in the reality of Christianity, as righteous acts that are to one's own disadvantage. For there is no disguising the truth, "You cannot serve God and mammon." You cannot fear God and be heaping up riches for yourself. You may lose money, and many a seemingly good opening, if you walk strictly in practical righteousness; but in eternity I need not say who will be the gainer. If you enjoy and trust in "the grace of God" that has brought you salvation, remember and practice its lessons, and see that you live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Search out all the wonderful Old Testament promises made to the righteous man; and remember that you are not heir to these even spiritually, save as you walk in practical righteousness. Happy indeed is the man who, standing before God in the righteousness which He has provided, walks before his fellow man in that practical rectitude which can alone adorn the grace that has picked him up.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Practical Sanctification

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In our last paper we spoke on the practical righteousness of the Christian—the state which answers to his standing in the righteousness of God through the finished work of Christ. We trust the subject has been made sufficiently clear to prevent any thinking that the one can in any way be substituted for the other, or that any Christian can do without both. None can be saved by practical righteousness alone; they must be made the righteousness of God in Christ. On the other hand, none can take their stand on the fact that, divine righteousness being now revealed, practical righteousness is of but little value for the Christian. This would, indeed, be a gross abuse of grace, and yet is there not some danger of our deceitful hearts becoming somewhat lax as to this? We fear there is, and that there is therefore great need in insisting on a sober, **RIGHTEOUS**, and godly walk, even among many who are well versed (in head at least) in divine truth; for a right standing can never excuse a wrong state.

### Two Sanctifications

Turning now to sanctification, it will be seen that it also has a double aspect, connected, like righteousness, the one with our standing, the other with our state. Sanctification and holiness are the same words, and mean “set apart for God.” In one or two passages only, however, does the word mean merely “set apart” without reference to what we understand as holiness.

Every believer is not only justified, but sanctified, in Christ Jesus; that is, set apart for God by the work of Christ. We have already briefly touched on this in the first paper, and therefore do no more than allude to it now, as our present theme is not that first action of the grace of God which takes us like a stone out of the quarry, and sets us apart for His holy temple, and moreover gives us a new nature which is not only absolutely righteous, but absolutely holy; but is rather the question as to how that stone is cut and polished so as practically to answer to the glorious position it is one day to have; or, in other words, how this new life shows itself, not toward man in practical righteousness, but toward God in practical holiness of walk.

### The Work IN Me is Not the Work FOR Me

Great confusion exists between practical sanctification and divine righteousness—the former, the progressive work of the Spirit of God in me; the latter, the finished work of Christ for me. As a matter of fact, sanctification of the Spirit (complete, not progressive) takes place together with belief of the truth (2 Thess. 2:13) which is salvation; and practical sanctification is always a result of this, never a means to it. In short, I must have this new and holy life before I can practically live it day by day.

Justified and sanctified perfectly when I believe, I have subsequently to walk in practical righteousness and holiness. But salvation must come first.

### Practical Sanctification Twofold

Practical sanctification, the fruit of the new life, shows itself mainly in two ways—obedience and holiness—obedience according to the obedience of Christ, holy because the Father is (1 Pet. 1). Paul's sanctification began the moment that another will took the place of his own. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" From that instant a new power moved him, a new life energized him, a new object possessed him, a new person controlled him, the love of Christ constrained him.

#### Obedient as Christ

We are sanctified unto obedience. We have already seen that obedience is not for salvation (we have the blood of Christ for that), but is one of the first fruits of the new nature, and not only "unto obedience," but "unto the obedience of Christ." "Lo, I come to do Thy will," is the sentence that explains every varied action of His perfect life. The divine will that sent Him into this world was the sole cause of every word and work; and when it was accomplished, Jesus returned whence He came.

See now the force of the words, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." We are sent into this world by Christ. But, you say, "I was in it before." Yes, but you have died to it in Christ, and are now by Him sent back into it solely and expressly for His use, to obey Him as He obeyed God. Dear friends, what do you know about all this? Anything or nothing?

O that God would rouse us up to judge ourselves honestly in this matter, and that Christ would make His love a sufficient power in our hearts to lead us to live really for Him.

But how is practical sanctification or holiness obtained? First, by looking at and copying Christ—"by faith which is in Him"—certainly not by looking at ourselves. Moses' face did not shine because he looked at it, but because he looked at God; and second, by becoming servants to God (Rom. 6:22), yielding our bodies to Him wholly, which is our reasonable service, that thus He alone may work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

#### Holy as the Father

The second part of sanctification is holiness. This is certainly akin to purity (1 John 3:3) and is only perfected when inward as well as outward (2 Cor. 7:1). Without it we cannot see God, for it becomes His house (both earthly and heavenly) forever (Psalm 93:5; 1 Cor. 3:17). We are to be holy in all manner of conversation, which is not in word only (see 1 Tim. 4:12, where they are distinguished), but in deed also. It includes a cleansing from all pollution of the flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1), which embraces far more than that we call gross sins.

How this is to be attained, we have already seen. It is step by step, bit by bit. In one sense we have it already, for we have Christ in us; hence we need not despair, the good qualities are all there, and we have to bring them out. On the other hand, it is this that causes our responsibility; if they are all there, then why are we not more holy? Why so worldly?

#### Two Persecutions

Now with regard to persecutions, they are connected both with righteousness and holiness. We get the former in Matthew 5:10 and 1 Peter 3, and the latter in Matthew 5:11 and 1 Peter 4. We are persecuted for righteousness' sake, because the world is unrighteous and does not understand

the Christian's high standard of right and wrong; but for following

Christ and bearing His image in obedience and holiness in the world that crucified Him, we are also persecuted and scorned. To such the Apostle says, "Happy are ye"! and calls on us to rejoice. Living godly includes both a righteous and sanctified (not sanctimonious) walk, and such shall suffer persecution; that is to say, not those who merely are alive in Christ, but those who "live godly." Under which head are we found? May the Lord help us to live Christ, and not merely to be alive!

## The Path of Wisdom

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There is nothing so unreasonable in the world as the walk set before us in the Word -nothing which so exposes us to the hatred of its prince. If then God be not with us, there is nothing so foolish, so mad; if He be with us, nothing so wise. If we have not the strength of His presence, we dare not take heed to His Word; and, in that case, we must beware of going out to war. But having the courage, which the almighty power of God inspired by His promise, we may lay hold of the good and precious Word of our God; its severest precepts are only wisdom to detect the flesh, and instruction how to mortify it, so that it may neither blind nor shackle us.

The most difficult path, that which leads to the sharpest conflict, is but the road to victory and repose, causing us to increase in the knowledge of God. It is the road in which we are in communion with God, with Him who is the source of all joy; it is the earnest and the foretaste of eternal and infinite happiness.

## Abraham and Lot

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Gen. 18; 19

The destruction of Sodom is a figure of what will happen when the Lord comes. They carried themselves as if the world was to last forever, Such is still the great sin of the world, and what marks the incredulity of the heart (2 Pet. 3). Men make all possible arrangements for the future; and yet, since the death of Jesus, the world cannot count upon a single day. God is waiting till the iniquity of the earth reaches its height, till it is all out and open, before He exercises judgment. The world takes advantage of this. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Eccles. 8:11. It is the principle and the practice of infidelity all through; it was the history of the antediluvians and of the doomed cities of the plain (Luke 17:26-30).

The Church, the Christian, has properly but one object- Christ in heaven - and therefore is called to be in heart separated from everything here below. Abraham, as far as he was a stranger and pilgrim on earth, is the type of the faithful (Heb. 11). He saw the promises afar off, was persuaded of them, embraced them, and confessed himself a pilgrim here below. Of such God is not ashamed to be called their God. He would be ashamed to own as His people those who make this world their fatherland. "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." Abraham had only a burying-place in the land of Canaan. As he followed God in the main faithfully, God took a particular interest in him; Abraham is called "the friend of God." There is no uncertainty in his movements. He quits Ur of the Chaldees; he and his leave Haran subsequently. "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

On the other hand, Lot's wife ("remember Lot's wife") left Sodom in bodily presence, not in heart. Her judgment is recalled to mind by the Savior. Which of the two does Christendom resemble? His people are not in a state which God can own, if they do not say such things as Abraham, if they say them not in deed and truth.

God communicates His thoughts to Abraham; and Abraham responds, in his measure, to such grace on God's part. He is not here, as in Genesis 15, asking something for himself; he intercedes for others. There is no lovelier scene than the opening one of Genesis 18, upon which the infidel spews his wretched materialism, and proves his moral incapacity to appreciate God's gracious condescension to His "friend." This did not Abraham. Accustomed to the ways and words of God, he quickly feels the divine presence; yet he beautifully waits till the Lord is pleased to discover Himself, acting all the while with a touching and instinctive deference.

Indeed, such intimacy was not only most suitable to the infancy of man in the revealed blessings of God, but it was the fitting prelude and preparation for Abraham to learn the high privileges in store for him; above all, for that precious communion which rejoices in another's blessings and

sympathizes in another's sorrows. God therein assured Abraham, in such a way that he could not possibly mistake, of His interest, and His confidence in him. "And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in Him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." Gen. 18:17-19. Abraham enjoys the closest intercourse with Jehovah, who reveals His counsels to him. Not only is he told afresh, with fuller light, of the promised seed, but he learns from God the imminent destruction of Sodom.

Now God has displayed other, richer, and more spiritual means of assuring our hearts of His love; but nothing could be more appropriate than His dealings with Abraham. He appears to him in the plains of Mamre. He comes before the tent door, enters, converses, and walks with him. He wanted to confirm the heart of Abraham practically; and He succeeded, we need scarcely add. The effect appears in pleading before Jehovah. For us, through infinite grace, He has provided something better still. He has come and manifested Himself in Jesus. And we have the certainty that we have, in the Man Christ Jesus, One who ever intercedes for us; yea, we see ourselves in Christ before God; and the Holy Ghost gives us an intimacy with God, which even Abraham did not and could not enjoy, because the basis which renders it possible was not yet laid. It is too likely that we have made little progress in using this nearness to God; but such is our standing privilege; though it be not a palpable, visible thing, the reality of this intimacy is not the less great. The counsels of God are revealed to us in His Word, and the

Holy Spirit is given to us that we may know and enjoy them. What we fail in is the simple and strong faith of Abraham.

Abraham does not dread the presence of Jehovah; such fear is the effect of sin. If we have seen the glory of God in Jesus, the divine presence becomes sweet to us; we find there full strength and confidence. To know Him is indeed life eternal, and His presence makes us happy with the deepest possible joy.

When a soul is in this confidence, God shares His thoughts, as here He treats Abraham as a friend, telling him even what concerns the world. With a friend we do not speak of mere business, but of what we have on our heart. Intercession is the fruit of the divine revelation and fellowship. Abraham, separate from the world, and with the Lord upon the mountain, communes of the judgment which was about to fall upon the world below. The Church is, in a still more positive and complete way, separated to God from the world, and beloved of Him. God confides to the Church His thoughts—not merely what He means to do for her, but what is hanging over the world. The Son of man is going to judge the quick as well as the dead, and He has told us of it.

God shows the world the utmost patience. He lingers; He "is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." If His love be displayed to us in ways beyond and more spiritual than that which the elders tasted, His forbearance to the guilty world is also marked. If a man had to govern the world, he could not endure its ingratitude and iniquity for an hour. God brings His friend, in some degree, to enter into His own long-suffering, and even reproduces it, as it were, in him. The angels, in the guise of men, turn their faces and go toward Sodom; but Abram

stood yet before Jehovah. Such also is the portion of the Church - to stand before the Lord and learn His purposes and thoughts. She is familiar with His love for her, and has the consciousness of it. She intercedes for the world, in the hope that there is still room for grace. The heart then leaves circumstances to draw upon the love that is in God. If we cannot intercede for a person, the sin is stronger than our faith. When we are practically near God, the Spirit which sees the sin intercedes for the sinner.

Abraham is silent (vv. 32, 33), "And the LORD went His way as soon as He had left communing with Abraham"; but He did more than Abraham asked. He withdrew Lot from Sodom and saved him. Nothing could be done till Lot was safe (Gen. 19:16, 22). God's eye was upon him. What blessedness to be able to reckon on His love for the righteous!

Abraham persevered in intercession, though he stopped short of the fullness of God's mercy. We know not as God knows all He is going to do. Nevertheless, we may intercede with faith. Abraham grows bold as he goes on; his confidence increases. In result he knows God much better than before. The peace of God kept his heart. The fruit of it all is seen in Gen. 19:27, 28, where Abraham gets up early in the morning, to the place where he stood before the Lord, and looks down on the plain, now smoking like a furnace. From far above he sees the effects of the utter destruction. Such is our position if we are heavenly. It is thus that we see the judgment of the wicked.

On the other side, Lot and his daughters had been spared - saved so as by fire - not to their honor, but through the faithful care and tender mercy of the Lord. It was his unfaithfulness, indeed, that had placed Lot there; it was his unmortified desire after the good things of the world. "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD.... Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan" (Gen. 13); then he pitched his tent toward Sodom. Next he dwelt in Sodom (Gen. 14). On the eve of its downfall, "Lot sat in the gate of Sodom," in the place of honor there (Gen. 19:1), sad example of the earthly minded believer in the path of declension! Such men dishonor the Lord, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

## 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!

## Redemption by Blood: God's Way of Escape

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Redemption is directly taught in God's Word for the first time in the story of the Passover. God would have the bondsmen of Egypt His freedmen. Rest had been promised them, the tidings of the pleasant land had been brought them, but not one step toward liberty could the bondsmen take until they were redeemed by the blood of the paschal lamb.

Love wafted the gentle tidings of the good land to the fainting slaves, but the stern fact remained unmoved—they were in the land of judgment. Justice had drawn its sword, it exacted its claims against them, and from justice they could not escape.

But the judgment which fell upon Egypt was forestalled for Israel; the blood outside their houses forbade the destroyer entering within. The blood upon lintel and doorposts uttered its voice, and the angel passed over.

There was no escape save by blood. Mercy retired from the land, chased away by the destroyer. Wherever the blood was not, there fell the sword.

Whatever house bore not the evidence of having already been under the sentence of judgment, which had not appropriated the blood to its own door, lay under the wrath. Honor, titles, personal worth, were no shield; the sword clave through them all and smote the first-born dead - "From the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon," all perished. The very customs of Egypt augmented the horrors of that night, for at death's entry the living fled from their houses - the women with breasts bared and hair loose, the men wildly crying -all hurrying hither and thither till every street and village in the land echoed with their terror. "There was a great cry in Egypt: for there was not a house where there was not one dead."

When the day of judgment comes, who shall be able to stand? Who? The great, the mighty, the noble of the earth? Who? The well-disposed, the upright, the moral? They, and they only, who are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Some Israelite might have said, Show me proof that I am saved. O for evidence that I am among God's people!

"The blood shall be to you for a token." There is none other granted. Look not for a sign within your breast; see it in the cross of Christ. Look not at your feelings, but at His shed blood. It would not have been faith but disobedience in Israel to have spent their night in inquiring and looking if the blood marks were upon their houses. "None of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning," God had said. And they sat within and waited for the daybreak. Is that family whose doors are shut, and who assemble in fear and trembling around their paschal lamb, less safe than its neighbors who calmly wait for liberty's coming morn as they keep the feast? Is the first born of the pale, dejected mother less secure than hers whose strong faith in Jehovah already accepts God's freedom? No, it is the blood without the door, not the feelings of them within the house,

wherein the safety lies. Faith obeyed God, took the blood and sprinkled it, and in the redeeming blood was the security.

We once bent over a poor dying man and said, "Friend, you are leaving this world. You will very soon appear before God. How is it about your soul? Where are your sins?" He was too weak to lift a finger, but looked up calmly and whispered, "My sins are under the blood."

The poor man had received the truth in the love of it. He had believed what God says respecting the blood of His Son. He rested in this-that God looks upon the sacrifice of His Son, and not upon the sins of those who put their trust in Him.

## Hungry?

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In the garden of the house where we lived recently, was a row of tall trees. In one of these, some birds built a nest, and in due time hatched out a little family.

It was a great interest to us all to watch them, though the chief thing we could see was a cluster of little heads with big, wide-opened mouths. Soon the mother or father bird would come with some choice morsel, and then what excitement ensued as it was dispensed to the hungry family!

There was never any question as to whether they wanted it or not. They seemed to be always ready with their mouths opened wide - that was their part. The parent birds did the rest, and dropped food into the open mouths of those tiny, helpless creatures.

Is it not somewhat the same with us and the Lord? He is ever faithful to provide us with food in due season, and yet how many Christians seem to be half starved; and why? Isn't it because they have not learned to open their mouths wide to receive the food? There was an earnest, eager desire with the birds, and is it not that which we too often lack? The Lord says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." 1 Pet. 2:2.

The food is ready and waiting. There is no other way to grow, and yet how slow we are to desire it - so slow to open our mouths wide and let the Lord fill them.

I was hearing recently of some of the Lord's dear people who had come together to feed on the Word of God (or perhaps I should say, to be fed with His Word), and they were greatly discouraged and disappointed because some of those whom they were accustomed to have dispense it to them, were not with them; and they felt it hardly worth while to open their mouths. And yet when they did, they found the Lord as faithful as ever, and they came away filled.

Is it not ever so, dear fellow believer, whether alone or together, if we approach that Holy Word with wide open mouths, we will ever come away with them full? The difficulty so often is that we are so "full" already with other things, that there is no room for the Lord to fill us. Most of us have to own it with shame. How little in spiritual things is our "progress... manifest to all" (1 Tim. 4:15; J.N.D. Trans.).

But there was one other thing we noticed about the birds They were always at work early. Very early in the morning those older birds might be seen walking across our lawn, gathering worms. I could not but think of our old proverb, "The early bird gets the worm," and perhaps this may be spiritually applied.

May we each one be found, like Israel of old, out gathering that "manna" before the sun is up, and it is melted!

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16).

## Keep Yourselves in the Love of God

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Extract - "I trust God is keeping you very near Himself, and that He maintains the freshness of His grace and love in your soul. We need to be constantly renewed; without that, spiritual energy does not keep up - they 'shall renew their strength,' it is said, 'as eagles.' And it is not progress in knowledge that affects that, although this is profitable for helping others in the truth. What is of moment is the keeping oneself near God. There love maintains itself and grows - His love in our souls, which finds its activity and comfort in exercising itself toward poor sinners and toward the saints. One seeks the glory of the Lord in them, and their own well-being.

God gives you to enjoy Himself; but God reveals Himself not only as infinite blessedness in Himself, but also in the activities of His love in which He finds His delight. And when His love is shed abroad in our hearts, we enjoy assuredly what He is, but this love is active toward us by His grace.

Activity, unless renewing itself in communion with Him, may be sincere, but will degenerate into routine and into a habit of acting, and is even dangerous; the soul gets far from God without knowing it. But abiding in His love in Jesus, and His word abiding in us, we can count on an answer to the requests we address to Him in our hearts."

## Backsliding in Heart: First Stage of Declension

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Jer. 2; 3, and 4

I have very much laid on my mind, I trust by the Lord, the subject of backsliding. You do not find the word in the New Testament, but you find the thing. And I suppose we have not, any of us, very far to look to find the thing in our own history.

The scriptures referred to at the head of this chapter give a beautiful unfolding of the deep distress it is to the Lord if His people are not near Him. And this is always true as a principle. Ah, beloved, nothing can satisfy the heart of the Lord Jesus but having you and me near Him. And nothing can satisfy our hearts but being near Him, for "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways" (Pro. 14:14). It does not say the backslider outwardly, but the backslider in heart.

How wise is God to say, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Pro. 4:23. Again, as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Pro. 23:7). It is not what I do, or what I say with my lips, but what I really am, what my heart is, what the affections are occupied with. I believe we are in a day when intelligence goes very far ahead of the heart. I shall not be speaking too plainly if I say, The secret of the want of a great deal of spiritual power is pride of heart. Hence I would say before God, Let us beware of backsliding in heart. God must have reality.

Now look at these three exceedingly interesting chapters of Jeremiah. They show you that in days gone by God had a people whom He loved with a very deep love - a love He was continually expressing. They show also the beautiful way in which He seeks to win His people back to Himself, after they have wandered. Nothing could be more touching. Look at the deep toned affection of God for His people! In the people themselves too we may see the picture of what our own hearts are, and the only way, when they have wandered from God, of getting back.

Now God's way of dealing with a backslider is surely not our way. God's way is beautiful and perfect. There had been a great outward revival in the days of Josiah the king (2 Chron. 34; 35). But God looked underneath, and He saw that it was only feigned. "Judah hath not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD" (Jer. 3:10). The revival was not genuine. And therefore Jeremiah is selected to bring this word to them!

"Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of His increase; all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD."

Eight hundred and fifty years had rolled by since that people, in obedience to God, had turned their backs upon Egypt and its fleshpots, and had come out to the Lord. They were holiness to the Lord then. They were then a separate people for the Lord. I love to see the affection of soul, and the energy, and fervency, that mark a young convert.

Let us ask our hearts if we are as fresh as in the first weeks we were saved. Oh, you say, I know a great deal more now. Is the simple love of Jesus, the delight in Jesus, the practical holiness, and the desire to be anything and everything for Him the same as it was then? You may have forgotten that early thrill of affection, but God has not forgotten. He says, I have not forgotten their early love. "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me." Where? Into a wilderness. When they crossed the Red Sea they were in a desert. What was in the desert? Only two things. What were they? God and the sand, nothing else.

I think the second chapter of Jeremiah is very like the second chapter of Revelation. The Lord there says to the church of Ephesus, "I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." Rev. 2:4; J.N.D. Trans. It is not lost thy first love. I do not think that is a scriptural thought. It is "left thy first love." Something has come in, says that blessed Lover in Revelation 2, that has eclipsed Me, and all your affection for Me. Ah, beloved, where are our souls as regards Christ? Well, if conscience smites, and the heart is sensible of a bit of declension, it is a grand thing for us to know it.

The great sin of Israel was that decay existed, but they knew it not. God had already, years before, addressed them by another prophet, Hosea, saying, "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not." Hos. 7:8, 9. When a man sees gray hairs in his head, he is conscious that old age in that sense is setting in. Israel (the ten tribes, called in the prophets "Ephraim") had already grievously declined, but knew it not.

Let me implore you, especially the young believers, to beware of backsliding. The first movement toward it is that something comes in to intercept the enjoyment of the love of Christ, and your heart loses its sweet apprehension of His love and grace. You have forgotten Him, but He has not forgotten you. I think Paul brings the same thought before us when he says, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Cor. 11:2, 3. It was a great exercise to the beloved Apostle that day, lest anything should come in to make Christ less precious to them. To the Thessalonians also he says, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." 1 Thess. 3:8. You turn back, says Paul, and I shall die of grief.

Are these lines in the hand of a backslider? Do I hear you saying, I have gotten away from the Lord? It is good that you know it. We do not always know it. The Lord knows it, and ever seeks to bring us back. To effect this, does He chide? No. He may have to rebuke and chasten. But that which restores is His Word. I do not forget your devotedness; you may have forgotten it, but it was sweet to Me, says the Lord, so I have never forgotten the hour when you came to Me, and I was everything to you. By a word like this He sought to recover Israel; and, beloved friend, it is the same with the Lord today! He is yesterday, and today, and forever the same.

When Israel emerged from Egypt they had a deep sense of the Lord's care and protection. "Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Neither said they, Where is the Loan that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed

through, and where no man dwelt." Jer. 2:5, 6. What a touching plea for the Lord to bring before His people. Had He altered since that day? Ah, no; there was no change on His side. They had lost His presence, and they were insensible of the loss. "Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt?" They had alike forgotten the grace of the Lord, and the kindness of the Lord.

Now comes God's arraignment. "And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled My land, and made Mine heritage an abomination." v. 7. He had brought them out of Egypt, and He had brought them into Canaan; but somehow or other they had lost all touch with God, and had fallen into gross idolatry. "The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit." v. 8. Such was the low state in Israel. Priests, pastors, prophets, and people had alike forgotten the Lord. We have here full-blown backsliding in heart. There are many believers in such a state today, alas!

If the joy of the love of Christ has passed away, my dear friend, you are very miserable in your soul. Things are in a very, very sad state. Yes, but stop. The Lord wants you to be right, just as you will see He sought to put Israel right.

And now He says, "Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." vv. 9-13. This is His plea. Did ever the nations - the heathen - do what My people have done? My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. You will find all through Scripture that that which profits is the great point. If there has been departure from God, has it profited you?

The things of time and sense, the business, the duties, and even the cares of life we have to face, if they eclipse Christ, is it profitable? Ask your own heart. It will say, No! emphatically. That is a striking word, "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." Psalm 106:15. Do you want the world? You shall have it. God never demands devotedness. The two going to Emmaus had to constrain the Lord to come in. Christ will never force His company. They constrained Him to come in, "and He went in to tarry with them" (see Luke 24:13-32). True, the love of Christ constrains us first, but He loves to be valued.

My friend, there is no food for the soul, no peace, no rest, away from Christ. You may have gotten on in the world; you may have secured the things you put out your hands for; but what have you paid for them? What about the Lord, the love of the Lord, the company and fellowship of Christ, and the sense in your soul, I am just in this scene for Him. If you have lost that, there is no profit. Is it not an extraordinary thing that God calls on the heavens to gaze on a backsliding people (v. 12)? "They have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters." Ah, what a lovely title, "fountain of living waters." What a wonderful thing to be in touch with the fountain of living waters. How God brings Himself before us in all the freshness of His grace, and the living energy of His love. "And hewed

them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (v. 13). Broken cisterns! It does not matter whether they be big or small. The point is, if my object be not Christ, it is a broken cistern. Alas! how many saints today are trying to drink at broken cisterns. A broken cistern cannot hold water. Anything short of Christ will fail to satisfy my heart.

This indictment is followed by a touching query. "Is Israel a servant? is he a home-born slave? why is he spoiled?" v. 14. How can this be? Out of Egypt have I called My Son, was God's word long before (Exod. 4:23; Hos. 11:1). He had been a slave, and God had set him free. "Why is he spoiled?" Is the one who is free, and in the sense of God's love, is that soul to go back to bondage?

It was so in Israel's case, the trouble and sorrow came on them in retributive judgment. It was all their own doing. God keep us from backsliding. Whoever you are, be set for Christ, I beseech you; and let nothing come in to divert your heart from Him.

Read this second chapter of Jeremiah carefully. Follow it out for yourself, and note how God seeks to get at the conscience as well as the heart. "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when He led thee by the way?" v. 17. All that came upon them was the fruit of their own doing. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. 6:7, 8. We cannot sow a handful of seed without the crop which that seed produces coming up.

"And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?" v. 18. After their redemption, neither Egypt nor Assyria had aught to do with Israel till they got away from God. But their hearts, away from God, yearned for evil association, and received their due reward. Most truly does God say, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that My fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts." v. 19. Now here is the first time we get the word "backsliding." Then in the 6th, 8th, 11th, 12th, 14th, and 22nd verses of chapter 3 you get the expression. It is the characteristic word in the early part of Jeremiah. But then it supposes recovery, and that the heart will be turned back again to God, because that is what the Lord wants. He longs to have us very near Him. And do not our hearts love to be near Him? But if I am away from Him, and His hand is on me, I cannot blame Him. Is the blame His? Ah no, I know Him too well to say that.

If there has been departure of heart from the Lord, "My fear is not in thee" (v. 19) is true of that heart. I think that is one of the first steps of departure; the sense of the fear of the Lord somehow dies out in the soul, and then declension develops.

But it is of no use for a backslider to try and put things right outwardly. That is the next point. External washing will not do. It is the inside - the heart - that must be put right. "For though thou wash thee with niter, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the Lord GOD." v. 22. Then He turns to show how they were like the "wild ass" (v. 24), and like the thief who is found out (v. 26), they were "ashamed" because they had gone into downright idolatry (v. 27). How God knows what our hearts are! If we get never so far away from the Lord, should

trouble and sorrow come, what should we do? The Lord tells us, "In the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us" (v. 27). Well may He reply, "But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble" (v. 28). Let the thing that you have been occupied with deliver you. That cannot be.

Nothing could be more touching than God's next query here: "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?" (v. 31). Was I barren? Was there barrenness in My land? Is there barrenness in heavenly things? What a striking expression for God to use to His people! But that is what it is. If the heart loses the sense of grace, it loses its delight in Christ, and "Our soul loatheth this light bread" (Numb. 21:5) is the sure result.

Then He adds, "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet My people have forgotten Me days without number." v. 32. What had He done every day? Watched over and cared for them. Yes, blessed be His name, He had continually thought of them. We have forgotten Him perhaps, but He has never forgotten us. We are graven on the very palms of His hands, and the one thing He has before His mind is to have the backsliders brought back. Even although their sin was as deep as that, we read, "Yet return again to Me, saith the LORD" (Jer. 3:1). So deep was His desire for their restoration.

Backslider! He then called them, and bid them come back. Now He calls you back. If anyone asks, How can I get back? you say, I feel God has spoken to my soul through His Word; I am drinking at broken cisterns. How am I to get back? Listen. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity" (v. 13). There is only one way back, and what is it? Confession. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. How touchingly tender is the call, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you" (v. 14). There was no break of relationship on God's part. See too how He encourages the heart in verse 15. It is really lovely, beloved, the way in which the Lord seeks to recover and link the soul with Himself.

If that blessed response to the call does not take place, do you know what will follow? Things will get worse. If we do not heed the recalling word, we shall reach the 6th verse of chapter 5. I think God graphically describes to us in this book what is bound to follow if backsliding is not checked. "Their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased" (v. 6). How solemn!

There is only one way of deliverance from this terrible downgrade path of the backslider. It is by honest acknowledgment of the state, and by simply looking to God for deliverance. It is thus voiced: "O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for Thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against Thee." Jer. 14:7. Do not suppose, my dear friend, that if there has been distance and departure from the Lord, it is all over with you, and that you cannot be restored. Oh no, there are brighter and better days in store for you if you return. I believe God brings us into deeper and fuller communion. I think His grace brings us into the enjoyment of a deeper, fuller, and more blessed place in His affections. "They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon" (Hos. 14:7), are wonderful figures of the brightness and freshness of a restored soul. When restored, that soul says, like Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" To this God rejoins, "I have heard him, and observed him." Then says Ephraim, "I am like a green fir tree." A fir tree is one of the finest things you ever saw. It is green all the year round. It is the soul in the sense that it is in all the

favor of God, and the love of the Lord is prized beyond everything.

But God says, "From Me is thy fruit found." You see that, in verse 8, you have a dialog. There is repentance and a conscious sense of blessing all flowing from God.

## On the Move

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The epistle to the Hebrews does not present Christians as already in heaven, but as on their way to it. It abounds in warning and exhortation to get on. It keeps us continually on the move. It is characterized by such utterances as, "Let us fear"; "Let us labor"; "Let us come boldly"; "Let us go on to perfection"; "Let us draw nigh"; "Let us hold fast"; "Let us consider one another"; "Let us run"; "Let us go forth."

The epistle to the Ephesians gives us one grand aspect of Christianity; and the epistle to the Hebrews gives us the other. In the former, the Christian is presented as seated in heaven, and coming down to walk on earth in all the varied relationships of life. In Hebrews the Christian is presented as starting from earth, responsive to the heavenly call, and pressing forward to the rest that remains.

## The Pastoral Gift: Publicly and From House to House

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The quotation which we have just penned is taken from Paul's farewell address to the elders at Ephesus, as recorded in Acts 20. It is a very suggestive expression, and sets forth in a most forcible manner the intimate connection between the work of the teacher and that of the pastor. "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you," says the blessed Apostle, "but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house."

Paul was not only an apostle; he combined in a truly marvelous manner the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher. The two last named are closely connected, as we may learn from Eph. 4:11; and it is of the utmost importance that this connection should be understood and maintained. The teacher unfolds truth; the pastor applies it. The teacher enlightens the understanding; the pastor looks to the state of the heart. The teacher supplies the spiritual nutriment; the pastor sees to the use that is made of it. The teacher occupies himself more with the Word; the pastor looks after the soul. The teacher's work is, for the most part, public; the pastor's work is chiefly in private. When combined in one person, the teaching faculty imparts immense moral power to the pastor, and the pastoral element imparts affectionate tenderness to the teacher.

The reader must not confound a pastor with an elder or bishop. The two things are totally distinct. Elder and bishop are frequently interchangeable, but pastor is never confounded with either. Elder is a local charge; pastor is a gift. We have nothing about elders or bishops in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, or Ephesians 4, though in these scriptures we have the fullest unfolding of the subject of gifts. We must carefully distinguish between gift and local charge. Elders or bishops are for rule and oversight. Teachers and pastors are to feed and edify. An elder may be a teacher or pastor, but he must keep the two things distinct. They rest upon a different footing altogether, and are never to be confounded.

However, our object in this brief article is not to write a treatise on ministry, or to dwell elaborately upon the difference between spiritual gift and local charge, but simply to offer to our readers a few words on the immense importance of the pastoral gift in the Church of God, in order that we may be stirred up to earnest prayer to the great Head of the Church, that He may graciously be pleased to shed forth the precious gift more abundantly in our midst. We are not straitened in Him. The treasury of spiritual life is not exhausted, and our Lord Christ loves His Church, and delights to nourish and cherish His body, and to supply its every need out of His own infinite fullness.

That there is urgent need of pastoral care throughout the length and breadth of the Church of God, few can deny who know what pastorship is, and who are at all acquainted with the true condition of the Church. How rare is the true spiritual pastor! It is easy to take the name, and assume the office; but in point of fact, pastorship is neither a name nor an office, but a living reality - a divinely imparted gift - something communicated by the Head of the Church for the growth and blessing of His members. A true pastor is a man who is not only possessed of a real spiritual gift, but also animated by the very affections of the heart of Christ toward every lamb and sheep of His blood-bought flock.

Yes, we repeat it, "every lamb and sheep." A true pastor is a pastor all over the world. He is one who has a heart, a message, a ministry for every member of the body of Christ. Not so the elder or bishop. His is a local charge, confined to the locality in the which such charge is entrusted. But the pastor's range is the whole Church of God, as the evangelist's range is the wide, wide world. In New York, in London, in Paris, or Canton, a pastor is a pastor, and he has his blessed work everywhere. To imagine a pastor as confined to a certain congregation to which he is expected to discharge the functions of evangelist, teacher, elder, or bishop, is something altogether foreign to the teaching of the New Testament.

But, ah! how few real pastors are to be found in our midst! How rare is the pastor's gift, the pastor's heart!

Where shall we find those who duly combine the two grand and important elements contained in the heading of this paper - "Publicly, and from house to house"? A man may, perhaps, give us a brief address on the Lord's day, or a lecture on some week day; but where is the "house to house" side of the question? Where is the close, earnest, diligent looking after individual souls, from Monday morning till Saturday night? Very often it happens that the public teaching shoots completely over the head; it is the house to house teaching that is sure to come home to the heart. How frequently it happens that something uttered in public is entirely misunderstood and misapplied, until the loving pastoral visit during the week supplies the true meaning and just application.

Nor is this all. How much there is in a pastor's range that the public teacher can never compass! No doubt public teaching is most important; would we had ten thousand times more of it than we have. The teacher's work is invaluable, and when mellowed by the deep and tender affection of a pastor's heart, can go a great way in meeting the soul's manifold necessities. But the loving pastor who earnestly, prayerfully, and faithfully goes from house to house, can get at the deep exercises of the soul, the sorrows of the heart, the puzzling questions of the mind, the grave difficulties of the conscience. He can enter, in the profound sympathy of an affectionate heart, into the ten thousand little circumstances and sorrows of the path. He can kneel down with the tried, the tempted, the crushed, and the sorrowing one, before the precious mercy seat, and they can pour out their hearts together, and draw down sweet consolation from the God of all grace and the Father of mercies.

The public teacher cannot do this. No doubt, if, as we have said, he has something of the pastoral element in him, he can anticipate in his public address a great deal of the soul's private exercises, sorrows, and difficulties. But he cannot supply the house to house ingredient. He cannot fully meet the soul's individual need. This is the pastor's holy work. It seems to us that a pastor is to the soul what a doctor is to the body. He must be able to feel the spiritual pulse. He must understand disease and medicine. He must be able to tell what is the matter, and what remedies to apply. Alas! how few proper doctors there are! Perhaps they are as rare as proper pastors. It is one thing to take the title, and another thing to do the work.

Christian reader, we earnestly entreat you to join us in fervent believing prayers to God to raise up true pastors among us. We are in sad need of them. There is great dearth indeed, both of teachers and pastors. The sheep of Christ are not fed and cared for. We are occupied so much with our own affairs, that we have not time to look after the beloved flock of Christ. Every moment is

swallowed up in the business of providing for ourselves and our families. It is, alas! the old sad story-"All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." How different it was with that blessed Apostle! He found time to make tents, and also to teach "publicly, and from house to house." He was not only the great Apostle, ranging over continents and planting churches, but he was also the loving pastor, the tender nurse, the skillful spiritual physician.

Let no one suppose that we advocate idleness. The Lord preserve us from any such moral mischief! We believe there is nothing like abundance of healthful occupation. Indeed, the Apostle himself afforded a living example of this, by working with his hands the thing which is good, that he might not be chargeable to any.

But for all that, he found time to teach, preach, and pastorize. He had a heart for Christ and for His body, the Church, and for every member of that body. Here lies the real secret of the matter. It is wonderful what a loving heart can accomplish. If I really love the Church, I shall desire its blessing and progress, and seek to promote these according to my ability.

May the Lord raise up in the midst of His people pastors and teachers after His own heart - men •filled with His Spirit, and animated by a genuine love for His Church - men competent and ready to teach-"publicly, and from house to house."

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Coming Events

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The day is now past when the doctrine of a general resurrection and judgment at the last day is universally accepted among Christians. A closer examination of the Word of God, together with increased freedom from mere church tradition, has shown to many how ill-founded these views are, and that Scripture expressly speaks of at least two resurrections and of two judgments.

Before briefly considering these, it will be well to glance back at the great judgment of sin and sins passed upon the Holy One of God in our stead, and also at that resurrection which is the pledge and proof of the perfection of His finished work.

At the cross of Christ, God made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, and "laid on Him the iniquity of us all," numbering our righteous Substitute with the transgressors. It is in virtue of this judgment of sin that God can now freely justify every sinner that believes, and offer to every soul on earth the free forgiveness of all his sins in righteousness. It is in virtue of this death of Christ that the one who believes can say with perfect assurance, He bore my sins in His own body on the tree.

It is here the believer sees that not only what he has done is judged and atoned for, but that he himself, as far as his old nature is concerned, is condemned and crucified with Christ. For the cross is not only the judgment of my deeds, but of myself; not of sins only, but of sin, the root; and I as a man in the flesh am put out of God's sight at the cross of Christ. Resting then in full assurance in the simple fact that all God's judgments have passed on Christ in his stead, the believer understands the full meaning of that wonderful passage in John 5:24 (so obscured by mistranslation), where he is told that he shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life. But not only were all the believer's sins thus judged at the cross of Christ, but in the resurrection of Christ he gets a new and endless life, a life out of death, the life of Christ. We who believe are raised with Him out of darkness, death, and sin, into light, life, and holiness. Thus, through the death and resurrection of the Lord, the believer gets immunity from all coming judgments of sins, and also an eternal, pure and holy life, so that he will never be judged and never perish, but is alive spiritually in resurrection life, risen from his state of death in trespasses and sins.

The next thing we find is that there is a present judgment of God on His children which is going on all through the Christian era, being exercised in the way of discipline or chastisement on those Christians who are not judging themselves but are leading careless and worldly lives, and in some way or other sinning against the light (see Heb. 12; 1 Cor. 11 to end). This judgment is not exercised on the unsaved because they, not being sons, are without chastisement. For Christians, however, it is an ever present reality which we do well to remember. The Christian is often astonished to find that he cannot do with impunity what he sees the unbeliever doing every day.

"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." This is now, in this present time; but the value of this self-judgment is that it not merely saves us from God's present discipline (1 Cor.

11:31), but keeps us from walking in such a way that we shall be ashamed when manifested before Him.

The next subject we have to consider is the resurrection of believers, including all “that are Christ’s” (1 Cor. 15:23), called also the resurrection of life (John 5:29), the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5-6), and the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14). This takes place at the coming of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:23) into the air (1 Thess. 4:16-17), which may take place at any moment (Luke 12:40), and for which we wait (Rev. 22:20). At this resurrection none of the wicked dead will be raised (Rev. 20:5). Although sleeping in the same tomb, side-by-side, the “sheep” only will hear the Shepherd’s voice; the others who heeded it not in life will not then hear it in death, but will lie in their graves for the thousand years of the millennial age. Such then is the resurrection of life, and although in some verses it may seem to be very closely connected with the resurrection of judgment (John 5:29), both being said to take place in the same hour (John 5:28), yet we find from Revelation 20:5 that this hour extends over at least a thousand years, and that the resurrection at the last day, that we hear Martha speak of (John 11:24), has now been clearly divided into two parts — perfectly distinct in character and time.

This resurrection of life takes place, as we have seen, at the coming of the Lord; but we also find from Revelation 20:4 that it will include those Jews who were slain subsequently at the persecution under antichrist for the witness of Jesus.

We will now briefly consider the manifestation of believers before the judgment seat of Christ, which is spoken of in Romans 14:10 and Corinthians 5:10. So great and solemn a subject, however, demands more than a few passing words, and we hope elsewhere to look at it more fully in its practical bearing on the Christian walk. It seems probable for several reasons that the manifestation of believers will take place after the rapture of the saints, and before the public return of Christ, when every eye shall see Him. In the first place, it cannot be before the rapture, for it evidently takes place in heaven; and Paul distinctly speaks of it as future, and as consisting of a review of all deeds done in the body. Second, inasmuch as it forms the only means of which we read of determining our places in the coming glory, according to our faithfulness down here, it will surely be all over before we are publicly displayed with Christ according to Revelation 19, when He comes in His glory to usher in the kingdom. We cannot, however, go further than this, and positively fix a time which has been left indefinite in Scripture, but can only say we believe that the saints will be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, when they are in heaven after the rapture, and before the Lord’s public second coming or appearing in power and glory on the Mount of Olives.

Although, when standing before this judgment seat, we shall be in the perfect likeness of the One who sits on it (1 John 3:2), and in the full enjoyment of His perfect love that casts out all fear, this manifestation will be a very solemn reality, and should lead now to earnest labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to Him (1 Cor. 5:9; literal). Then will be seen the result of our trading down here (Matt. 25), of our building (1 Cor. 3), and of our labor generally for the Lord (2 John 1:8); and not only this, but we are to be manifested, that is, we are to hear God’s judgment on all our acts and ways — surely a most intensely solemn thought for each one of us. Then, for the first time, we shall form a true estimate of all; we shall understand the perfection of Christ’s grace all through, and see how wrong and mistaken we have been in many ways down here. To

limit the judgment seat of Christ to a reward for works is largely to nullify its practical power.

It must be noticed in 2 Corinthians 5 that the judgment seat of Christ is there spoken of in a general way, so as not only to include the presence there of believers, but the fact that all must (at one time or another) be manifested before it. The effect of this on the believer is seen in verse 9. To the unbeliever it is a terror (2 Cor. 5:11), being to him nothing less than eternal damnation. To the Apostle this coming review of the believer's walk and work was a very solemn fact, and led him to walk day by day in God's presence, so that he could say, "We are made manifest unto God." He did not wait for that day to see if he was walking so as to please God or no, but lived daily in self-judgment. What a moment it will be when for the first time we find out God's judgment on our life. How many are first now that will be last then, and how many unknown and unnoticed down here that then will shine as the stars forever and ever (Dan. 12:3). The time is short, beloved reader. Consider then, earnestly, as you read these few lines, what work you are doing really for Christ that will stand the fire, and how far you are really filling to His glory the sphere in which you move. Do not wake up when it is too late.

We must now pass on to the next judgment — that of the quick, spoken of in Matthew 25, and often alluded to elsewhere (see 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5; Acts 10:42). It is often so associated with the judgment of the dead, as to lead a superficial reader to suppose that both were only parts of the same event, taking place at the same time, whereas (as we have already seen with regard to the two resurrections) they are two distinct events, separated by not less than 1,000 years; the judgment of Matthew 25 taking place before the Millennium (Rev. 19; Jude 14-15), while the last judgment does not begin till after the close of the reign of Christ.

This judgment of "the quick" (or "of all nations") in Matthew 25, occurs in the presence of the saints who have descended from heaven with the Lord (Rev. 19; 1 Cor. 6:2), but does not directly concern them. All nations are gathered before the dread tribunal, and are separated by the scrutiny of God's all-seeing eye into the "sheep" and the "goats"; the former consisting of those among the heathen who have received the Jewish messengers who will proclaim the gospel of the kingdom (Rev. 14:7) to all the world (Matt. 24:14), and the goats, those who have rejected them. The former will constitute the Gentile inhabitants of the millennial earth, and will inherit "the kingdom," while the latter will be sent into everlasting punishment. The earth being thus cleared by the judgment of God, the millennial reign of Christ will be ushered in. It must be noticed that this judgment is of living people only, and only of those who have not heard and rejected the present gospel. These will not be brought before this tribunal, but will have been already swept from off the earth at the coming of Christ (2 Thess. 1:9).

We now pass on to the closing scene at the end of the millennial age, which consists of the last resurrection, called also the resurrection of damnation (John 5:29), and of the last judgment, also called the second death. The following passages speak of it: Revelation 2:11; Matthew 11:22; Hebrews 9:27; 1 Peter 2:9; John 4:17 and Jude 6.

After the final judgment of the devil (Rev. 20:10), all the wicked dead will be raised, and will stand before the Son (John 5:27), to be judged according to their works. The book of life will also be opened, because however bad a man's works may have been, if he has been washed in the blood of Christ, and his name inscribed in the Lamb's book, he will never be sent to hell. Hence, although all here are judged according to their works, it is expressly said that "Whosoever was not

found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” The sole reason why every believer is saved from this fate is clearly not on account of his having never sinned, but because Christ bore the punishment instead, and thus his name is written in the Lamb’s book of life. Hence this solemn scripture clearly shows divine grace reconciled with man’s responsibility.

Such then is a very brief account of the various judgments and resurrections in their order as revealed in Scripture. To the believer the consideration of them is very blessed and very solemn; blessed, as bringing home to his soul the wonderful value of the work of Christ in delivering him from all terror of the coming judgment of God; solemn, when he considers that rapidly approaching moment when all his life’s work will be fully reviewed before God.

To the unbeliever such a theme is surely one of terror, and yet not without hope; for if the last judgment at the great white throne shows him the final, awful fate of every unredeemed soul, the first judgment of sin on the cross in the Person of our blessed Saviour opens a door of mercy to whosoever will. Grace still reigns and judgment waits; and it is for those who know this to seek to persuade every unsaved soul that will hear to flee from the coming wrath to the open door of mercy, ere it be closed forever.

## Splitting Hair?

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"It is of little use to split hairs about the harm of this or that particular thing. The question is, What is our real purpose and object? Do we merely want to get on as men, or do we long to live as true disciples of a risen Savior?"

## Accepted and Acceptable

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"He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6). "Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of [acceptable to] Him." 2 Cor. 5:9.

The two words which form the heading of this paper, though rendered by the same word in our Authorized Version, are not at all the same. The former has respect to the person of the believer, the latter to his practical ways. It is one thing to be accepted; it is quite another to be acceptable. The former is the fruit of God's free grace to us as sinners; the latter is the fruit of our earnest labor as saints, though, most surely, it is only by grace we can do anything.

It is well that the Christian reader should thoroughly understand the distinction between these two things. It will preserve him effectually from legality on the one hand, and laxity on the other. It remains unalterably true of all believers, that God hath made them accepted in the Beloved. Nothing can ever touch this. The very feeblest lamb in all the flock stands accepted in a risen Christ. There is no difference. The grace of God has placed them all on this high and blessed ground. We do not labor to be accepted. It is all the fruit of God's free grace. He found us all alike dead in trespasses and sins. We were morally dead - far off from God, hopeless, Godless, Christless, children of wrath, whether Jews or Gentiles. But Christ died for us, and God has co-quickened, coraised, and co-seated us in Christ, and made us accepted in Him.

This is the inalienable, eternal standing of all, without exception, who believe in the name of the Son of God. Christ in His infinite grace placed Himself judicially where we were morally, and having put away our sins and perfectly satisfied, on our behalf, the claims of divine righteousness, God entered the scene and raised Him from the dead, and with Him all His members, as seen in His own eternal purpose, and to be called in due time, and brought into the actual possession and enjoyment of the marvelous place of blessing and privilege, by the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost.

Well, therefore, may we take up the opening words of the epistle to the Ephesians, and say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who bath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved." All praise to His name throughout t h e everlasting ages!

All believers then are accepted-perfectly and forever accepted - in the Beloved. God sees them in Christ, and as Christ. He thinks of them as He thinks of Him - loves them as He loves Him. They are ever before Him in perfect acceptance in the blessed Son of His love; nor can anything or any one ever interfere with this their high and glorious position, which rests on the eternal stability of the grace of God, the accomplished work of His Son, and attested by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

But are all believers acceptable in their practical ways? Are all so carrying themselves as that their dealings and doings will bear the light of the judgment seat of Christ? Are all laboring to be agreeable to Him?

Christian reader, these are serious questions. Let us solemnly weigh them. Let us not turn away from the sharp edge of plain, practical truth. The blessed Apostle knew he was accepted. Did that make him lax, careless, or indolent? Far from it. "We labor," he says, to be acceptable to Him. The sweet assurance that we are accepted in Him is the ground of our labor to be acceptable to Him. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." 2 Cor. 5:14, 15.

All this is pre-eminently practical. We are called upon, by every argument which can bear sway over the heart and conscience, to labor diligently to be acceptable to our blessed and adorable Lord. Is there anything of legality in this? Not the slightest tinge. The very reverse. It is the holy superstructure of a devoted life, erected on the solid foundation of our eternal election and perfect acceptance in a risen and glorified Christ at God's right hand. How could there be the very smallest atom of legality here? Utterly impossible. It is all the pure fruit of God's free and sovereign grace from first to last.

But ought we not, beloved Christian reader, to rouse ourselves to attend to the claims of Christ as to practical righteousness? Should we not zealously and lovingly aim at giving Him pleasure? Are we to content ourselves with vapidly talking about our acceptance in Christ, while at the same time there is no real earnest care as to the acceptability of our ways? God forbid! Yea, let us so dwell upon the rich grace that shines in the acceptance of our persons, that we may be led out in diligent and fervent effort to be found acceptable in our ways.

It is greatly to be feared that there is an appalling amount of antinomianism among us - an unhallowed traffic in the doctrines of grace, without any godly care as to the application of those doctrines to our practical conduct. How all this is to end, it would be hard to say; but, most assuredly, there is an urgent call upon all who profess to be accepted in Christ to labor fervently to be acceptable to Him.

## The Temptation in the Wilderness

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"And to a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward ahungered. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto Him. It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship Me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." Matt. 3:17; 4:1-11.

The temptation was needful to the introduction of the Lord into His ministry.

If the work which now lay before Him be redemption, if He be about to repair, yea, more than repair, the mischief which the first man had wrought, and which all other men had but witnessed and perpetuated, so must He personally stand where the first man, and all beside, had failed. Hence the temptation. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. The Spirit, who had descended and rested on Him at His baptism, in a bodily shape like a dove, now puts Him forth to withstand the serpent, who is also the roaring lion; for the dove-like ministry of grace to sinners is one with the full defeat of man's destroyer. Jesus came to save sinners and to destroy the works of the devil.

Accordingly, Jesus in the very outset, and as introducing Himself to His work, withstands Satan. He proves Himself to be impregnable. Eve surrendered God's word to the serpent; Jesus withstands him by it. No attempt of the enemy prevails. The Holy Thing that had been born is still as holy in full manhood as He had been in the virgin's womb. He proves Himself not to be in the common defeat and captivity. He leaves Satan without any title against Him; and thus He binds him.

And this binding of him is the first great action of our Deliverer with our destroyer.

He then comes forth at once, to enter his house and spoil his goods.

In the due season He will be his Bruiser, as well as his Binder and Spoiler. He will bruise his head on Calvary.

Then, in the [future], He will cast him from heaven (Rev. 12).

Then, He will put him into the bottomless pit (Rev. 20).

And finally, He will cast him into the lake of fire (Rev. 20).

These are the ways of our Great Deliverer with our adversary; and these ways He here begins in the wilderness of the temptation. How simple, and yet how glorious! How perfect in order, as well as mighty in action, from first to last! No one binds or bruises Satan but Jesus the Son of God. Samson typifies Him as the Stronger Man entering into the strong man's house to spoil his goods; and all the saints will have Satan bruised under their feet in season; but Jesus the Son of God bound the strong man, and bruised the head of the serpent. These works were all His own, and His only.

And all this was introductory to His ministry. As having fulfilled all righteousness, whether under the law of Moses, or under the baptism of John; as owned and ordained of the Father, in whose eyes the feet of this Messenger were to be more than beautiful; as endowed by the Holy Ghost, and as the Binder of the strong man, the Son comes forth to fulfill His course.

"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil.... And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about." Luke 4:1, 2, 14.

Jesus owned as Son of God, and that too in connection with the human family, as Adam had been (Luke 3:22, 38), Satan could not allow. He could not let this claim be revived without contesting it; for through his subtlety the first man had lost his dignity. God had created man, and in His likeness made him; but man had begotten children "in his own likeness," defiled as he was, and not as a race worthy of being called "sons of God." But Jesus had now appeared to re-assert in man this lost dignity. The devil must therefore try His title to it; and with this purpose he comes now to tempt Him, saying, "If Thou be the Son of God." This was a crisis between the anointed Man and man's great enemy. And surely Jesus stood, stood in the loftiest attitude of a conqueror.

Everything that had surrounded Adam, the first man, might well have pleaded for God against the enemy. The sweetness of the whole scene, the beauty of that garden of delights with its rivers which parted hither and thither, the fruits and perfume, with the willing service of ten thousand tributary creatures, all had a voice for God against the accuser. But Jesus was in a wilderness which yielded nothing, but left Him "ahungred," and the wild beasts were with Him, and all might have been pleaded by the accuser against God. All was against Jesus, as all had been for Adam; but He stood as Adam had fallen. The man of the dust failed, with all to favor him; the Man of God stood, with all against Him. And what a victory was this! What complacency in man must this have restored to the mind of God!

To achieve this victory Jesus had been led up of the Spirit into this place of battle, for His commission was to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). He stood now as the champion of God's glory and man's blessing, in this revolted world, to try His strength with the enemy of both, to make proof of His ministry, and to the highest pitch of praise He is more than conqueror.

But He was conqueror for us, and therefore at once comes forth with the spoils of that day, to lay them as at our feet. He had been alone in the conflict, but would not be alone in the victory. He that sows and he that reaps must rejoice together. It was an ancient statute of David that he that

carried by the stuff should share with him that went down to the battle. And it was a decree worthy the grace of "the beloved." But a better even than David, One not only of royal, but of divine grace is here; and accordingly Jesus the Son of God comes forth from the wilderness to publish peace, to heal disease, to meet all the need of those who were the captives of this enemy, and to let them know that He had conquered for them.

This tells us the character of the blessing which we sinners get from the hand of the Son of God. We get it as spoils of a conquest. By sin we have forfeited all creation blessing. All such was once ours in Eden, but we lost it there; and now all blessing is the fruit of the victory of Jesus. All this gives the heart assurance while enjoying it, for we read our title to it while we take it. The Blessor has entitled Himself to bless, for He has won the blessing before He confers it. We therefore know our right to be blessed by Jesus, as surely as Adam knew his to be happy in Eden. And what doubt could he have had? It is not stolen waters that we drink, not bread eaten in secret that we feed upon, but meat won from the very jaws of the eater, and sweetness gathered from the strong. This is the character of the blessing which the Lord is giving to us sinners. It is His own well-earned spoils. And such do we get here. Full of the Holy Ghost (v. 1), He met the devil in conflict, to withstand and overthrow him; full of the Holy Ghost still (v. 14), He meets sinners with blessing, to heal and to save them. And, since the day in the wilderness, He has been on Calvary with him that had the power of death, and there by death destroyed [annulled] him; He has come forth in resurrection, again to part His spoils with sinners all the world over; and with certainty of heart we survey and enjoy the glorious blessings.

But where is the sinner to value the blessing and to array himself with the spoils of the conquering Son of God? That is the question, the only question, now. Man has no mind for the blessing, and cares not about a victory and its spoils, in which the god of this world has been judged.

## Strangers and Pilgrims

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"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." 1 Peter 2:11.

Among the twenty or more names which Peter uses for believers in his first epistle are these two, "strangers and pilgrims." God wants us ever to remember that since we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, we have no home here - we are strangers. But we do have a home above - we are pilgrims. We are pressing on to glory; we have a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called our God. We are, however, going through the wilderness. But our God provides for every need, and is able to give us power and grace to overcome and triumph in every difficulty and danger.

## A Letter to a Dying Skeptic

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My Dear Friend: Pardon, I pray you, the liberty taken by an entire stranger in thus addressing you. I have heard you are ill, about to die, and yet in a state of unbelief; and I write to send you this message: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. 1:15. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts 16:31. "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

Now, my dear friend, these are the simple, yet true statements of the Word of God. My desire in writing to you is that you may hear and believe these statements, and live. Life, eternal life, is before you. It is the gift of God, not to those who think they are worthy, but to those who, confessing their unworthiness, look to Christ as a Savior. I need not tell you that you are a sinner; your own conscience will tell you that. The Word of God says plainly, "There is none righteous," "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3). But the Word of God says just as plainly that Christ is set forth a propitiation through faith in His blood, and that God is just and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. God justifies the ungodly through faith in Christ.

Do not, my dear friend, call this a fable. It is the very Word of God. I know Scripture says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"; but I hope you do not say this. And if you do not, like the fool, say, "There is no God," why should you not believe His Word? If you or I (poor worms of the dust) are able to communicate what is in our minds, why should not God be able to do the same? He has done so, blessed be His name forever and ever! He has spoken in no uncertain terms. He has revealed Himself in the Person of His beloved Son, and spoken to us through His Word, unfolding a plan of salvation which never could have originated in the mind of sinful man. Love, infinite love, to those that were enemies, lies at the foundation of this whole plan. But the cross, the blood-shedding of Jesus, was necessary in order that that love might flow out fully and righteously toward the guilty. We had no righteousness and no sacrifice; but God in infinite love has furnished the sacrifice that was needed. He gave His Son, gave Him up to the death of the cross, and this, that you and I might live. Oh! will you receive the gift of God? Will you believe in Jesus? In view of that eternity that lies before you, I pray you, do not turn away from Him who would speak to you through His Word, and who would draw you by cords of love, and reconcile you to Himself through the death of Christ. Oh! let your heart respond to the love of God. There is no love like His. No poetic fancy ever dreamed of such love, nor is it to be found - nor even the thought - in the writings of any heathen philosopher. God has revealed it in revealing Himself in the Person of Jesus. Otherwise such love could never have been known or conceived of. "God is love," and this shown out in Christ Jesus. Oh! let me intreat you, ere you pass into eternity, not to reject the love of God. Believe in Jesus. Believe and live.

I know not whether this letter may not be too late to reach you on this side of eternity; but if not too late, I entreat you by the compassions of God, and by the cross and sufferings of Jesus, not to turn

a deaf ear to His messages of love and grace. I write with the one desire that your soul may be saved, and that you may give glory to God in bowing to His Son Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

With earnest desire for your eternal well-being, I am your friend and well-wisher.

## Christ Is Our All

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The Lord Jesus Christ, God's blessed Son, is all our salvation. There is no salvation, no perfect peace, no real joy, no power over sin and Satan, no good works, no effectual service, till Jesus be received into the heart. In Jesus and Jesus alone we find eternal life, present happiness and future glory.

"Christ is all" (Col. 3:11). Jesus is the chief good—the center of rest and the source of grace and truth. God gives not His good things apart from Jesus; Jesus must be received first, and in Him we receive every blessing.

Communion with Jesus, in the spirit of faith and prayer, should be the habit of our life on earth; so precious is He that we should never forget Him, but always realize Him present in all places.

"To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). Any other object than Christ is below the Christian's dignity. Pursuit after riches, or honors, or worldly pleasures, is folly and sin.

A godly and beloved minister sent the following from his deathbed to his people:

"I have preached to you for thirty-two years, the complete atonement of Christ, His perfect righteousness, and salvation through His blood. These truths are now my hope, my comfort, my stay. I believe that God's righteousness is mine, and that Christ's atonement is my perfect satisfaction for sin; and God's Holy indwelling Spirit is my support and my life now. In this faith I have lived, and in this faith I die. I have nothing else, and I want no more. My faith is firm as a rock."

On another occasion he said to one by his bedside: "We ministers of the gospel ought to set before our people more fully the joys of communion with Christ as a living and present Friend. We are apt to preach about Christ, rather than to preach Christ; about salvation, rather than to set forth the Savior. I have learned to think more about the Person of my living Savior than about the doctrines that concern Him; and if I were raised up again from this bed of sickness - while I should preach the doctrines that I have ever preached - I would set before my people the joy of present, personal communion with Jesus; for He has said, 'Lip, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [age].'"

## Usefulness

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A question often arises about usefulness. Satan often beguiles by it. He may have suggested to John that he would be more useful if he were to compromise a little, and keep out of trouble for the sake of being free for his service to the saints. Useful to whom? To God or to men? God may be able to show out more of His glory by laying men aside. The eyes of God rested on Paul a prisoner, seemingly useless (not even always allowed to write), as the field for the display of some of the greatest privileges of truth. The very point when your weakness seems to make you useless, is often the very way in which God shows forth His glory.

People think it strange that old Christians, useless ones, etc., etc., should be left, and young active ones taken. Do not you be trying to settle God's house for Him; do not say, "What a pity for John to get to Patmos." The Lord wanted him there to communicate something that might serve His people to the end of time.

A person may be in difficult circumstances, and you may have it in your power to get him out of them in the power of human nature. And you may do it, and find out that God would have had him in them, because then he would have borne testimony; and you ought not to have measured things by your love for him and your comfort, but by the light of God. We often act on a set of thoughts of which the cord is bound to our own humanity instead of God's glory.

## How Do We Treat the Bible?

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The important, practical question is, How do we treat the Bible? Do we honor it because it is the Word of God? Are we guided by its counsels? Have we proved its sufficiency? Do we, when we read it, meditate on it, and mix faith with it, and realize the personal enjoyment of its soul-comforting ministrations? Do we habitually rely on the Holy Spirit to enable us to discern, receive, and communicate its precious mysteries? "He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." John 3:33.

WHY then do we read the Holy Scriptures? Because they reveal "the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3), and are written for our learning and comfort. To neglect them, therefore, is very serious. The faithful in all ages have been noted for standing for the authority of the sacred writings. Moreover, they give us divine assurance as to the eternal future, as well as sure guidance for every step of the way.

HOW do we read the Bible? is also a searching question. If we approach the imperishable Word with the thought of our own competency to discern and understand it, then let it not be surprising if we get nothing from it, or fall into the most grievous errors (1 Cor. 2:14). If, on the contrary, the reader, on opening the sacred volume, takes his true place of utter inability to discern the deep things of God, and waits on God to guide and teach him by the Holy Spirit, then he will never be disappointed and, mixing faith with the Word, will find much profit and blessing.

Again, we may remind the Christian reader of the tendency to read certain favorite chapters or books, instead of "all Scripture"; consequently such do not get a grasp of the scope of the written Word, and are always uncertain as to what the sacred volume really contains. We are not now speaking of reading the Scriptures publicly or in the family, but of reading them privately to honor God, to find food and blessing for our souls, as well as intelligence as to how to walk and please God.

WHEN do we read the Word of God? With these who have to arise from their beds early, and have much to do, there is often a strong temptation to put off the private reading of the Word of Truth till later on in the day; the consequence is that other things so engage the mind that such either give up reading, or are unable to apply themselves to the study of the Word, and therefore decline in soul. The best things in Israel were devoted to the Lord. Our Lord was found in prayer a great while before day. The manna came down early, and they had to gather it before sunrise; and our Lord said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Now it is manifest that if we are to seek God's things first, having to do with Him and His Word would precede our having to do with earthly things. We hesitate not to say that such as practically rank earthly things before the heavenly occupation of prayer and reading of the Word are not honoring God as they should; and we believe much of the failure, even in God's people, can be traced to their not giving the things of God the first,... the best, place.

It is said that when Dr. Johnson was told that Mr. had imbibed infidel notions as to the Scriptures, he replied, "He never read the Bible." We believe the same may be said of many a busy skeptic in the present day. The misquotations that some of them make, as well as the egregious errors and misapplications of Scripture, leave no doubt as to this; but those who do "search the Scriptures," pray over them for divine guidance and teaching in humility and uprightness before God, learn to say with an ancient prophet, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16).

And further, those who follow on to know the Lord through meditation in faith on the written Word, the faithful walk, sooner or later discover that the great testimony of the sacred volume from beginning to end is Christ; and those indeed are blessed who have thus learned that "Christ is all." Happy indeed is the reader who can truly say, Christ is all my salvation, all my desire, my life, my righteousness, my peace, my hope. All my springs are in Him. Christ is my refuge, my resource, my strength, my food, my Friend, my power for all fruit bearing. So absolutely is He all to me, that without Him I can do nothing; apart from Him I have nothing, and am nothing! In turning then to the sacred pages, may we never forget that they testify of Christ Jesus, the Son of God; and the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God!

## The Book of Books

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Into the midst of this world's activities, came Jesus. How did He treat this Book, the Bible? As none other; it was the Book of books to Him. Scripture was His food and His weapon always. It was not the New Testament yet, for this was not written then. It was the very part that high and low most try to get rid of. Men say it is the writing, first of one man, and then of another, sometimes put together by a third one or more. What folly! How then has it such astonishing unity of purpose and mind? It is madness and impiety for men to speak against the Book that Jesus treats as the Word of God.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Canaan

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The whole history of the bondage, redemption, deliverance, walk, and warfare of the children of Israel gives us perhaps the most complete picture of the whole life of a saint of God that the Bible contains. There is hardly a sorrow in Egypt, a trial of circumstances in the wilderness, a warfare or other event in the land, but may in some way or other afford a valuable lesson to the Christian. We purpose, therefore, looking to God for guidance, just to glance briefly at the wilderness —history and Canaan conflicts, as being those parts that most concern a young believer.

It may seem strange to some that of these two we should first speak of Canaan, especially if this is to be regarded as our final rest in heaven. We trust, however, clearly to show that, on the contrary, this goodly land embraces the whole sphere of our spiritual blessings into which we are brought now, and without the enjoyment of which we cannot tread the wilderness path to the glory of God.

Let us in the first place consider such scriptures as Exodus 3:7- 8; Exodus 6:7- 8. These speak only of bringing out of Egypt into Canaan, no mention being made of the wilderness at all, thus showing that although they must necessarily cross it (an affair of a few days), their wanderings there for forty years formed no part of God's purpose. In like manner we find in Colossians 1:13 that the same act that brought us out of the kingdom of darkness translates us into the kingdom of the Son. The wilderness may come in by the way to humble us and to prove us, or it may not. The dying thief had no wilderness journey, but passed straight out of Egyptian bondage into the paradise of God. Most of us have, however, a certain stretch of wilderness to cross; but it is important to see at the outset that this is only by the way, and in no way interferes with the fact that the sinner who one day was in Egypt, dead in trespasses and sins, the next may be raised up and sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (not as yet with Him).

As a matter of fact, the heavenly life and the wilderness life go on together, the latter in the strength given by the former. As "in Christ," a part of Him (also as a priest and worshiper), I am in heavenly places now; as a pilgrim and a stranger, I am in the wilderness. Thessalonians, Ephesians, and Colossians touch most on the Canaan side, while Philippians and 1 Peter take the wilderness path. It is clear that Canaan cannot be confined to our final home in heaven, though doubtless including it (when the wilderness journey is actually over), but is mainly a vivid picture of the saint's position in the heavenlies, now waging war like the Israelites of old, as soon as the Jordan is crossed, for the possession and maintenance of their rights, as well as the destruction of their enemies. This we read of not only in the Old Testament, but as regards the Christian in Ephesians 6.

In Deuteronomy 26:1 we read, "And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possesses it and dwellest therein." This verse speaks of three distinct positions of the Israelite in Canaan; that is to say, of the believer and his heavenly privileges. First he enters the land; next, he possesses it, or makes it his own; and third, he dwells in it. Let us briefly consider these in order.

Those for whom we write are sufficiently familiar with the leading facts of the history of the Israelites to remember that, having been delivered from the judgment of God, not by the fact of their being His people but by the atoning blood of the lamb, they next crossed the Red Sea, and then leisurely crossing the desert found themselves on the borders of the land. This they refused to enter, and were therefore doomed to die in the wilderness; while the next generation were not allowed to enter Canaan otherwise than by passing a second time through the waters of death in the Jordan.

Two facts at once arrest us here. First of all, the fact that neither the Red Sea nor the Jordan lies directly between Egypt and Canaan (Abraham, Jacob, and the Lord never crossed either in their journeys between the two); and second, that the children of Israel did cross the Red Sea by the direct guidance and leading of God. They never need have crossed the Jordan had it not been for their own unbelief. Let us try and see what meaning all this has for us. We have not only as sinners the judgment of God to face, from which the blood of the Lamb delivers us, but after this we still need deliverance from our three great foes—the world, the flesh, and the devil. Nothing now but the death of Christ can deliver us from the power of these, and of this both the Red Sea and Jordan are remarkable types.

In the waters of the former it will be remembered the pomp and pride of Egypt were drowned, and the strength of Pharaoh was broken, thus answering to the death of Christ which separates us from the world and Satan's power (Gal. 6:14; Heb. 2:14). But Romans 6 finds no real counterpart here, for although the Israelites should have left their old unbelieving hearts behind, as a matter of fact they did not. This is clearly seen on nearing Canaan. If the flesh had been left behind them as truly as Pharaoh and Egypt were, no Jordan would have been needed; but, alas, it appears this was the hardest lesson of all to learn. Those, therefore, who thus refused to leave it behind them, but on the contrary betrayed their confidence in it by putting themselves under law, had all to perish in the wilderness, that it might be destroyed; and death was again presented to the generation born in the wilderness, at the Jordan. Only this time special care was taken that they themselves, represented by twelve stones, should be left at the bottom. And this is the entrance into Canaan. The death of Christ has not only put away the sins of every believer, not only freed him from the world and Satan's power, but has also put an end to him, so that his old self is crucified and buried with Christ (in type by baptism), out of which he is risen in the power of a new life, and brought into the new and heavenly sphere of Canaan.

If, therefore, we put the Red Sea and the Jordan together, they present to us a full picture of the death of Christ, the former especially typifying what it delivers me from; in the latter, what it brings me into; or, in other words, death and resurrection. To cross the Jordan and enter Canaan is not the privilege of a few, but is the effect of the death of Christ for every believer, however few may enter into the meaning or power of it.

Let us now briefly consider the POSSESSING. This only belongs to those who fight for it; the condition of possession is stated in Joshua 1:3. We find that all Israel entered it together, but that many were careless about possessing it (Josh. 18:3), while two and a half out of the twelve tribes never dwelt in it at all, or at any rate, in that part beyond the Jordan.

This has great meaning for us, dear fellow believers. In Christ we all have died and risen, and entered the land; but how slow we are to POSSESS, to make our own, often after much exercise

and conflict with our spiritual enemies, the blessings that are ours in Christ! We have to fight the Lord's battles, but we are poor soldiers, though after all, the work is entirely His from first to last (Josh. 21:44). We have not space here to consider the various wiles by which Satan, at one time by fright as a roaring lion, at another by deceit as a wily serpent, sought to hinder this POSSESSION, but we earnestly commend the study of the book of Joshua in the light of Ephesians to our readers.

All that we can do here is, while just pointing out the outlines of this interesting subject, to bring home to each of our hearts the fact that it is only as we are thus possessing, thus abiding in communion with Christ, in the enjoyment of His love and peace, in the blessed sense of our portion in Him, that we can hope to walk to His glory down here. And in all this let us beware of possessing without dwelling; the two and a half tribes were valiant enough in possessing, that is, in making the land their own; but they did not enjoy what they obtained. So with many of us. We are keen and eager, it may be, in the pursuit of truth and a true position according to the mind of Christ, but how far are we dwelling in the power of what we know? How far does the atmosphere of Canaan so pervade our spirits, and its fruits so fill our lives, that we are found to the praise of God down here? Only the man who lives in Canaan can rightly cross the wilderness; the heart must be satisfied and happy in Christ to be content with His portion and path down here. If we would be strangers here, we must practically have a home with Christ in heaven for our hearts; and the man who does not dwell in a house in Canaan can never be content with only a tent in the wilderness. May the Lord give us each to feel more and more the importance of keeping up a fresh and happy inward life in real communion with Christ where He is, as this is the only real power to maintain a consistent walk to the glory of God.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: the Wilderness

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We have seen that entrance into the heavenly country is the privilege of every believer, but that possession, and still more dwelling in it, only belongs to those who make it their own and live in the enjoyment of it.

In the same way it is true with regard to our wilderness life here below, that although all true believers are brought safely through the Red Sea, saved from the judgment of God, delivered from Pharaoh's power and Egypt's slavery, yet it is only as we are really following Christ that we practically find that this world is the "wilderness wide," of which our hymn speaks, or that we are pilgrims and strangers in it.

Am I in it at All?

These things, beloved reader, are realities, and it will help us but little to know all the resources God provides for our wilderness journey if we are not in it in heart at all. Let us then seriously ask ourselves two questions. First, Am I in any sense a stranger in this world for Christ? and second, Am I passing through it as a pilgrim, or living in it as a citizen? Simple, heart-searching questions like these, honestly asked and faithfully answered before God, often speak to our consciences more powerfully than the most stirring address; and if we are conscientious and yet still clinging to this world, we shall find them very awkward and unpleasant questions to face. Do not shirk them, however, but if they do touch a sore point, let them have their full effect and show us just where we are really before God.

We noticed in the last paper that we must have a home and enjoyment for our spirits somewhere, and that the only way not to seek this now on earth is by truly having it as a present reality for our souls with Christ in heaven; or, in other words, the only way to be a stranger in the wilderness is to be even now at home in Canaan, in spirit, though as to our bodies we are still pressing on to our rest.

Communion with Christ in heaven alone gives the desire to follow Him on earth, while resurrection life in Him supplies the only power; hence, the Apostle prays both that he "may know Him," and the power of His resurrection, before he asks to know "the fellowship of His sufferings."

All My Resources are in God

The first thing that characterizes the wilderness is that all my resources are in God; my food comes from heaven, my water is given by God, my guide is the cloudy pillar; in short, every detail of my life is ordered by God. All around is nothing but the thirsty desert sand, capable, indeed, of receiving all I have to give, but utterly incapable of helping me an inch on my journey. In fact, from the moment I first passed beneath the sheltering blood of the Lamb, God has been and is my sole resource and stay until, in His good time, I actually reach the long-looked-for "rest of God." These then are the two great lessons to be engraved on our souls as strangers here:

1. There is nothing of this world that can help my spiritual life.

## 2. All my resources are in God.

### Seven Wilderness Lessons

#### 1. The Song

We will now very briefly glance at seven things connected with the wilderness journey—not in the thought that in any way they embrace the details of it, or even its leading features, but simply because each one may give us food for a few practical thoughts which may be of service to any who with honest hearts are desirous of treading more closely in Christ's footmarks.

The first thing we notice is that at the start all is smooth, pleasant, and joyful. What can be more delightful to the weary, worn-out Egyptian slave than to stand on the wilderness shore of the Red Sea, and after seeing the destruction of all the power that held him captive, to raise his joyful heart to God in a song of praise, the first song in Scripture, the song of a delivered soul brought to God, a song full of beauty and meaning, a song that no angel can sing, a song which shall echo through the countless ages of eternity; and then to turn around with his back to Egypt, his face to that glorious heavenly country which already by faith he counts his home, and start off with God for his Guide in all the happy freshness of a newborn soul. Surely we all know what it is thus to begin our pilgrimage.

#### 2. Marah—The Power of the Cross

The second thing that we observe is that Marah is reached, a place of bitter water, water which can only be sweetened by a certain tree. What meaning has this, beloved reader? Did we not think we should find all smooth and pleasant when we first set out to follow Christ, and did we not very soon come across something very bitter and unpleasant, and discover that practically to be crucified to this world, to be dead to it, is not a very pleasant thing? Do we not remember too that it was only when we cast in the wood of Christ's cross, and of His sorrows for us, that the waters became sweet; and, according to 1 Peter 4, we rejoiced, inasmuch as so early in our journey we had been made in any measure partakers of Christ's sufferings? Oh! the power of the cross of Christ! No Christian can live three days in this world without meeting Marah in some way or other, but it is the Marahs which draw us near to Christ's heart. It is the want of water here which makes us go for all our refreshment to, the Rock which is Christ.

To the soul, therefore, who knows what it is thus to have fellowship with Christ in rejection, these Marahs are sweet, each one marking a never-to-be-forgotten interview between the suffering servant and the loving Master.

“We know Him as we could not know,

Through heaven's golden years;

We there shall see His glorious face,

But Mary saw His tears.”

#### 3. Spiritual Refreshment

The third thing in the 15th chapter of Exodus is the spiritual refreshment Christ provides for true souls who have known what Marah means in the wilderness. In Elim we find the good shepherd leading his flock in the green pastures, and by the still waters. Here is an oasis in a desert. And what oasis does Christ provide for His pilgrims in this world? Truly that of Christian fellowship; these are our Elims. What a happy, blessed time we have when a few of us who are really seeking to follow Christ can get together beneath the sheltering palm trees, and draw fresh strength from the wells of the water of life. Many a one has called these happy Elims, “foretastes of heaven,” as they have enjoyed the “Sweet bonds that unite all the children of grace.”

Alas, that strife and discord should so often mar what our Lord has provided for our rest and refreshment.

#### 4. Wilderness Food

The fourth thing we notice is in the next chapter, and that is the food for the wilderness. Our bread is the manna that is sent down from heaven. In the deliverance from Egypt Christ is fed upon as the lamb roast with fire, our Substitute and Saviour; in Canaan we get Him as the old corn of the land, our glorified and exalted Lord; and it is worthy of observance that we never find the Israelites of old loathing either of these two foods. It is the manna, Christ in His humiliation and rejection, that is considered “light food.” It is this “bread from heaven” that is the test for each of our hearts today, as to whether we have been so truly won by His love as to esteem a path of rejection with Him better than all the “leeks and cucumbers” of Egypt.

Surely too we may learn an important wilderness lesson from the fact that this precious bread was gathered freshly every morning before the sun was up; so those find now who spend “an hour with Jesus” before the bustle of daily life has begun, that the sweetest and most strengthening food is then gathered and stored. As has been so well said by another: “If I sincerely desire to grow in the divine life— if my one grand object is to be assimilated and devoted to Christ—I shall without doubt seek continually that character of nourishment which is designed by God to promote my spiritual growth. It is plain that a man’s acts are always the truest index of his desires and purposes. Hence, if I find a professing Christian neglecting the Bible, yet finding abundance of time—yea, some of his choicest hours—for the light and other secular reading, I can be at no loss to decide as to the true condition of his soul. I am sure he cannot be spiritual—cannot be feeding upon, living for, or witnessing to, Christ.”

#### 5. Streams in the Desert

The fifth point that we may observe is the refreshing stream that pours out of the riven rock in accordance with the well-known passage in John 7:37. Surely if in the manna we have a picture of the humbled Christ as our food, here we have the indwelling Spirit that is with us throughout our wilderness journey, one of the blessed results and fruits of the death and glorification of Christ (John 7:39). The rock is Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). The waters, doubtless, here as elsewhere, are typical of the Holy Spirit, who is the refreshment and source of power and blessing, not only for ourselves, but others down here. “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” (Eph. 4:30). He is here to testify of Christ but He can only testify to ready and listening ears. He is here to guide us into all truth, but only those who have willing feet and subject hearts. This water too, unlike that in Exodus 16, is not for our own refreshment alone, but is to run

out from us, so that we ourselves, as filled with the Spirit, are to be as streams in the desert. Thus far we have traced the believer—a song of joy in his mouth—the fellowship of Christ's sufferings known to his heart—enjoyment of Christian fellowship—feeding on a humbled Christ—and refreshed by an indwelling Spirit.

#### 6. Wilderness Conflict

Sixth, we come to Amalek, a picture of the flesh energized by Satan, who is ever hanging about our rear ready to snap up any that are weak and ready to halt. We feel that it is quite impossible in the limits of a short paper to do more than just touch on this most important theme. It will be noticed that the victory in this case (Ex. 17) was obtained by two means—the one the intercession of Christ on high, and the other, the resistance in the power of the Spirit (Joshua) down here. Now both of these are necessary if we are to overcome our adversary. In Peter's case the intercession of Christ that his faith might not fail was fully answered, but on account of the want of his active resistance against the enemy, he failed. The resistance down here would be valueless were it not for the uplifted hands on high; at the same time we are to resist the devil, and the Spirit in us lusts (or fights) against the flesh, that we may not do the things that we would. Christ will not fail in His part, blessed be His name, but how often do we fail in practically resisting the assaults of the enemy.

#### 7. Water for Defiled Feet

The last, or seventh, thing we have to notice is the provision made in case of defilement in the wilderness journey. We refer to Numbers 19, which answers in type to 1 John 1:9. This cleansing is by water, not by blood, but it is water which contains and brings home to our hearts the memorials of the death of Christ (the ashes of the heifer), teaching us that restoration to communion after getting astray, is not by a fresh application of the blood of Christ (which is quite an unscriptural thought), but a bringing home to our hearts by the Word of God (the water; see John 13), the power of the death of Christ which we in our self-will had forgotten. It is thus that Christ Himself, in His perfect love, washes our feet when defiled with the wilderness journey.

Just think the whole subject over, beloved reader, and you will find that Christ is with us in every step. We meet Him first in Egypt, in the blood of the lamb; next in the delivering power of the Red Sea; next in the power of His cross; then in His gracious provision for our refreshment; next as the Manna, then as the Rock; then as our great Intercessor up on high; and last, in His wondrous love in following us when we go astray, and restoring our souls by the washing of water by the Word; the end of all being to meet His own glorious Self on the cloud, when all the journey will be over forever, and we shall praise for evermore the grace that has carried us on eagles' wings, and at last brought us to Himself.

## Not Given but Taken

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### Genesis 24

When the servant spoke of Isaac to Rebekah, unfolding his beauty, his riches, and the promises of which he was the exclusive heir, she felt an irresistible awakening of her affections, and loved Isaac already in her heart. It was not so much that she was giving her heart to an unseen and unknown Isaac, as that he had taken it.

It was thus before I knew Jesus; I felt it hard, impossible to give Him my heart; but when the Spirit of God opened up the knowledge of Him to my darkened understanding, revealing His beauty, His riches, intimating that all who believe are "joint heirs" with Him in His inheritance, I had no further thought of giving my heart, for He had naturally and designedly taken it.

## The Secret of Power: Nearness to Christ

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"And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils." Mark 3:14, 15.

We often look at the apostles as vessels of power taken up by the Lord, and qualified by Him for the accomplishment of His gracious and mighty work on earth. And we are right; for they were ordained by Him to preach, to heal, to cast out demons, and thus to illustrate the infinite power of the blessed Redeemer. That He should have possessed such power, that He should have entered the domain of Satan and spoiled his house, is no wonder when we remember who He was. But it is marvelous to think of the apostles - men - wielding a similar power! They received it from Him in dependence upon Him. They carried His authority and lived on His account.

But while all this is true, we are prone to overlook the first great privilege, and that from which all the others flow; namely, that "they should be with Him." They were ordained to this as fully as to the others. The principle thus asserted is that communion precedes service; and this company of the Lord is that which alone fits for testimony.

Now this is exceedingly happy. The blessed Master, in order to make His service a pleasure, calls us first into His presence and creates us His friends. This is Christianity and the atmosphere of love. "Henceforth," He says, "I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends." The idea of slavery is thus precluded; and the service, though intensely real, is perfect freedom. It is the service of love, and a pure, holy, happy service therefore. Hence the first consideration on the Lord's part was that "they should be with Him." How can you send a servant to do your bidding if he be not within call? It is necessary that he be at your constant command. You must have him near yourself. Again, how can you familiarize your messenger with your mind and ways if he should habitually live apart from you? Proximity creates acquaintance, and companionship produces similarity; and this is indispensable when accurate witness is to be borne. The ambassador must be in the secret of his government, and the servant of Christ in the sweet enjoyment of His presence.

Moreover, as to power or authority, where else can such a one find this? If the Lord authorize for service, He also grants the needed power, but only on this ground, that it is held as in Him alone, and by us as in full dependence on Him. The excellency of the power is of God, and not of us. Mark this - it is "not of us." We are in no sense depositaries of power, but we may be its channel; yet only then as being in company with the Lord. "That they should be with Him... and to have power" (authority). Being with Him (in spirit now) and having power go together. He has most power who abides most in his Lord's blest company. The nature of the power is not the question. Mighty signs and wonders may not be seen, but he is always a man of spiritual power who walks with the Lord; for with such, communion is the first thing, and service results from that. Such service is, like Mary's ointment, precious to Him, and it fills all the house as well.

## Deliverance From the Power of Sin: Romans 6:6-23

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Revised notes of a lecture on Rom. 6:6-23

This chapter may be justly called the chapter of the New Testament that shows how God has delivered us from what we were as children of Adam, from sin the sinful nature that is in us - and shows us, too, the real power for holiness of life and walk down here. The question of holiness is one raised on all sides today; and the fact that sin has power over them, instead of their having power over it, is what troubles many Christians. There are thousands of the Lord's people who are in this difficulty. But it is a remarkable thing that those who talk so much about holiness, and their difficulties as to it, often overlook what is to be found in this important chapter.

God will deliver us from sin and all its consequences when we are in glory; but there is also deliverance from its power now, although we still have it in us.

The word "holiness" is twice mentioned in this chapter, in verses 19 and 22, both of which verses speak of practical holiness of walk while in this world. It will help greatly to the understanding of this chapter to notice that its main truth is set forth in three consecutive verses -10, 11, and 12. I will first take them up as a whole, and afterward speak of them more in detail.

Verse 10 is what is true of Christ alone. In verse 11 the Spirit of God says, so to speak, "What is true of Him is true of you, because He took your place before God on the cross"; and faith believes this. Verse 12 is, "Carry it out in practice." We get first what is true of Christ. When the Spirit of God wants to teach us something about ourselves, He speaks of Christ first, then says, that "what is true of Him is equally true of you," and ends with, "Now carry it out." "Likewise" in verse 11 is very significant. Christ died unto sin once; likewise reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin. Christ is now alive unto God; likewise reckon ye yourselves to be alive to God.

In verse 12 we get another word which is full of meaning -"therefore"--that is a conclusion drawn from what goes before. This verse implies two things. First, that the sin is in our mortal bodies; second, that instead of its having power over us, we have power over it.

If I say to a man, "Don't let that child come into this room," I imply that he has the power to keep him out. So when God says, "Let not sin reign," it implies that you have the power to carry it out.

This chapter unfolds the way of deliverance from the power of sin now, while we are down here in the body- "the end everlasting life" (v. 22). The end is coming by-and-by, the end of all exercises of soul, and trials and troubles. Precious thought! But let me now take up these verses a little more in detail.

In verse 10, as I said, is what is true of Christ only- "In that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." I am quite sure that many of the Lord's people read this verse as if it said, "died for sin." But it is not so. What, however, does it mean when it says He "died unto sin once"? We will look at one or two scriptures that might help us, as it is very important to the understanding of the next verse, that we should catch its meaning. "He [that is, God] hath made

Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). What a wonderful truth! I cannot attempt to explain it, and I suppose we shall not fully comprehend it throughout eternity. He was not "made sin" in His life when He trod the earth in spotless purity. He was not "made sin" in the garden of Gethsemane when He prayed to the Father in such an agony that He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. It was not then, but on the cross; when He hung there, and was forsaken of God, He was made sin. What passed between God and His Son during those three hours of darkness, we are not told; but at the close that cry was heard, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But Scripture is totally silent as to what took place during those hours when darkness covered all the land. God drew a veil over the scene. Dear friends, just think of it. God made Him to be sin for me (speaking individually), because nothing else would fit me for His presence in glory.

Have you ever noticed the difference between this verse in Corinthians and 1 Pet. 2:24? "Who His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree." There, you see, it is the sins-actual offenses committed. In 2 Cor. 5:21, He was made sin; that is different. It is important to see that the Lord Jesus was not only there to bear our sins; but all the depth of our evil, sinful nature-sin, root and branch-came out before God then. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin.

The next scripture I will ask you to look at is Rom. 8:3: "For 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." That expression, "sin in the flesh," means sin in our flesh, as children of Adam. The evil of our nature not only came out before God, but was judged and condemned there and then. God there saw an end of it. This verse is very blessed - "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." It is not a mere, bare doctrine. Think of God's Son going under all the waves and billows of God's judgment! "God sending His own Son." Why does it say "own"? It reminds us of the love that the Father has to the beloved Son. Think how He loved His Son; or, as the Lord Jesus in Mark 12:6 speaks of it, "Having yet therefore one Son, His well beloved." He had only one Son. We know how fond parents are of an only son. That does not express all. He must add something - "His well-beloved." So in Rom. 8:3 it is not dry doctrine, but a question of God's heart of love. The Spirit reminds us of it, so to speak. Just think of it! And think of that God who "sent Him," "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all"; and then think of that beloved Son "made... sin for us." When He was on the cross, sin in the flesh was judged and condemned. He alone could sustain that awful weight and not be crushed under it. He did sustain it. He said, "It is finished." "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." John 19:30. Those who understand the Greek language say that the word for "gave up the ghost" means that He gave up the ghost by the action of His own will. He laid down His life, we know. He had "power to lay it down" (John 10:18).

Now in verse 10 of Romans 6, "He died unto sin once." The death of the Lord Jesus was the death of One who had undergone the judgment of God against sin, and had died to it. He died to sin - has done with it forever. He is never going to come in contact with it again in that way for all eternity.

The illustration given in verse 16 of Romans 6 will help us to understand the application of this to us. It speaks of sin being a master, and we its slaves. However tyrannical a master may be, a slave cannot get rid of him by giving notice to leave. However hard a master he may have, he is

bound to him for life. But the time comes when that slave reaches a deathbed, and now he slips out of his master's grasp, out of that state and condition in which he was a slave; he dies to his master.

"In that He died, He died unto sin once." He has done with it forever. But have you ever seen that you are as clear as He is in God's sight? You do not question for a moment whether He is clear of it, but do you question whether you are free of it? If I am dead to sin, why should I feel this working of sin in me? Many think that verse 11 means, Carry this truth into practice; but it is rather that faith accepts what is true of me in God's sight; faith believes what God says, and thus we can reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin, because in God's sight we are so. What foolishness it would be for me to say to you, Reckon yourself to be the Emperor of Russia. Why? Because it is not true of you. But in God's sight we have as much died to sin as that blessed One has; and thus God can say to us, You may reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin.

I purposely did not quote just now the latter part of verse 10-"In that He liveth, He liveth unto God"-because I wish to look at it separately in connection with verse 11. When John was in the isle of Patmos, and saw One like unto the Son of man, he bowed at His feet. And He laid His right hand upon him. How would it feel to have the right hand of that living, glorified Christ laid upon you? He said to John. "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I became dead [that is the correct wording of it]; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." He is the living One. "In that He liveth, He liveth unto God." It is not simply that He is alive. I cannot explain it; but I suppose that Christ, as alive from the dead, need never be occupied with sin again, or come in contact with it as the sin-bearer. He is free from death, judgment, and sin forever.

Now comes our side of it. You may count that you live to God in the same way. Have you ever done that? It is just as much an exhortation to reckon yourselves to be alive unto God, as to reckon yourselves to be dead to sin. And in God's sight, as in Christ, we are as much delivered from sin as we shall actually be delivered from it when we shall be in glory. We have nothing about practice in this verse. It is faith believes what God says about me. God says, I have given Christ. He has died to sin; so have you. He is alive to God; so are you. As a matter of fact, for a time, just for a little while, sin is in you still; but it is not for long.

Verse 12. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." Now, as I said before, that verse proves first, that sin is there; but it says also that you need not obey it. Do not pay any attention to what it says, you need not obey it. See what a power that gives us - that we have done with it as much as Christ has. I have only got it in me for a short time while I am in this body, but I have not to obey it any more than the slave of whom I have spoken, if he were to be raised, would have to obey his old master. "No," he could say, "I have died out of your hands, and am beyond your control." The old master has no power to tell you to do anything. I can say, "I shall not pay any more attention to what he says now; he has no right over me."

There is one thing more. Not only do not obey him, but do not let sin, that old master, have the members of your body as instruments to use. You used to use them in the service of sin, but now they are no longer to be used in the service of sin; they are to be used as instruments of righteousness unto God. The eyes, feet, hands, and the tongue- these are the members of our body. Ah, the tongue! You remember what we read in Jas. 3:5 about the tongue- "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." And verse 6, too. Oh, how solemn! This is

one of the members we are not to let sin have. So in verse 2, "In many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." I picked out this verse because the Spirit of God says that if you will not let sin have your tongue, you will be able to govern or bridle your whole body. How much the tongue can do! We often say things we are sorry for afterward. What mischief the tongue can cause! Yield not "your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God." Sin may come in and try to usurp a claim over them, but do not let it.

I would just refer to one more verse in the end of the chapter (5:21): "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" But in verse 22, "Now," - what have you got now that you are "become servants to God"? "Your fruit unto holiness, and the end" (there's the end, you see) - "the end everlasting life." Instead of death, the wages if sin, when that bright and blessed end comes, for us it is "everlasting life." Then we shall not only be delivered from the power of sin, but from its presence, too, and be holy and without blame before God in love.

But God looks at every believer as in Christ, as much delivered from sin now as we shall be in glory.

God grant that we may not give our members any more to the service of sin, but to His service who has done so much for us. Amen.

## An Advocate With the Father: Provision for Our Present Need

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Blessed indeed it is to see how rich and full is God's provision for our need. There is not a single need that can possibly arise in the history of God's people that He has not foreseen and made provision for. And it is well if our hearts have drunk in this blessed fact, for it will help to give us confidence in God, and enable us to go to Him in every time of need.

In John we have the manifestation of eternal life in the Person of Jesus; and as partakers of this life we are in relationship with God, and have communion with the Father and the Son. But this communion may be broken through sin. The relationship cannot be destroyed, but communion is interrupted. Now the same grace that brought us into this relationship with God, restores communion also when it has been lost through sin. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." This is God's gracious provision for His own children when they have lost communion through falling into sin.

Before we look at this point, let us notice a little the fact that God's Word makes no provision for a believer to sin. John says, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." He does not say, "that ye may sin," but "that ye sin not." In the first chapter he says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"; and "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." So then, we have sin, and we have sinned. Yet, true as this is, God has brought us to Himself in grace where we walk in the light as He is in the light. But what is the ground of this? How could God, consistently with His own nature and character, give us such a place? The simple soul-satisfying answer is, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Blessed and sure foundation for our souls to rest upon! "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

Amen." How wonderful is God's grace abounding over all our guilt and shame!

But "shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." It is all to deliver us from sin, not that we may go on in it. God is not only "faithful and just to forgive us our sins," but also "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In virtue of Jesus' blood we are pardoned once and forever; but we are also morally cleansed through the Word applied in the power of the Holy Ghost. A new nature is given, and as this is regulated by the Word, we are cleansed from all unrighteousness. May we then lay to heart that the whole work of grace is to deliver from sin - from its guilt, and from its power and defilement. "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

But the soul-humbling fact remains, that the believer, though a child of God, and walking in the light, does fall into sin; as James says, "For we all often offend" (J.N.D. Trans.); and as John here says, "If any man sin." We still have the flesh in us, and if allowed in the least degree, it is sin, and communion is broken. God has condemned sin in the flesh on the cross, and if we are allowing what He has condemned in the sacrifice of His Son, He cannot have communion with us.

Now God has made provision for the restoration of this communion when it has been lost. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." God provided a Savior for us as lost sinners, and He has provided an Advocate for us as failing children. And thus His provision is complete. It covers the whole range of our need from first to last. Jesus died for us to save us, and now He lives for us on high, a High Priest with God, an Advocate with the Father; and there He maintains our cause according to the value of an already accomplished and eternal redemption founded on the shedding of His own blood.

There is a difference, no doubt, between His intercession as in Hebrews, and His advocacy as in John. But all is founded on the value of His sacrifice for us. In Hebrews, His intercession is in view of our weakness. Here His advocacy is in view of sin which has interrupted communion. Both are needed. We are weak and can no more take a single step in the wilderness journey in our own strength than we could have saved ourselves when in our sins. It was as much the power of God that conducted Israel across the wilderness, as it was His power that saved them out of Egypt. And so it is with us. It is God's salvation and God's power from first to last. We are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"; and because we have a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having been tempted in all points like as we are, except sin, we can "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (1 Pet. 1:5; Heb. 4:15, 16.)

But in John it is not merely a question of weakness. It is if any man sin. And here "we have an advocate with the Father." It is "with the Father." Mark, though we may have sinned, the relationship is not broken. God is our Father still. The relationship abides, but communion is interrupted and needs to be restored. And this is brought about through the advocacy of Christ who has undertaken our whole cause. We have this Advocate. It is God's provision, and nothing can possibly hinder His services for us in this capacity. It is an unconditional service characterized by pure grace. It is no movement on our part that secures it. It is not, if we repent, or if we confess our sins, but "if any man sin, we have an advocate." It is all grace. The whole movement begins with Him, just as when He saved us in the first place. As surely as sin has interrupted our communion with God our Father, so surely the advocacy of Jesus goes on to bring about its restoration. And this is what makes the restoration certain, sooner or later. If left to ourselves, we could never get right. But all begins with Him, and His work cannot fail - blessed be His name! Repentance and confession have their place, but these are the results of His advocacy, not the cause; and the difference is very great. But we will look at this a little more fully that our souls may get the full benefit of it.

I repeat, the action of the Advocate does not wait for our repentance and confession. We may take the case of Peter as an illustration. Before he had committed the terrible sin of denying his Lord, Jesus said to him, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He was indeed on the way to this sin, being filled with self-confidence, and he needed to be sifted, and the sifting was allowed to take place; but Jesus prayed for him before he fell into the hands of Satan, and his faith did not fail. He was indeed sifted, but his faith was sustained even in that dark hour when Satan would have filled him with despair.

At the suited moment Jesus looked on him, and His words were brought to his remembrance, and then "Peter went out, and wept bitterly." Here was indeed repentance, but it was the fruit of the

Lord's intercession, and not what led to it. Afterward Peter was restored. There was the message to him from the risen Lord by the women, and the Lord appearing to him first of all the apostles, and, last of all, the probing of Peter's heart to reach the root of the evil; but in all this we see only the Lord's own action in meeting Peter's need. And He meets our need too when we, like Peter, have turned aside. It is a service of perfect love and unmixed grace, not waiting for anything in us, save the need which arises from our failure and sin; and even this it anticipates, as we have seen in the case of Peter.

We may now look a little at the ground of this service of our blessed Lord. Our Advocate is "Jesus Christ the righteous." The righteous One represents us; "as He is, so are we." He is our life and our righteousness. We are in Him, the righteous One, and thus stand before God in immutable righteousness. "And He is the propitiation for our sins." He has suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, and has borne them in His own body on the tree, and has perfectly glorified God about them; and His presence on high is the witness of our perfect acceptance in Him, according to the value of His propitiatory sacrifice. On the ground of this, He maintains our cause on high and, if we have sinned, secures our restoration to communion.

It is important to see that His advocacy is not in any sense to atone for our sins, as if they were imputed to us.

He atoned for our sins once in His death on the cross, and this can never be repeated. By that one sacrifice all our sins are covered, and there can be no imputation of guilt to the believer, as it is written, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin"; and again, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." We have been pardoned and justified, and are in Christ, according to divine righteousness, so that the advocacy of Christ can have nothing to do with satisfying God about guilt, or securing pardon for us, as if sin had been imputed to us. Even the sins we may commit after having believed were all covered by the death of Christ, and they are not imputed to us; but they hinder communion with God, and this is an immense loss to our souls.

It is God's good pleasure that we should be in communion with Himself, and that our joy should be full. But practical holiness in us is absolutely necessary for this, because God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. We cannot go on in sin, and have communion with Him; and hence, if we sin, we need to be restored so as to enjoy afresh the communion we have lost. And for this, Jesus our Advocate intercedes on the ground of the fact that we are in relationship to God according to divine righteousness, and according to the value of His propitiatory sacrifice.

And now a word as to the action of the Lord's grace toward us when overtaken in sin. A beautiful picture of this action is given us in John 13, where the blessed Lord washes the feet of His disciples. Peter did not understand then, but would understand it afterward. He also, in his ignorance and pride of heart, resisted the Lord's action, saying, "Thou shalt not wash my feet." But "Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Peter then desired Him to wash his head and hands also; but Jesus again answered, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all."

All, except Judas the betrayer, were already washed, and were "clean every whit." They were clean through the word which Jesus had spoken unto them (chap. 15:3). They were born again - born of water (a figure of the Word) and of the Spirit - and thus were clean. We are born again but

once, and in this get a new and clean nature, and thus are washed all over. But washing of the feet applies to our walk as Christians. Our walk needs to be separated from the defilement of this world, in order that we may have communion with Christ in glory. It is thus we have a part with Him. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Rejected and cast out of this world, He was going back to the Father. But He did not thereby give up His own which were in the world, but "loved them unto the end." And in going to the Father, He would have them linked up with Himself in His own blessed relationship with the Father, to have communion with Himself and the Father outside the world which was the scene of His rejection and death. But to have part with Him - communion with Him - according to the heavenly relationship, it was necessary to have the walk kept pure (the feet washed) according to the truth of this relationship. Thus the blessed Lord has girded Himself for this lowly service of love to

His own in order to keep them in communion with that heavenly scene where He is, forming their affections according to the revelation of Himself to their hearts, as they are being conducted on to their portion with Him in glory.

Do we then fall into sin? Do our feet become defiled in our walk through this evil world? Well, we have an Advocate with the Father, whose plea for us cannot fail, and who also turns to us in blessed grace, with towel and basin, to wash our feet and bring us back into the communion we have lost. By the application of His Word to us, we are led to self-judgment and a walk of holy separation from evil, according to the truth of the cross, in which sin in the flesh has been condemned. May the Lord give us to walk thus in happy communion with Himself.

Jesus also says, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." May we also heed this admonition, following His example in the same lowly grace, and in the power of the same divine love.

One thing more. If we have sinned, and the Lord is seeking to wash our defiled feet, or if our brethren are seeking to do so in the Lord's name, how solemn if we are resisting this action of grace! God is not mocked! He is full of patience, but if we are rebellious He knows how to chastise and break our stubborn wills. Oh! may we trust our feet in the hands of the blessed Lord, to be washed when the need arises through our failure, bowing to His will with repentant hearts and with chastened spirits, and humble, prayerful dependence on God, seek to walk in His fear, and in the realization of His perfect and unfailing love and grace.

## The Lion of the Tribe of Judah

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The names and titles given to the Lord Jesus in the Word of God are many and varied in thought. They speak of His attributes, of His glories, and of dispensational relationships. The One whom God delights to honor is thus placed before man according to the varied glories which are and will yet be His. And these varied names and titles, so full of significance, call forth worship and homage from hearts that are won to Him, when their meaning is entered into.

The Lion of the tribe of Judah is one of His titles, and is given to us in Rev. 5:5. "And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." Here we have the Lord Jesus introduced in connection with the earthly purposes of God. David, the son of Jesse, was the one whom Jehovah had chosen to be king of Israel, as we read in Psalm 78:70: "He chose David also His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds." David was marked as "the king" and this title brings before us God's purpose as to Christ in connection with Israel on earth.

In Rev. 5:5, the One who can step forward when all others have failed-not one in heaven, in earth, or under the earth, being worthy to open the book and loose its seals-is the blessed One who comes, according to God's purpose, in the royal line of Judah, and who, because of this, is termed "The Lion of the tribe of Juda." He alone can take the book, open its seals and unfold those things which are coming to pass upon the earth. He is the worthy and powerful One, but not manifested as such till all others have been proved unworthy to undertake such a work. How suitable and appropriate is the name, "The Lion of the tribe of Juda." We know Judah was the tribe from which Christ, or Messiah, came, and the name "Lion" gives the thought of majesty and power. So Jacob compared Judah to a lion in Gen. 49:9: "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?"

The same symbol is used in connection with Israel and awaits fulfillment in a future day. "Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." Numb. 23:24.

The Lord, in His character as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, is the One who will bring this about. At present He is still despised and rejected by man, but accepted of God and seated at His right hand; He awaits the time when He will make His enemies His footstool, and all things shall be put in subjection under Him. Then His lion like character of power and majesty will be manifested.

Another very important point which this portion brings before us, is that He does not take the place of opening the book because of His divine glory, or because He is worthy, but because He "prevailed." His victory through His death is what is made prominent.

The Lord might, at any time, have taken that book and opened the seals, because of His personal worthiness; but had He done so on that ground, we could not have known the wonderful unfoldings (or the secrets) of the book. No, He would not thus open the seals, but by having become man, and still being a divine person, He had power to go down into death and to rise

victoriously. He overcame, He conquered, or as the Scripture says, He "prevailed"; and on that ground He takes the book and opens

the seals and can unfold to us, through John, what is to take place on this earth, after He will have His Church with Himself in the glory.

"Lion of Judah's tribe,

Thy kingly power we own;

All blessing, might, ascribe

To Him upon the throne.

For Thou hast purchased by Thy blood,

And made us kings and priests to God."

As you read this, do you rejoice that the Lord Jesus Christ will yet have that place of honor and glory, or do you fear as you think of this? If you know Him in His Lamblike character, that is, as the One who has been a sacrifice for sin, and can say, "He died for me," you will rejoice that He will have His rightful place; but if you are not able to say so from the heart, you may well fear and tremble at the thought of His coming power and glory. Man must have Him as his Savior, or as his Judge. Which will it be with you?

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Waiting

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Lord's coming in reference to His work among them, and the reward which He will get in them in the glory; while in chapter 3 we find the return of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints is placed in connection with a holy and God-pleasing walk (1 Thess. 4:1).

Having then shown that these are three scriptural distinctions, let us for a moment consider the Christian as waiting for Christ.

### It is the Heart That Waits for Christ

Where this is spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 1, we notice one thing most particularly, and that is, that those who thus earnestly looked out for Christ, knew so little about the doctrine of the way and manner of His coming, that it had to be made a subject of a special revelation in the close of chapter 4. But they did not wait till that chapter before they looked out for Christ. We are thus clearly taught that waiting for Christ is not a matter of intelligence, but of heart. And this, beloved reader, shows us where we fail. For in these closing days God has wonderfully opened up His Word to us, so that there are thousands now who know a very great deal more of the Lord's coming than did these Thessalonians of old; but of how many of all these can it be truly said, They are waiting for Christ?

### How We Are to Wait

It is an important and deeply interesting fact that our Lord has detailed the precise attitude in which He wishes us to await His return, so that any uncertainty is not possible. In that wonderful passage in Luke 12, when Jesus seeks to prepare the hearts of His disciples for His coming departure, He also speaks of His return. Those who wait for Him during the long dark night are to be characterized by girded loins and trimmed lamps, and they themselves are to be like men that wait for their Lord. And then follows that wondrously blessed promise that those who are thus girded and watching here, shall there sit down at table while the Lord rises, girds Himself, and serves them!

Now the girded loins, in other words, are the Christian's walk, carefully keeping his garments from the defilement around, and declaring by his tightly girded dress his position as a traveler, and as a pilgrim; while the lights or lamps burning, speak of his work, and his testimony in this world for Christ, both of which we hope to touch on in future papers, so that it is the emphatic, "Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord," that most occupies our thoughts here.

### Like Men that Wait for Their Lord

One thing about this waiting is clear. Although it surely leads to self-examination and carefulness in walk and ways, it is a waiting with joy, not with fear. While a certain solemnity surely attaches to the thought of that sublime moment when we first behold our Lord, He would have our hearts anticipate it with joy. In order to do this, it is clear we must know something of Christ; for it is certain that it is just in proportion as we know Christ, not truth, that we long to see Him. And this

leads us in many ways to walk more worthy of Him; as our hearts get more occupied with Christ, insensibly one thing after another stands revealed in its true light. We distinguish the substance from the shadow, our eyes get cleared from the mists around, our hearts freer for Him, our lives more separated, more devoted, more unworldly; in short, altogether we become—like men who wait for their Lord.

#### Worldly Christians Cannot Wait for Christ

To truly wait for Christ we must be unworldly. If we love this world and the things which are in it, how can we look out for the One who is to take us from it forever? But if we have learned to dread and dislike the world, to see through all its tinsel, and to discern the power of its god and prince that is behind, hurrying all on to destruction, we long to leave it, and thus doubly to welcome Christ—first, for His own sake, and next, for taking us away from it all to the Father's house.

I shall never forget some time ago when I had to get a dear old lady from a boardinghouse, where she had been badly treated, seeing her sitting in the little dark underground room in which she had been kept, in a large armchair, with bonnet, boots, cloak, and gloves all on, earnestly awaiting my arrival. Although I could not come before twelve, so anxious was she to leave the place, that she had insisted on getting up between four and five o'clock that morning, and being fully dressed; and she had been sitting thus in that chair for six or seven hours, all ready and waiting to go. I cannot describe her look of intense joy and satisfaction when I entered the room just as she was thinking herself quite forsaken, and her delight when at last she found herself going away with me. What a feeble picture this is of what our attitude ought to be, and what our joy will be at Christ's coming!

#### Christ's Coming Draws Near

Everything, too, bespeaks its nearness. Vain though it must be for us to attempt to fix an hour, which the Lord says no one knows but the Father, still in many ways He has indicated His approaching return. First, in the remarkable spread of gospel preaching and work among young and old throughout Christendom, thus rapidly gathering in the number of His elect. Second, in the fact that the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him," that was unheard prior to the last century, is now sounded everywhere; and, third, in that the signs of the last times, spoken of in 2 Timothy and elsewhere, are to be seen on every side of us. Many, however, think that unless it is quite sure that Christ will come in our time, it is no use waiting for Him, because it will be in vain. This is a great mistake. In no sense is it in vain. As regards ourselves, it exercises its purifying influence on our lives, draws us nearer to Christ, and keeps us more separate from the world. With regard to Him, it is just as precious to His heart as if He came. Unlike the queen who can only see those who are waiting at the moment she passes, He has watched and recorded the names of every "watcher" whose watchful heart has communed with Him through the long dark night— not one is forgotten. And if you thus patiently look out and watch for Christ, you will be among those in glory whom Christ will specially come forth to serve. Oh, may He speak to each of our hearts in power, that many sleepers may henceforth become watchers to His praise and glory.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Walking

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We have spoken of the Christian's attitude in waiting for Christ's return, in the last paper, in which we also saw that two other attitudes are also closely connected with this event; namely, the Christian's walk and work. We will now briefly consider the former of these two. In the first place, let us clearly understand that "walking" is not "working," properly so-called. The distinction, indeed, seems so plain as to be hardly necessary at all, yet there is a great deal of confusion on this very point. People seem to think that if they are walking steadily and correctly, and are manifesting Christ more or less in their daily lives, they are doing all that can be required of them; and yet it may be that with all this, beautiful as it is in its place, they may be ignoring and leaving undone a large amount of Christian work that is ready for them. We will point out one or two scripture expressions on this subject.

### Walking and Working

"To me to live is Christ" is a very comprehensive one, and includes both the walk and work, indeed, all that Christ did. Would that we knew more of its meaning!

Take, however, the exhortations to a godly walk in the Ephesians—to walk worthy of our vocation, to walk in love, and walk circumspectly; also those of Peter on the same subject, and compare them with "Always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58); "If any man's work abide" (1 Cor. 3:14); "To every man his work" (Mark 13:34), and it will be at once seen that "walk" is not the same as "work," though in some cases the word is so used as to include it: as, "Walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the true knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10 JND).

We, however, are so one-sided in our actions and views that, far from maintaining the even balance of Scripture, we either are very active in works, often seeking in that activity to cover up the want of a really godly and Christ-like walk; or else we become so occupied with the passive side of the new life as to have but little Christian activity left. Some, indeed, press work, work, work, till it would seem as if Christianity were all work. Others say only walk, walk, walk, as if the Christian had no real work to do. What Christ wants is both.

Leaving the working, however, just for the present, let us briefly consider the walking. Now our walk is characterized by two great principles, for as we ought to walk even as Christ walked (1 John 2:6), and as He was light and love, even as God is (1 John 1:5; 1 John 4:8-16), these two principles govern our path.

### Walking in the Light

Taking light first, we find that all believers walk in the light (1 John 1:6, 7), but not according to it (Eph. 5:8); that is to say, being brought out of darkness into His marvelous light, we are set in a position where no darkness affords an excuse for stumbling. The twilight is passed; we stand in the full blaze of the gospel day. Hence the exhortation in Ephesians is to walk according to the

sphere in which we are set. When a Christian sins, therefore, it is not in darkness, but in and against the light, so that we are without excuse. But light is not merely a question of position; from it flow several important qualities of the Christian walk. Righteousness, holiness, truth, purity, are all fruits of light, and of cardinal value in the Christian life.

### Fruits of Light

Righteousness is divine light applied to the affairs of daily life; holiness is divine light applied to the life with God; truth is divine light ruling my words; purity, divine light ruling myself (1 John 3:3). We have already considered the question of a righteous walk in paper number 4, and that of a holy or sanctified walk in number 5; both of these, let us remember, are directly connected with the Lord's return in Revelation 22. In 1 Thessalonians 3:13, as we have seen, holiness is connected with the Lord's return; but here, let us remark, it is inward, a holy heart before God. What a thought!—a heart really consecrated to God, where He is first in all things, separated to Him. What a source this is for the holy walk that follows in the next verse (1 Thess. 4:1).

### Truth

"The lip of truth shall be established forever" (Prov. 12:19). But God desires "truth in the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6), and "walking in truth" (2 John 4) goes far beyond these words, all-important as they are. With regard to speaking the truth, one has expressed a very beautiful thought to the effect that we should so "seek to speak that our words shall express exactly the fact, no more and no less; so that speaking, like painting, shall become an art, which shall in the most appropriate words, instead of colors, lay the matter before the hearer." In the present day, especially, when exaggeration is so common, it is as singular as it is refreshing to find a young Christian so weighing his words as to be as accurate as a good picture. Is not our Lord's reply when asked who He was, in John 8, a proof how perfectly true and transparent His words had ever been? "Altogether that which I also say to you" (John 8:25 JND). Surely the habit of consciously being in the light of God's presence greatly tends to this true speaking. But truth in the inward parts is what God requires — true to God, to myself, and to others — to God, in all His Word requires from me—to myself, in really and truly being what I am, no more, no less, putting on no false appearances, not deceiving myself—true to others, not deceiving them, avoiding all hypocrisy. This true living is of all importance to a young believer, as many things may tend to make him unreal. If he has learned quickly much spiritual truth, and yet not been brought very really into God's presence, he is very apt to desire to appear more than he really is, and prone to seek to be accredited for the truth he knows, rather than for the life he leads. The most dangerous position of all is when he has stepped into some right position before God without real exercise of conscience, and then supposes that the position entitles him at once to look down on others, and imagines himself far on in the school of God. Be severe with yourself, beloved reader; at all costs be truthful; underrate rather than overrate your spiritual state. This alone leads to a truer and holier walk. Walking in the truth is different (2 John 1), and means walking according to the revealed Word of God. This, it is needless to say, is of all importance. No walk, however sincere, can possibly be according to God that is not according to "the truth."

Purity is a beautiful quality in a Christian's walk. Occupation with what is defiling can never make us pure, but occupation with Christ does. We see that in 1 John 3, where Christ is the measure of our purity (1 John 3:3), our righteousness (1 John 3:7), and our love (1 John 3:16).

## The Threefold Sphere of Love

Love is the second great characteristic of God, and therefore of the Christian's walk. We are exhorted to walk in love— love to God, to our fellow believers, to our fellow men. Love to God shows itself in obedience. Obedience, to be worth anything, is the offspring of love. Thus alone Christ obeyed, and to His obedience are we set apart (1 Pet. 1:2-14). Turning instinctively to God for direction in every event of life, waiting till we get it, and then following it. Such is the path of Psalm 32, and that of the obedient child—a path of security, of happiness, of freedom from care, though not from carefulness. "To obey," too, "is better than sacrifice," and it springs from hearkening, which is better than "the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22). It may not bring us much praise or credit, but it always pleases God, and even when we are slow of understanding, if the desire is to obey, the Lord will guide. This then is the proof of love to God, and a special blessing is reserved for those who thus walk (John 14:23). Love to our brethren is mostly shown in washing one another's feet; this is the most delicate proof of real love that can be given, and the rarest (John 13). Love can be shown in the cup of cold water, in the offering of a sweet-smelling savor (Phil. 4:18), in caring for bodily or spiritual needs. The heart that is "at leisure from itself, to soothe and sympathize," will readily discover the appropriate way of showing love. Love to the world at large is most shown in pointing them to Christ. Caring for the suffering and the poor is an essentially Christian duty; but care for the soul comes first, though it may not always be made the most prominent.

Such then is a brief and most imperfect sketch of the Christian walk, all perfectly summed up in the three words, "as He walked." This is the best direction of all — "as He walked" — in righteousness (Isa. 53:11), goodness (Matt. 19:16), truth (John 7:18), lowliness (Matt. 11:29), patience (Matt. 27:14), self denial (Matt. 8:20), humility (Luke 22:27), obedience (John 4:34), compassion (Luke 19:41), benevolence (Matt. 4:23, 24), love (John 13:1).

May the Lord exercise our hearts to a more godly, truthful, and lowly walk in view of the nearness of His return.

## Growing Like Him

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The silkworm grows to be similar in color to the leaves on which it feeds. The tree-frog takes on the hue of that to which it clings. So the human soul becomes Christ like when Christ is to that soul the bread of life. If we walk with Him, commune with Him, feed on Him, we become satisfied with His likeness, and the world will take note that we have been with Jesus.

## Fragment

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### Matthew 26

In this solemn chapter we have a great many hearts revealed. The hearts of the chief priests, the hearts of the elders, the hearts of the scribes, the heart of Peter, the heart of Judas. But there is one heart in particular unlike all the others, and that is the heart of the woman who brought the alabaster box of very precious ointment to anoint the body of Jesus. This woman had a heart for Christ. She may have been a very great sinner-a very ignorant sinner - but her eyes had been opened to see a beauty in Jesus which led her to judge that nothing was too costly to be spent on Him. In a word, she had a heart for Christ.

Passing over the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes, let us look for a moment at the heart of this woman in contrast with the heart of Judas and the heart of Peter.

1) Judas was a covetous man. He loved money-a very common love in every age. He had preached the gospel. He had walked in company with the Lord Jesus during the days of His public ministry. He had heard His words, seen His ways, experienced His kindness. But, alas, though an apostle, though a companion of Jesus, though a preacher of the gospel, he had no heart for Christ. He had a heart for money. His heart was ever moved by the thought of gain. When money was in question, he was all alive. The deepest depths of his being were stirred by money. "The bag" was his nearest and dearest object. Satan knew this. He knew the special lust of Judas. He was fully aware of the price at which he could be bought. He understood his man, how to tempt him, and how to use him. Solemn thought!

Be it observed, also, that the very position of Judas made him all the more fit for Satan. His acquaintance with the ways of Christ made him a fit person to betray Him into the hands of His enemies. Head knowledge of sacred things, if the heart be not touched, renders a man more awfully callous, profane, and wicked. The chief priests and scribes, in Matthew 2, had a head knowledge of the letter of Scripture, but no heart for Christ. They could at once hand down the prophetic roll and find the place where it was written, "Thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel." v. 6. And this was very well, very true, and very beautiful; but then they had no heart for this "Governor" - no eyes to see Him - they did not want Him. They had Scripture at their fingers' ends: They would have felt ashamed, no doubt, had they not been able to answer Herod's question. It would have been a disgrace to men in their position to exhibit ignorance; but they had no heart for Christ, and hence they laid their scriptural knowledge at the feet of an ungodly king who was about to use it, if he could, for the purpose of slaying the true Heir to the throne. So much for head knowledge without heart love.

It is not, however, that we would make little of scriptural knowledge. Far from it. The true knowledge of Scripture must lead the heart to Jesus. But there is such a thing as knowing the letter of Scripture so as to be able to repeat chapter after chapter, verse after verse, yea, so as to

be a sort of walking concordance, and, all the while, the heart be cold and callous toward Christ. This knowledge will only throw one more into the hands of Satan, as in the case of the chief priests and scribes. Herod would not have applied to ignorant men for information. The devil never takes up ignorant men, or stupid men, to act against the truth of God. No; he finds other agents to do his work. The learned, the intellectual, the deep-thinking, provided only they have no heart for Christ, will answer him well at all times. What was it saved the "wise men from the east"? Why could not Herod-why could not Satan-enlist them into his service? Oh, reader, mark the reply. They had a heart for Christ. Blessed safeguard! Doubtless, they were ignorant of Scripture-they would have made but a poor hand of searching for a passage in the prophets; but they were looking for Jesus-earnestly honestly, diligently looking for Jesus. Wherefore, Herod would fain have made use of them if he could, but they were not to be used by him. They found their way to Jesus. They did not know much about the prophet who had spoken of the "Governor"; but they found their way to the "Governor" Himself. They found Him in the Person of the Babe in the manger at Bethlehem; and instead of being tools in the hands of Herod, they were worshipers at the feet of Jesus.

Now it is not that we would commend ignorance of Scripture. By no means. People are sure to err greatly who know not the Scriptures. It was to the praise of Timothy that the Apostle could say to him, "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation"; but then he adds, "through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 3:15. The true knowledge of Scripture will always conduct us to the feet of Jesus; but mere head knowledge of Scripture without heart love for Christ will only render us the more effective agents in the hands of Satan.

Thus, in the case of the hardhearted money-loving Judas, he had knowledge without a spark of affection for Christ, and his very familiarity with that blessed One made him a suitable instrument for the devil. His nearness to Jesus enabled him to be a traitor. The devil knew that thirty pieces of silver could purchase his service in the horrible work of betraying his Master.

Reader, think of this! Here was an apostle-a preacher of the gospel-a high professor; yet, underneath the cloak of profession lay "a heart... exercised with covetous practices" - a heart which had a wide place for "thirty pieces of silver," but not a corner for Jesus. What a case! what a picture! what a warning! Oh! all ye heartless professors, think of Judas! think of his course! think of his character! think of his end! He preached the gospel, but he never knew it, never believed it, never felt it. He had painted sunbeams on canvas, but he had never felt their influence. He had plenty of heart for money, but no heart for Christ. As "the son of perdition" "he hanged himself" and "went to his own place."

Professing Christians, beware of head knowledge, lip profession, official piety, mechanical religion-beware of these things, and seek to have a heart for Christ.

2) In Peter we have another warning, though of a different kind. He really loved Jesus, but he feared the cross. He shrank from confessing His name in the midst of the enemy's ranks. He boasted of what he would do, when he should have been self-emptied. He was fast asleep when he ought to have been on his knees. Instead of praying, he was sleeping; and, then, instead of being still, he was drawing his sword. He followed Jesus "afar off," and then warmed himself at the high priest's fire. Finally, he cursed and swore that he did not know his gracious Master. All this was terrible! Who could suppose that the Peter of Matt. 16:16 is the Peter of Matthew 26? Yet, so

it is. Man in his best estate is but like a sere autumn leaf. There is none abiding. The highest position, the loudest profession, may all end in following Jesus afar off, and of basely denying His name.

It is very probable, yea, almost certain, that Peter would have spurned the thought of selling Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and yet he was afraid to confess Him before a servant maid. He might not have betrayed Him to His enemies, but he denied Him before them. He may not have loved money, but he failed to manifest a heart for Christ.

Christian reader, remember Peter's fall, and beware of self confidence. Cultivate a prayerful spirit. Keep close to Jesus. Keep away from the influence of this world's favor. "Keep thyself pure." Beware of dropping into a sleepy, torpid condition of soul. Be earnest and watchful. Be occupied with Christ. This is the true safeguard.

Do not be satisfied with the mere avoidance of open sin. Do not rest in mere blamelessness of conduct and character. Cherish lively, warm affections toward Christ. One who follows Jesus "afar off" may deny Him before long. Let us think of this. Let us profit by the case of Peter. He himself afterward tells us to "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:8, 9). These are weighty words, coming as they do from the Holy Ghost, through the pen of one who had suffered so much from lack of "vigilance."

Blessed be the grace that could say to Peter, before his fall, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Mark, He does not say, "I have prayed for thee that thou mayest not fall." No; but "that thy faith fail not" when thou hast fallen. Precious, matchless grace! This was Peter's resource. He was a debtor to grace from first to last. As a lost sinner, he was a debtor to "the precious blood of Christ"; and as a stumbling saint, he was a debtor to the all-prevailing advocacy of Christ. Thus it was with Peter. The advocacy of Christ was the basis of his happy restoration. Of this advocacy Judas knew nothing. It is only those who are washed in the blood that partake of the advocacy. Judas knew nothing of either. Hence he "went and hanged himself," whereas Peter went forth as a converted or restored soul, to "strengthen" his brethren. There is no one so fit to strengthen his brethren as one who has himself experienced the restoring grace of Christ. Peter was able to stand before the congregation of Israel and say, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just," the very thing he had done himself. This shows how entirely his conscience was purged by the blood, and his heart restored by the advocacy of Christ.

3) And now, one word as to the woman with the alabaster box. She stands forth in bright and beautiful contrast with all. While the chief priests, elders, and scribes were plotting against Christ in "the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas," she was anointing His body "in the house of Simon the leper." While Judas was covenanting with the chief priests to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, she was pouring the precious contents of her alabaster box upon His Person. Touching contrast! She was wholly absorbed with her Object, and her Object was Christ. Those who knew not His worth and beauty might pronounce her sacrifice a waste. Those who could sell Him for thirty pieces of silver might talk of giving "to the poor"; but she heeded them not. Their surmisings and murmurings were nothing to her. She had found her all in Christ. They might murmur, but she could worship and adore. Jesus was more to her than all the poor in, the world. She felt that nothing was "waste" that was spent on Him. He might only be worth thirty pieces of

silver to one who had a heart for money. He was worth ten thousand worlds to her, because she had a heart for Christ. Happy woman! May we imitate her! May we ever find our place at the feet of Jesus, loving, adoring, admiring, and worshiping His blessed Person. May we spend and be spent in His service, even though heartless professors should deem our service a foolish "waste." The time is rapidly approaching when we shall not repent of anything done for His name's sake; yea, if there could be room for a single regret, it will be that we so faintly and feebly served His cause in the world. If, on the "morning without clouds," -a single blush could mantle the cheek, it will be that we did not, when down here, dedicate ourselves more undividedly to His service.

Reader, let us ponder these things. And may the Lord grant us A HEART FOR CHRIST.

Note - There is something perfectly beautiful in the way in which the Lord vindicates the act of the woman. "When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for My burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Nothing can exceed the grace that shines in these most precious words. "This gospel," which reveals Christ for the heart, is here linked with an act which reveals a heart for Christ, and sent forth to the whole world, to be heard by countless millions. The Lord be praised!

## Understanding 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 babble 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 "Headgeneral"; 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.

## Christ for the Heart and the Heart for Christ

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It is not, however, that we would make little of scriptural knowledge. Far from it. The true knowledge of Scripture must lead the heart to Jesus. But there is such a thing as knowing the letter of Scripture so as to be able to repeat chapter after chapter, verse after verse, yea, so as to be a sort of walking concordance, and, all the while, the heart be cold and callous toward Christ. This knowledge will only throw one more into the hands of Satan, as in the case of the chief priests

and scribes. Herod would not have applied to ignorant men for information. The devil never takes up ignorant men, or stupid men, to act against the truth of God. No; he finds other agents to do his work. The learned, the intellectual, the deep-thinking, provided only they have no heart for Christ, will answer him well at all times. What was it saved the "wise men from the east"? Why could not Herod-why could not Satan-enlist them into his service? Oh, reader, mark the reply. They had a heart for Christ. Blessed safeguard! Doubtless, they were ignorant of Scripture-they would have made but a poor hand of searching for a passage in the prophets ; but they were looking for Jesus-earnestly honestly, diligently looking for Jesus. Wherefore, Herod would fain have made use of them if he could, but they were not to be used by him. They found their way to Jesus. They did not know much about the prophet who had spoken of the "Governor"; but they found their way to the "Governor" Himself. They found Him in the Person of the Babe in the manger at Bethlehem; and instead of being tools in the hands of Herod, they were worshipers at the feet of Jesus.

Now it is not that we would commend ignorance of Scripture. By no means. People are sure to err greatly who know not the Scriptures. It was to the praise of Timothy that the Apostle could say to him, "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation"; but then he adds, "through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 3:15. The true knowledge of Scripture will always conduct us to the feet of Jesus; but mere head knowledge of Scripture without heart love for Christ will only render us the more effective agents in the hands of Satan.

Thus, in the case of the hardhearted money-loving Judas, he had knowledge without a spark of affection for Christ, and his very familiarity with that blessed One made him a suitable instrument for the devil. His nearness to Jesus enabled him to be a traitor. The devil knew that thirty pieces of silver could purchase his service in the horrible work of betraying his Master.

Reader, think of this! Here was an apostle-a preacher of the gospel-a high professor; yet, underneath the cloak of profession lay "a heart . . . exercised with covetous practices" - a heart which had a wide place for "thirty pieces of silver," but not a corner for Jesus. What a case! what a picture! what a warning! Oh! all ye heartless professors, think of Judas! think of his course! think of his character! think of his end! He preached the gospel, but he never knew it, never believed it, never felt it. He had painted sunbeams on canvas, but he had never felt their influence. He had plenty of heart for money, but no heart for Christ. As "the son of perdition" "he hanged himself" and "went to his own place."

Professing Christians, beware of head knowledge, lip profession, official piety, mechanical religion-beware of these things, and seek to have a heart for Christ.

2) In Peter we have another warning, though of a different kind. He really loved Jesus, but he feared the cross. He shrank from confessing His name in the midst of the enemy's ranks. He boasted of what he would do, when he should have been self-empty. He was fast asleep when he ought to have been on his knees. Instead of praying, he was sleeping; and, then, instead of being still, he was drawing his sword. He followed Jesus "afar off," and then warmed himself at the high priest's fire. Finally, he cursed and swore that he did not know his gracious Master. All this was terrible! Who could suppose that the Peter of Matthew 16:16 is the Peter of Matthew 26? Yet, so it is. Man in his best estate is but like a sere autumn leaf. There is none abiding. The highest position, the loudest profession, may all end in following Jesus afar off, and of basely denying His

name.

It is very probable, yea, almost certain, that Peter would have spurned the thought of selling Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and yet he was afraid to confess Him before a servant maid. He might not have betrayed Him to His enemies, but he denied Him before them. He may not have loved money, but he failed to manifest a heart for Christ.

Christian reader, remember Peter's fall, and beware of self - confidence. Cultivate a prayerful spirit. Keep close to Jesus. Keep away from the influence of this world's favor. "Keep thyself pure." Beware of dropping into a sleepy, torpid condition of soul. Be earnest and watchful. Be occupied with Christ. This is the true safeguard.

Do not be satisfied with the mere avoidance of open sin. Do not rest in mere blamelessness of conduct and character. Cherish lively, warm affections toward Christ. One who follows Jesus "afar off" may deny Him before long. Let us think of this. Let us profit by the case of Peter. He himself afterward tells us to "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:8, 9). These are weighty words, coming as they do from the Holy Ghost, through the pen of one who had suffered so much from lack of "vigilance."

Blessed be the grace that could say to Peter, before his fall, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Mark, He does not say, "I have prayed for thee that thou mayest not fall." No; but "that thy faith fail not" when thou hast fallen. Precious, matchless grace! This was Peter's resource. He was a debtor to grace from first to last. As a lost sinner, he was a debtor to "the precious blood of Christ"; and as a stumbling saint, he was a debtor to the all-prevailing advocacy of Christ. Thus it was with Peter. The advocacy of Christ was the basis of his happy restoration. Of this advocacy Judas knew nothing. It is only those who are washed in the blood that partake of the advocacy. Judas knew nothing of either. Hence he "went and hanged himself," whereas Peter went forth as a converted or restored soul, to "strengthen" his brethren. There is no one so fit to strengthen his brethren as one who has himself experienced the restoring grace of Christ. Peter was able to stand before the congregation of Israel and say, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just," the very thing he had done himself. This shows how entirely his conscience was purged by the blood, and his heart restored by the advocacy of Christ.

3) And now, one word as to the woman with the alabaster box. She stands forth in bright and beautiful contrast with all. While the chief priests, elders, and scribes were plotting against Christ in "the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas," she was anointing His body "in the house of Simon the leper." While Judas was covenanting with the chief priests to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, she was pouring the precious contents of her alabaster box upon His Person. Touching contrast! She was wholly absorbed with her Object, and her Object was Christ. Those who knew not His worth and beauty might pronounce her sacrifice a waste. Those who could sell Him for thirty pieces of silver might talk of giving "to the poor"; but she heeded them not. Their surmisings and murmurings were nothing to her. She had found her all in Christ. They might murmur, but she could worship and adore. Jesus was more to her than all the poor in, the world. She felt that nothing was "waste" that was spent on Him. He might only be worth thirty pieces of silver to one who had a heart for money. He was worth ten thousand worlds to her, because she had a heart for Christ. Happy woman! May we imitate her! May we ever find our place at the feet of

Jesus, loving, adoring, admiring, and worshiping His blessed Person. May we spend and be spent in His service, even though heartless professors should deem our service a foolish "waste." The time is rapidly approaching when we shall not repent of anything done for His name's sake; yea, if there could be room for a single regret, it will be that we so faintly and feebly served His cause in the world. If, on the "morning without clouds," - a single blush could mantle the cheek, it will be that we did not, when down here, dedicate ourselves more undividedly to His service.

Reader, let us ponder- these things. And may- the Lord grant us A HEART FOR CHRIST.

Note - There is something perfectly beautiful in the way in which the Lord vindicates the act of the woman. "When Jesus understood it, He- said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for My burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Nothing can exceed the grace that- shines in- these most precious words. "This gospel," which reveals Christ for the heart, is here linked-with an act which reveals a heart for Christ, and sent forth to the whole world, to be heard by countless millions. The Lord be praised!

C. H. M.

## Patronage or Fellowship: Which Shall It Be?

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There is a vast difference between a patron of the cause of Christ, and having fellowship with Himself - between patronizing Christianity, and identification with a rejected Jesus. This difference is not generally seen, and yet there is a great deal involved in it.

There is something very attractive in the idea of being a patron of the good cause, of being able to contribute largely to the various Christian institutions of the day, of using an extensive influence on behalf of the people of God and the servants of Christ - all this is immensely attractive to a liberal heart and a generous nature. And yet there may be all this without one atom of true fellowship with a rejected, outcast, crucified Lord.

This is a serious reflection. It is not that we want to detract in the smallest degree from the value of patronage in all its varied forms. By no means; our object at present is merely to suggest to the reader that patronage and fellowship are not the same thing, and an example or two from Scripture will illustrate the difference.

Take the case of Moses in the court of Pharaoh. Look at the golden opportunity which he possessed of exerting his extensive influence on behalf of the people of God. Did he embrace it? Not at all. So far from availing himself of the wide field which Providence had so manifestly thrown open to him, he actually abandoned it altogether, and flung himself into the very bosom of the despised and oppressed people of God. Instead of using his influence for them, he openly identified himself with them. If ever a man occupied a position in which he could act as an extensive patron of the cause of Christ, Moses was the man; but instead of exercising the patronage and so getting a name for himself, his heart sighed after fellowship which only led him into reproach, sorrow, and shame. He might have enjoyed the smiles of a monarch, the luxury of a palace, and the splendor of a court, and all the while have done large service to the cause of the Hebrews; but he gave all up in order to identify himself with those people in the depth of their degradation and in all the toils of their wilderness course.

Such are the striking facts of the history; let us look for a moment at the inspired commentary thereon. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Heb. 11:24-26.

From this passage we learn that what Moses did, he did by faith. We might feel disposed to condemn a man for giving up such a fine field of usefulness plainly opened up to him by a chain of most remarkable providences; but the Spirit of God declares that Moses did this by faith; and hence we have this most important truth - that Jesus values fellowship with Himself far more highly than the patronage of His cause. He thinks more of earnest, devoted identification with His Person, than of the most liberal outlay in connection with His work.

It is well to see this. God has called us into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ, and we should seek to know this. It is our high privilege to be identified with a rejected Lord and Master; and shall we refuse this, even though it be on the attractive plea of using our fortune and influence in patronizing Christianity in its various institutions? If our Lord had said to the rich ruler in the tenth of Mark, Go, use your riches for Me; put forth your extensive influence for the furtherance of My cause in the earth," we may safely imagine the young man departing with alacrity and self complacency. B u t when He told him to let all go -when He said, "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor,... and come, take up the cross, and follow Me," he went away sad. No doubt he would have found it far easier and more agreeable to nature to patronize Christ's cause than to have fellowship with His Person. But O Christian reader, it is the latter that Jesus values. If I love Himself, I shall keep near Him and His cause-His interests -His people-His work-and His workmen will be dear to my heart. On the other hand,

I may scatter thousands in the various fields of Christian effort, in the schemes of benevolence and philanthropy, and all the while never taste the sacred reality of fellowship with Jesus Himself. His own words are, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be." May our hearts' desire be to "know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." May God's Spirit enable us really to understand the difference between being patrons of Christianity, and companions of a rejected Christ!

## Four Men of Faith

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In the case of Abel, Enoch, and Noah, the Scripture tells us that the first obtained God's witness that he was righteous, that the second had the witness on earth that he pleased God, and that the third became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. But in their daily lives in the world, no sign appeared that it was worth anyone's while to be righteous or to please God.

Abel was cut off by the hand of a murderer, unavenged. Enoch disappeared mysteriously and was not found. Noah disappeared, probably amid the mockery of the world of his day, into an ark which he had prepared in obedience to God. God shut him in, and that was the last the world saw of him. The importance of pleasing God or of being righteous appears from the fact that God selected the facts concerning these three men, out of the many centuries that passed between the fall in the garden of Eden and the flood, for His divine comments.

Later in Genesis, two chapters (10 and 11) are allotted to the history of the world; then twenty-four chapters are devoted to recording the history of an unknown, insignificant man (Abraham), while Nimrod, the mighty hunter, is busy founding empires, and Asshur goes out and builds Nineveh, the "great city" (Gen. 10:11). The world was being settled, populated, and divided too by the judgment of God. But of all these things, so interesting to the scientists and antiquarians of our day, the Scripture speaks little. God's heart was with the solitary man who obeyed Him, and who became the object of these wonderful ways of God.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Heb. 11:8.

God's comment about the world of Abraham's time shows that it was much like the world of today. "And this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Gen. 11:6).

So we can understand something of what it must have meant to God to find in such a world a man who, when he was called, obeyed. The Scripture expresses the simplicity of his obedience in a striking way: "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came" (Gen. 12:5).

"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles" (that is, tents) (Heb. 11:9).

Nimrod founded an empire while Abraham dwelt in tents. Asshur built the "great city" (Jonah 1:2), while the steps of Abraham's path toward the city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God, might be traced by the frail heaps of stones that marked the spots where had taken place the intercourse of a man of faith with God. God is not the God of Nimrod, but He is not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham (Heb. 11:16).

## A Letter to Young Believers

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"In our country Christians are despised." This was spoken softly by a young man recently in our home. As he told us why, we were saddened and exercised anew as to the power for good or evil of a "Christian's" testimony.

This, young man, Altaf Hussain, is from Pakistan, and was a devout Moslem. About two years ago he came to the United States to complete his studies in international law. On a university campus he met a Christian of a different sort than those he'd known in his own country or had previously met in the U.S.A. Altaf envied this Christian for the joy and quiet peace he possessed. His new friend led him into a study of the Scriptures.

Altaf believed that Jesus Christ would one day return to the world, but his new Christian friend successfully pointed out to him the fact that there must be an important reason for this. When he learned that the Lord Jesus was returning the second time as the Savior of His people, his eyes were opened to see Him as the One who had died for his sins and had risen and was returning to take those who had received Him as Savior to glory.

The reality of his conversion is obvious! His desire now is to live to the will of God and to testify to others of the love of God in the gift of His Son Jesus Christ as the only Savior of sinners.

Altaf realizes now that those "Christians" he'd known in his country were but "professors" and not "possessors" of Christ. In Pakistan these professing Christians are called "Paper Tigers" because of their ungodly and worldly ways. This false profession has turned a great many of his people against Christianity.

Oh! my dear friends, is our Christianity real, or are we too just "Paper Tigers"-no earthly good to God or men? Satan has no more effective weapon against the cause of Christ than the worldly and lukewarm Christian. How this should exercise the hearts and consciences of those of us who know Jesus Christ as our own precious Savior, to have our eyes upon Him and bring honor to Him.

Is Christ being "magnified" in our bodies (Phil. 1:20)? May we be much before Him, walking in the light as He is in the light.

"You are living a gospel, a chapter each day;

By the deeds that you do, by the words that you say,

Men read what you are, whether faithless or true.

Say, what is the gospel according to you?"

Affectionately in the Lord,

## The Abuse of the Law: Nature Puffed up

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"If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Gal. 6:3. The law never crushes the pride of man; and man will bear with anything that supposes he can do something. The law works upon the mere nature of man, and puffs him up, unless it be used of the Holy Ghost to slay him in his conscience. Nature perverts it to the notion that it can do something; and people love this, and are the more pleased with themselves. This is what the gospel destroys by the very roots. And hence, persons who are uncommonly self-satisfied when put upon the ground of doing great things for God, would be deeply mortified and offended if told plainly that they are not capable of serving Him. How few would bear to hear that they had never worshiped God all their life, and cannot till born of God! They are offended at such a doctrine as this, because it makes self nothing and God everything; it brings before them what an awful peril they are exposed to - lost indeed. If they believed it, they would cry out to God about it, and look to God to give them new life.

But as long as men are dealt with on legal principles, the distinction between what is of the first man and the Second is, more or less, merged. Man is addressed as such, and not thoroughly as a sinner, or as a saint; but the two things are confused together, so that souls do not know clearly whether they are saved or lost, whether they are passed from death to life, or are still under the wrath of God. This is the reason why we find so many, even some who are true believers, frequently suffering from clouds and eclipses. The root of the matter is the abuse of the law. It was what worked among the Galatians, and what has tied and bound with the chain of their sin so many thousands of God's children ever since. Thus it was acting upon their flesh, and it made them think themselves to be something when in truth they were nothing; and if a man does, evidently, as the Apostle adds, "he deceiveth himself." Nothing can be more cutting than the words here....

Another thing to be observed is, that the children of God generally do not understand how the mingling of the law with Christ lies at the root of a thousand difficulties. It is a rare thing now to find a Christian who is not in principle where the Galatians were. We shall not see it only in particular spots, here and there, but in one form or another it is the universally prevalent, the settled, chronic, fatal complaint in Christendom, insinuating itself into men's thoughts and ways, and everything.

## 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.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Working for Christ

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In our last paper we briefly considered the Christian's walk, his life, himself in short, as practically shown in this world. We now turn to consider his work, a subject as distinct, as we have seen, as a man's life and habits are from his daily business, although he may carry the one into the other. Perhaps it can hardly be said which is the more important, when both are supremely so; still this at least is clear, that the walk must come first, and that work only is right which is accompanied by and flows from a godly walk.

### Mary and Martha

There can be no doubt as to the importance of this question which some would exalt at the expense of the inner life, others vice versa. The latter often think they are taking Mary's part, and that workers are only Marthas after all, forgetful that the most blessed work ever done on earth was done by Mary (John 12), who lavished her money and care on the Lord's feet, at which also she laid her glory (1 Cor. 11:15). Who then are Christ's feet now? The answer is not hard to give—not the poor, merely as such (John 12:8), but the poor of His flock on every side of us needing our love and care.

### What Scripture Says

Let us just glance at what Scripture has to say on the object: We are created in Christ unto good works (Eph. 2:10); we are also exhorted to be careful to maintain good works (Titus 3:8-14); to be fruitful in them (Col. 1:10); to be perfect in them (Heb. 13:21); to be prepared or ready to every good work (2 Tim. 2:21; Titus 3:1); to be rich in them (1 Tim. 6:18); to be established in them (2 Thess. 2:17); to be zealous in them (Titus 2:14); to abound in them (2 Cor. 9:8); and to provoke one another to them (Heb. 10:24). Beloved reader, what do we really know of all this?

One thing we must be very clear about, and that is, because we have got salvation without working, we are not to lead idle lives ever afterward, put to shame by earnest though mistaken souls who are, alas, thinking to win heaven by their good deeds. On the contrary, every Christian has his work to do in this world for Christ.

### What is My Work?

Do you know yours? or is it possible that having been a Christian one year, two years, ten years, twenty years, as you read this you find it impossible to answer the question clearly and decidedly, What is my work in this world for Christ? The night is far spent, but it is not yet gone; let us then who are "not of the night," but "of the day," wake up and cease to slumber in our privileges, and begin our long neglected work at once.

But what is my work? you say.

Ah, that is a sad question for us to have to ask if we have been Christians any time at all; but if sincerely asked of God, even though late, it will surely be answered. It is surely a most important

question, for we are all members of Christ's body, and the hand cannot do the seeing, nor the eye the walking, nor the feet the talking, nor the tongue the working. The head alone can rightly set each part of the body its appointed work.

"Are you then doing nothing for Christ?"

"Well, I try and live like a Christian."

"That is well, but you have to work for the Lord too. What work do you do for Him?"

"I am afraid I don't do any!"

So it is then true that if you died this moment, no soul on earth beyond the circle of nature would miss you? Alas! I have heard those who have been Christians for years confess such was the case, so useless did they feel in this world of woe and need. I am sure that many of us are quite unaware of the selfish and idle lives we often lead. We have got so accustomed to think that if we avoid gross sins, if we are pretty regular in our reading and prayer and in our attendance at meetings and services, that we have done all that can be required of us, that we are positively surprised to hear that we are not quite so satisfactory in the Lord's eyes as in our own, and that for years we have been neglecting, utterly neglecting, the Lord's work, our work, and it may be adding to our own sin, by hindering, finding fault with, or looking down upon, those who are more diligent than ourselves. Let no readers of these pages rest satisfied until they both know their work and are doing it.

#### God Will Guide the Willing

But again the question is asked, How am I to know what my work is?

The best way is to find out what gifts the Lord has bestowed upon you, and what sphere He has given you to use them in. This, well considered with prayer, will help greatly. God's principle is, "If any man will do His will" (John 7:17); there must be first a willing mind (2 Cor. 8:12). If the Lord sees you humbly taking up what is nearest your hand in dependence upon Him, He will show you if He would have you continue in it; or if not, He will certainly lead you into what He has ready for you. Study the parables of the talents and the pounds, and see what bearing they have on this subject—also Revelation 22:12.

#### Christ Must Be the Object

We must be clear in our work that Christ is the Object— not that we are not to delight in it, and be zealous and active in it, but even in our hearts, the motive, the mainspring that produces the zeal and activity, must be Christ. Otherwise the work may be useful, and may be highly praised of men, but we shall get no reward, and our work loses its character of a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savor to the Lord. It is the fragrance of Christ's name that gives the value to all we do in God's sight. Busy bodies are no more use to God than lazy bodies, and are often more hurtful to others.

#### There IS Work Ready for You

The variety of work is endless, and may range from pastoral care over hundreds of God's people to giving a cup of cold water in Christ's name. There is work suited to each and there is work suited to you. Take the most difficult possible position for active service—that of a young girl

brought up in the seclusion of the family circle, which she has not yet left, it may be with no opportunities of visiting the poor (though this is very rare), what can she do? What can she not do? if she has a heart is rather the question. Has she unconverted relatives and friends, any for whose souls she particularly cares? Can she not do a real work for Christ by sending them regularly, it may be unknown to them, gospel books and papers, accompanying each with earnest prayers? And when that relative or friend is saved, none may know save the Master and the workman to whose instrumentality it is due. Prayer, definitely continued for others, is a very real work for the Lord. But all work involves some amount of self-denial, and above all steady perseverance. How many lives of service have been given up through want of this one necessary quality!

#### Idleness Injures Everybody

The Lord's work must be done; if we do not do it, He often has to set others to do our work; but, of course, if the hand is paralyzed, and the foot has to act in its stead, it cannot do the work as well, especially as it has its own besides. Idleness, therefore, is a great evil, causing not only some to suffer from neglect, but others, who are willing, to be overworked; and after all the work is not so well done. Consider then if ever you are tempted to criticize the work of another, whether that servant may not be doing double duty for some lazy Christian who will do nothing, and it may be that "thou art the man."

Let us then encourage one another in the work of the Lord, and see that none of us are mere lookers-on, for a looker-on is generally a fault finder. Let us remember too that our labor is not in vain in the Lord, but that our loving Master is only too glad to give each one His full meed of praise for every bit of work done in His name, and that will therefore stand in the fire.

The time is short, and much has been wasted by all of us; before the Lord's return then let each of us be found steadily at our posts working for Christ.

"With the first faint blush of morning,

Hasting from thy still retreat,

Labor on until the evening,

Heedless of the noontide heat.

"Labor till the far horizon

Paleth with the setting sun;

Then the Master's voice shall greet thee

With the welcome words, 'Well done!'"

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: the New Jerusalem

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We will close this series of papers with a subject that is but very little studied in comparison with the intense interest it surely should have for every one of us. Even on earth we sing, “There is no place like home,” and to it our thoughts ever turn in all our wanderings. How much more then should our hearts enjoy the consideration of our eternal home—that Jerusalem of which Bernard wrote so long ago:

“With jasper glow thy bulwarks, thy streets with emeralds blaze.

The sardius and the topaz unite in them their rays;

Thine ageless walls are bordered with amethyst unpriced;

Thy saints build up its fabric, and the cornerstone is Christ.

Jerusalem the glorious! The glory of the Elect!

Oh dear and future vision our eager hearts expect.

E’en now by faith I see thee; e’en here thy walls discern;

To thee my thoughts are kindled, and strive, and pant, and yearn.”

Somehow I think that this subject was more thought of in other days than now; for it is but seldom one hears the heavenly Jerusalem spoken of, and certainly very rarely with that heart longing that a contemplation of its glories must raise. Let us consider a little the well-known passage that describes them.

### The City

In Revelation 21:9 we find that the heavenly Jerusalem is itself the bride, the Lamb’s wife. This city, therefore, really is not so much the abode of the saints (though it is that) as the saints themselves. Where inhabitants are spoken of, they are probably the saints looked at as individuals. The city is divine in its origin—it comes from God—it is also heavenly in its character, not being situated on earth like the Jewish city, but being placed in the heavens over it, so that it has the appearance of coming down out of heaven. It will probably be over the earthly Jerusalem to which it will give light and glory (compare Isa. 4:5). It is clothed with the glory of God, according to Ephesians 1:18; 2:7. Although it is the bride of the Lamb that John sees, it is as a city he describes it, this being its appearance to the earth below. We are destined to know the deepest affections of Christ, as His bride; but to the world we shall be the center of heavenly rule, transmitting the glory and power of our Lord to the furthest parts of the redeemed world, and thus giving a deeper and fuller meaning to 1 Corinthians 11:7, for “the woman is the glory of the man.”

### A Transparent Cube

The city is further described by the Apostle as a perfectly transparent cube, 1,500 miles in every direction, having the glory and brilliance of gold, and the crystal clearness of glass or jasper—a most beautiful figure as we shall see when we consider the city as a light bearer to the earth. This city is secure; she has a great and high wall (a symbol only) and twelve gates, or seats of judgment, of which angels are the doorkeepers (see also Heb. 2 and 1 Cor. 6:3), and at each of which a Jewish tribe is judged according to the Lord's words in Matthew 19:28: "Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (See also Luke 22:30.) The foundations of this glorious city are the twelve apostles of the Lamb, according to Ephesians 2:20. Such is the new and heavenly capital of the government of God. It is vast, as we have seen, and perfect, as shown by the figure of a cube. The foundations are precious stones (that part most seen from the earth), showing all the varied glories of Christ.

### Creation, Grace, and Glory

We get these glories figured by precious stones three times in Scripture. We find His glories shown in creation in Ezekiel 28:13. We get the varied glories in grace in the high priest's breastplate, and we get them all in glory here. The pure white light of Christ's glory is thus split up by the media through which it passes into its varied characteristics, as displayed among, and apprehended by, men.

This city differs from the earthly one in having no temple, for the all-pervading presence of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb is there. Before passing on to consider it as a light bearer, we may here quote some beautiful words on this passage by another: "The wall which secured this city was the divine glory. As it is written of the earthly Jerusalem, salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks. The city was formed in divine righteousness and holiness—gold transparent as glass. That which was by the Word wrought in and applied to men below, now, was the very nature of the whole place (see Eph. 4:24). The gates have the moral beauty which attracted Christ in the Church (see Matt. 13), and that in a glorious way. That on which men walked, instead of bringing danger of defilements, was itself righteous and holy; the street was gold, transparent as glass." Such then is the general glorious aspect of our future home.

### The City as a Light Bearer

Now let us see what is the object and purport of this vast city. A consideration of its construction will at once prepare us for the answer. It is a crystal cube, having in it the seat and center of glory, of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:3). Every ray, therefore, of the divine glory to reach this earth, must pass through this transparent cube. It is, therefore, plain that every ray this city gives of light and glory to the earth, comes from Christ alone, though it is all transmitted through the saints who will then form (not alas, now!) a perfectly transparent medium; they enjoy direct light, the earth, transmitted light. What a joy to think that we are then no longer to hinder and turn aside the light, as too often now, but perfectly to fulfill our high destiny of being light bearers of the glory of the Lamb.

### Christ in Us, and God in Christ

Then will be fulfilled in all its perfection the wonderful thought of John 17:23, when Christ will be in us, and God in Christ, so that all the glory of God is seen in the Person of Christ who deigns thus to use His people, His beloved Church, to transmit these glories to the redeemed earth. There will

be no night there, the gates need not be shut, for no defense against evil is needed, this glorious object being so much unlike that which has been established by God on earth, and soon invaded by evil and deceit; for “naught that defileth” shall even enter into it. All that have a place in the city are dependent on pure grace alone; the Lamb’s book of life is the register which will determine whether you or I shall ever gaze upon its glories. Thanks be to God, the answer is certain and sure for the feeblest believer.

### Paradise Regained

In this wonderful panorama, we get again, in all their divine perfection, those things from which man was shut out in the earthly paradise, here reappearing in the paradise of God. This city is the source of the river of blessing; the tree of life grows there, its fruits doubtless for the inhabitants of the city, its leaves bestowed in grace to the nations for their healing. God and the Lamb, now united in glory, have their throne in the city, and those who compose it are their happy servants. God’s glory being seen in the Lamb, we get but one God; hence, they “shall serve Him: and they shall see His face” (Rev. 22:3-4). They too, like the Lamb (Rev. 11:15), shall reign forever and ever. Beloved reader, gaze as much as your longing eyes can bear on this glorious spectacle of our happy home on high, and then just quietly ponder all that these images mean.

### Our Position in It

From them we gather that we shall have our home in the immediate presence of Christ, whose face we shall ever see, that we shall be used to transmit His glories to the millennial earth, over which we shall reign with Him, that we shall be constantly employed in His service, thus being in the relation of servants to Him, though in that of kings to all beside. We shall be secure from all evil; none of the defiling influences that will be seen on earth toward the close of the Millennium will ever mar our ceaseless joy. For all this we shall have a full capacity of enjoyment, never checked by any change of circumstances or of state within or without. Death, sorrow, pain will all be forgotten words, save as they remind us, as we gaze on His still pierced hands, of the mighty cost which has secured to us all these endless joys. Oh, how the heart longs and sighs for the realization of those glorious scenes. However, thanks be to God, they are all secure; and as surely, beloved reader, as your eyes scan these lines, shall you behold the King in His beauty, and enjoy to the full those realms of bliss we have been so feebly considering.

### Never Fading Beauty

One word more, and we have done. In the first four verses of Revelation 21, we find another glorious fact. In the new heavens and new earth succeeding the Millennium, when all sin is forever done away, when Satan has been cast into the lake of fire to deceive no more—in the eternal state our glorious home remains unchanged, and is seen descending from out of heaven as fresh and beautiful as at the beginning of the Millennium in verse 10. It may seem strange to some that verse 10 should really date before verse 2. The explanation is that the first eight verses of this chapter close the subject of chapter 20, and in verse 9 a new scene opens in which the angel describes to John the appearance of the new Jerusalem during the

Millennium.

Too briefly have we considered it, but let not its glories be forgotten when this short article is laid aside, but let it be the means of awakening new and lasting desires for the moment when faith shall be changed to sight, and prayer to praise.

“Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest,

Beneath thy contemplation sink heart and voice oppressed;

And when I fain would sing them, my spirit fails and faints,

And vainly would it image, the assembly of the saints.

“They stand, those walls of Zion, all jubilant with song,

And bright with many an angel, and all the martyr throng.

The Prince is ever with them, the daylight is serene;

The pastures of the blessed are decked in golden sheen.

“There is the throne of David, and there from care released

The song of them that triumph, the shout of them that feast;

And they who with their Leader have conquered in the fight,

Forever and forever are clad in robes of white.

“Oh fields that know no sorrow! Oh state that fears no strife!

Oh princely bowers! Oh land of flowers! Oh realm and home of life!

Thy loveliness oppresses all human thought and heart;

And none on earth, O Zion, can sing thee as thou art.”

## **Practical Righteousness: the Three Branches of It**

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I owe it to all to be... punctual.

I owe it to my hearers to be... audible.

I owe it to my correspondents to be... legible.

And PRACTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS consists in the proper discharge of ALL LEGITIMATE CLAIMS.

## Ten Thousand Words: Five Words Preferred

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It is often very wonderful to mark the way in which the words of Scripture seize upon the heart. They are indeed "as goads, and as nails fastened by the master of assemblies" (Eccles. 12:11). At times, some brief sentence or clause of a sentence will lay hold upon the heart, penetrate the conscience, or occupy the mind in such a way as to prove beyond all question the divinity of the Book in which it stands. What force of reasoning, what fullness of meaning, what power of application, what an unfolding of the springs of nature, what an unveiling of the heart, what point and pungency, what condensing energy we meet with up and down throughout the sacred pages! One delights to dwell upon these things at all times, but more especially at a moment like the present, when the enemy of God and man is seeking in such varied ways to cast a slur upon the inspired volume.

The foregoing train of thought has frequently been suggested to the mind by the expression which forms the title of this article. "I had rather," says the self-emptying and devoted Apostle, "speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." 1 Cor. 14:19. How important for all speakers to remember this! Of course we know that tongues had their value. They were for a sign to the unbelieving. But they were useless in the assembly unless there was an interpreter.

The grand end of speaking in the assembly is edification; and we know this end can only be reached by persons understanding what is said. It is utterly impossible that a man can edify me if I cannot understand what he says. He must speak in an intelligible language and in an audible voice, else I cannot receive any edification. This surely is plain, and well worthy of the serious attention of all who speak in public.

But further, we would do well to bear in mind that our only warrant for standing up to speak in the assembly is that the Lord Himself has given us something to say. If it be but "five words," let us utter the five and sit down. Nothing can be more unintelligent than for a man to attempt to speak "ten thousand words" when God has only given him "five." Alas! that something like this should so often occur! What a mercy it would be if we could only keep within our measure! That measure may be small. It matters not; let us be simple, earnest, and real. An earnest heart is better than a clever head, and a fervent spirit better than an eloquent tongue. Where there is a genuine, hearty desire to promote the real good of souls, it will prove more effectual with men, and more acceptable to God, than the most brilliant gifts without it. No doubt we should covet earnestly the best gifts; but we should also remember the "more excellent way," even the way of charity that ever hides itself and seeks only the profit of others. It is not that we value gifts less, but we value charity more.

Finally, it would greatly tend to raise the tone of public teaching and preaching to remember the following very homely rule: "Do not set about looking for something to say because you have got to speak, but speak because you have got something that ought to be said." This is very simple. It is a poor thing for a man to be merely collecting as much matter as will fill up a certain space of time.

This should never be. Let the preacher or teacher attend diligently upon his ministry- let him cultivate his gift - let him wait on God for guidance, power, and blessing - let him live in the spirit of prayer, and breathe the atmosphere of Scripture; then he will be always ready for the Master's use, and his words, whether "five" or "ten thousand," will assuredly glorify Christ and do good to men. But clearly, in no case should a man rise to address his fellows, without the conviction that God has given him something to say, and the desire to say it to edification.

## A Letter to a Friend

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Dear John,

After our many discussions during the holidays, I have been thinking about the situation that exists in the assembly as far as some of the young people are concerned. I know several who are in a state of emotional unrest because of their efforts to reconcile the role they are playing in the world with regard to their place in the assembly. I feel certain that they believe on the Lord Jesus as Savior, since I have had many happy talks on the Scriptures with them; but to see them in this state of turmoil makes me feel that we all must be more dependent upon the Lord or the occurrence of these incidents will increase. There has been a marked decline in spirituality in the last decade, and as simple faith in the Word of God has been the antidote in the past, I am sure it is so today.

I have enjoyed some thoughts taken from the lives of Jeremiah and Paul which would be pertinent to our position in this hedonistic society of the seventies. I had occasion to discuss this with some young people recently, and we found it to be helpful, so I felt that you would find it encouraging too. Perhaps you too have additional thoughts that could be a blessing to all of us; and, of course, we would be appreciative if you passed them along.

The historical background of the book of Jeremiah is relevant to the present situation. Jeremiah prophesied between 629 B.C. and 587 B.C. From the first few verses of the book, you can see that Jeremiah wrote during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah. This was a time of steep decline for Judah; after Josiah died, ungodly kings reigned. If you read 2 Kings 22, you will find that Josiah was a godly king that feared the Lord. The people, because of their fidelity to the king, went along with his reforms; but if we turn to Jeremiah and read portions from it, such as chapter 10, we find that this was mere outward reform, because their hearts were not right with God.

If a Christian looks ahead into the 1970's and extrapolates from the articles that have been appearing in the national magazines (such as, Time, e.g., "God is Dead," and "Is God Coming Back to Life?"), he can be sure that Jeremiah's characterization of Judah will also apply to the professing Christian world. "For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jer. 2:13.

Jeremiah, commenting on the morality of Judah, scathingly attacked their lustful actions; and we today, upon viewing the salacious literature appearing in the daily newspapers, could employ the same diatribe. "How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken Me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Jer. 5:7-9.

After glancing through literature coming off the religious press today, I am sure that we can echo with Jeremiah, "An appalling and horrible thing is committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsehood, and the priests rule by their means; and My people love to have it so. But what will ye do in the end thereof?" Jer. 5:30, 31; J.N.D. Trans. Jeremiah faithfully pronounced God's judgment on all Judah's wickedness. I think if you read Jeremiah through with this perspective and try to draw a parallel with his day and ours, you will realize, as I did, that the Lord's coming for His own must be in the near future.

Young people today are prosperous and apathetic. I talked to a student several days ago who smoked marijuana and had decided to leave home because he felt restricted there. I tried to bring Christ before him, but he said he had an appointment that he "really had to get to." I trust some of these young people will turn to the Lord. Through Jeremiah the Lord spoke to the people. "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, and thou obeyedst not My voice." Jer. 22:21.

So far I have described only the society in which Jeremiah lived, and have not looked at how Jeremiah comported himself in that wicked society. I think that this is a very important aspect to consider. Our day is similar to his, and if we look at how he acted, perhaps we can obtain some instructions for ourselves.

It is evident from the Lamentations of Jeremiah that he felt very keenly about the wickedness of his people. He condemned his countrymen, not because he felt self-righteous, but because God called him to do it. "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!" Lam. 1:1. Surely we see the increasing apostasy of the professing Christian world; but, as in Jeremiah's day, there is a path for those who desire to follow the Lord. Jeremiah faithfully proclaimed judgment; the people did not believe him. They ridiculed him, they persecuted him, and they cast him into a dungeon because he opposed their words - but the judgment came! Jeremiah was responsible to show them the way of life in view of the impending judgment and death. "And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death." Jer. 21:8. They chose the course that resulted in death, and the majority of the people in the world today also choose a course which their own minds prescribe, leading them to eternal separation from God.

Jeremiah was faithful and walked a path of loneliness in the fear of God. How this speaks to my heart! We often forget Christ because of our desire to be accepted and successful in this life; yet, we should seek the path of faith in which only Christ has the pre-eminence. Although difficult, it is imperative that we as young people derive our perspectives from the Word and not from the priorities of the society in which we are found.

In 2 Timothy we find Paul surrounded by decline in both the world and the Church. Demas had forsaken him, having loved the present world;

Alexander, the coppersmith, had done him much evil; and all those in Asia had turned away from him. In these final words to Timothy, he described what would be the characteristics of the last days. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful,

unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.... But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2 Tim. 3:1-13.

There was degeneracy in Jeremiah's day and decline in Paul's day. Both these men followed the path of faith, and now the question is, What constitutes the path of faith in our day? I was talking to a very cynical young person a short time ago. He felt that he could expect many assemblies to crumble and deteriorate into merely social groups, and that there was little we could do about it. Did Paul advise Timothy to give up, telling him there was nothing that he could do about it? No, he told him by the direction of the Spirit to "have an outline of sound words" (J.N.D. Trans.). He was to keep the deposit of truth that had been entrusted to him. (See 2 Tim. 1:13-15.) This should be a burden of every Christian today! He was to "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." 2 Tim. 4:2. Paul also exhorted him to "be sober in all things, bear evils, do the work of an evangelist, fill up the full measure of thy ministry." 2 Tim. 4:5; J.N.D. Trans. Here Timothy was told to make sure that the gift that the Lord had given him was to be used in His work. How many Christian young people today are using all their talents and energies helping to run corporations, or in other areas of the business and educational world, and spending very few hours per week even considering the things of God. I suggest that unless we start asking ourselves how the Lord might use us, and then earnestly seek His will in how we might do this, there will be much decline in the moral and spiritual tone in the assemblies of God's people.

John, there is much to pray for in this respect. I know that I do not make it a matter of prayer often enough, but the Lord is able if we only trust Him. If there were more of a heartfelt concern for each other, there would be more of an effort to encourage one another in a path pleasing to the Lord, and thus there would be less of a tendency for some of us to turn toward the things of the world. I trust that each of us will make these circumstances a matter of personal concern before the Lord. If He leaves us here, and if the trend continues, it will be even more difficult for our children. The Lord is able to sustain individuals as He did Jeremiah, but the fellowship of saints is a privilege which all enjoy now; and it would be sad to be deprived of this because of increasing apathy and worldliness. It is encouraging to see that the Lord undertook for Paul and Jeremiah in very trying circumstances. I believe that although we should be deeply concerned about the decline that surrounds us, the Lord would have us take all our cares to Him. He has certainly blessed each one of us in the past, and we can count upon His help in the future. I am sure that each Christian who looks to the Lord for guidance could be encouraged by the words of Solomon in Proverbs 3: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

This has been a lengthy letter, but I trust that the subject has been of significant importance to you. I would be glad to hear your comments on these thoughts.

With love in Christ,

## The Faith of Manoah's Wife

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### Judges 18

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 Judges 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 comfortably 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 Romans 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 Spirit) 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 Judges 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 Spirit, says, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

## Try the Uplook

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"If the outlook be dark, try the uplook."

The words were passed on by a young Christian. She had been through a time of peculiar testing and difficulty, and had found them a valuable soul tonic.

Let me pass them on to you - they may serve to remind you of your refuge in every hour of trial.

Circumstances may be perplexing. The path may be filled with apparently insurmountable difficulties. The future may be dark with threatening clouds. At such hours, "Try the uplook."

Your Father knows what things ye have need of. His wisdom and power and love are all exerted on your behalf. He makes "all things work together for good" to them that love Him. He knows the end from the beginning. And He cares for you. He is more concerned for your true welfare than you are, and He who shapes the courses of the stars will shape circumstances for the blessing of His child.

"He knows, He loves, He cares.

Nothing this truth can dim;

He does the very best for those

Who leave the choice with Him."

Seek His glory in everything. Leave the future in His hands. And "If the outlook be dark, try the uplook."

## Absent From the Body

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We are often, it may be, disposed to wonder at how little is said in the New Testament in reference to the state of the spirit, from the moment in which it leaves the body until the morning of the resurrection. And yet, when we look more closely at it, we are struck with how much is said of it. True, there are but four passages which can properly be said to apply to that interesting interval; but oh! how much does any one of these four passages involve! If my reader will just turn with me for a few moments to the Word, he will find this subject presented in its application to four distinct phases of the Christian life. He will see the ransomed spirit passing into the presence of Christ from four distinct conditions. He will see one departing simply as a sinner saved by grace. He will see another making his exit as a martyr. He will hearken to the groanings of a burdened spirit desiring to be "absent from the body," and to be "present with the Lord." Finally, he will mark the earnest breathings of a laborer longing to be at rest forever in the Master's presence.

1) Our first reference shall be to Luke 23. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." vv. 39-43.

It is not my purpose at present to dwell upon this lovely passage, or to unfold in detail its rich evangelic teaching. I merely quote it in order that my reader may have the testimony of Holy Scripture fully and clearly before him. We here see the case of one who entered paradise in the simple character of a sinner saved by grace. He was a condemned malefactor in the morning - a railing blasphemer in the course of the day - a ransomed spirit in heaven ere the day closed. "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." He had been led to cast himself on Christ, as a justly condemned sinner, and he went to heaven with Christ as a blood-bought saint. He was not called to wear a martyr's crown. He was not permitted to bear any golden sheaves into the Master's garner. His was not a long and checkered Christian course, but he was a sinner saved by grace. And, what is more, he was enabled by grace to bear testimony to the sinless humanity of our blessed Lord at a moment when the great religious leaders of the people had given Him up to the secular power as a malefactor. And further, he was led to own Him as Lord and speak of His coming kingdom at a moment when, to mortal vision, not a trace of lordship or royalty was discernible. These were good works. To confess Christ, and flatly contradict a Christ rejecting world, are works of the very first order - works that shed forth the sweetest perfume and shine with the brightest luster. One of our own poets has beautifully and strikingly said,

"Talk they of morals? O

Thou bleeding Lamb,

The great morality is love to Thee."

The dying thief exhibited this "great morality." He owned Christ when a hostile world had cast Him out and when terror-stricken disciples had forsaken Him. "Lord, remember me," said he, "when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Sweet were these words as they fell upon the heart of the dying Savior; and sweeter still the response which fell upon the heart of the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." This went far beyond the thief's expectations. The gracious Savior was about to do "exceeding abundantly above all that" the thief could "ask or think." The thief asked to be remembered in the time of the kingdom. The Savior said, I shall have you with Me today.

And hence, when the Roman soldiers in the discharge of their brutal functions came to break the legs of this dying saint, he could smile and say, Ah, these men are just coming to send me straight to heaven.

It is happy to think of this. Heaven is much nearer, much more familiar than we at times suppose. Moreover, it is the very home of that love which sheds its bright and blessed beams upon this dreary scene through which we are passing. To be with Jesus secures everything. To be in the company of the One "who loved me, and gave Himself for me" will make me feel quite at home in heaven. We need not ask, Where is heaven? What kind of place is it? What are its occupations? "With Jesus" answers all these and many more such like questions. Where the tender affections of a Father's heart flow forth in divine purity and never varying strength - where the love of a Bridegroom glows with unabating intensity - where the sympathy of a friend is tasted in all its divine freshness and power - there is heaven; thither went the thief from his cross. "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Well may we say, "What must it be to be there?"

True, the thief left his poor body behind him until the bright morning of the resurrection, when it will be raised in incorruptibility, immortality, glory, and power. True it is that he, in company with all those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, waits for that happy moment. Yet it is equally true that Christ said unto him, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." What a thought! To pass from the cross - the ignominious cross of a malefactor - into the paradise of God, from a scene of blasphemy, mockery, and cruelty, into the presence of Jesus. Such was the happy lot of the dying thief, not for any merit of his own but simply through the precious sacrifice of Christ, who "entered in once into the holy place" by His own blood, and took the thief along with Him.

2) I shall now quote for my reader the second passage in the New Testament which bears upon our subject. It occurs in the Acts of the Apostles. "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Chap. 7:59, 60.

Here we have the case of a martyr-the very first of that noble army who have yielded up their lives for the name of Jesus. Stephen was not merely a sinner saved by grace, but also a sufferer for the cause of Christ - a sufferer even unto death. He passed from amid the stones of his murderers into the presence of his Lord, who had so recently gone before, and now stood ready to receive the spirit of His martyred servant. What an exchange! What a contrast! And be it observed that Stephen was favored with a very vivid view of the scene into which he was about to enter. "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Wondrous sight! Heaven would be no strange

place to Stephen. "The Son of man" was there, so that he should feel quite at home there. He did not, like the thief, see Jesus hanging beside him; but he saw Him up in heaven before him. He did not, like the thief, see Him dying; but he saw Him risen and glorified- crowned with glory and honor, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

Thus, then, if the thief could think of heaven as the home of that blessed One who was nailed to the cross, Stephen could look at it as the home of that One who had gone before him into glory. It was the same heaven and the same Jesus to both the one and the other. It was no vague or far-off region to either. It was the happy home of the crucified and glorified Jesus. The dying malefactor might look at it from one point of view, and the dying martyr might look at it from another; but it was the same attractive, happy home to both. True it is that the malefactor as well as the martyr had to leave his poor body behind him, to sleep in the dust until the morning of the resurrection. True it is that he too waits for that long-expected, blissful moment. Still, his spirit has been with Jesus ever since.

Yes; the malefactor and the martyr have both been up yonder with their Lord for many centuries. What happy years for them! Not a cloud, not a ripple, not a single interruption to their communion. Their condition is one of expectancy, but it is also one of perfect repose - no conflict, no sin, no sorrow, no change. All these things are over forever with them; so, although they are not more secure, they are far more happy than we. There is something peculiarly attractive in the thought of the unbroken repose which the spirit enjoys in the presence of the crucified and glorified Jesus. To be done with a world of sin, selfishness, and sorrow - done with the ceaseless tossings and heavings of a corrupt nature-done with the ten thousand snares and devices of a subtle foe, to be forever at rest in the bosom of Jesus! What deep, unutterable blessedness! Well may the spirit long to taste it.

3) This leads us naturally enough to our third reference, which occurs in the second epistle to the Corinthians: "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Chap. 5:4-8.

Here then we have the case of any poor, groaning, burdened saint looking forth from a crumbling, dissolving tabernacle and sighing to get away. Not that the unclothed state is the proper object of hope. Let no one imagine this. The believer looks to the moment in which he shall be clothed upon with a glorified body like the body of Jesus. Still, it would be happy at any moment to lay aside a body of death, and be present with the Lord. It is far happier to wait for the day of glory in the bosom of our loving Lord than in this dark and dreary world. Hence, the Apostle says, "We are... willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." That moment which, to an unconverted man, is death with all its terrors, is to the saint simply a laying aside of all that hinders his communion with Christ. It is just getting rid of all that is mortal. What very different work the Roman soldiers did for the two thieves! They sent one to be with Jesus, and the other to that place where hope never comes. How deeply important it is for each of us to possess the confidence that, in our case, to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord"! How

truly appalling-how unspeakably dreadful - the condition of those who, when absent from the body, must be present with the devil and his angels!

4) Let us in conclusion look at our fourth and last quotation, which we shall find in that lovely epistle to the Philippians: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." Chap. 1:23. Here, a laborious workman looks up from amid his golden fields of labor, and breathes forth his ardent desire to get away into his Master's presence. He is in a strait. His spirit longs to depart, but he casts his affectionate eye upon those who would so sorely feel his loss, and the thought of them checks his desire. "Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you," he says to his beloved Philippians. "And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith." What thorough devotedness! He longs to be in heaven, but he is needed on earth, and therefore he is ready to remain. So far as he is concerned, it was "far better" to depart; but so far as others were concerned, it was "more needful" to remain; and hence, he, being full of the spirit of Christ, was ready to sacrifice himself for their profit.

Now if my reader will just group these four scriptures together, he will not only have before his mind what is given in the New Testament in reference to the souls of those who have departed in the faith of Christ; but he will also see that the Holy Ghost has presented the subject in such a way as to meet every possible condition in which a Christian can be found-every aspect in which he can be contemplated.

In Luke 23 we see one just saved and forthwith taken to heaven. In Acts 7 we see one who was permitted to suffer martyrdom for the name of Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 5 we see a groaning, burdened Christian, longing to lay aside his poor crumbling tabernacle and be present with the Lord. In Philippians 1 we see a laborious workman, with many precious sheaves around him, looking up and sighing to find his place at his Master's feet.

This gives great fullness, completeness, and beauty to this most interesting theme. And let my reader note distinctly, that there is not a shadow of foundation for the idea entertained by some, that the soul is in a state of sleep while the body is in the grave. Indeed, one might reasonably suppose that, even though we had not such an overwhelming body of scripture evidence on the point, this strange idea would carry with it its own refutation. Who could admit anything so monstrous as the notion of a spirit asleep? Ah, no; the Lord Jesus did not say to the thief, "Today shalt thou be asleep." Stephen did not commit his spirit to sleep, but into the hands of his Lord. The Apostle does not say, "We are willing rather to be asleep"; or, "Having a desire to be asleep, which is far better." One can only wonder how such an idea could have found a place in any rational mind. Blessed be God! His Word teaches us most clearly that, should it be His holy will that we leave this world previous to the glorious advent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our place will be with Himself in that bright and blessed world above, where sin and sorrow are unknown, there to enjoy uninterrupted communion with the One who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and there to await that moment when "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52).

## The Twofold Way of God: Sanctuary and Sea

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Psalm 77:13, 19

His way is "in the sanctuary," and His way is "in the sea." Now there is a great difference between these two things. First of all, God's way is in the sanctuary where all is light, all is clear. There is no mistake there. There is nothing in the least degree that is a harass to the spirit. On the contrary, it is when the poor troubled one enters into the sanctuary and views things there in the light of God, that he sees the end of all else - everything that is entangled, the end of which he cannot find on the earth.

We have the same thing in Psalm 73. "When I thought to know this, it was too, painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." That is, in the sanctuary of God everything is understood, no matter how difficult and trying and painful as regards ourselves or others. When we once enter there, we are in the place of God's light and God's love; and then, whatever the difficulty may be, we understand all about it.

But not only is God's way in the sanctuary (and when we are there, all is bright and happy), but God's way is in the sea. He walks where we cannot always trace His footsteps.

"We cannot always trace the way

Where Thou, our gracious Lord, dost move;

But we can always surely say That God is love.

"When fear its gloomy cloud will fling

O'er earth - our souls, to heaven above,

As to their sanctuary, spring, For God is love."

God moves mysteriously at times, as we all know. There are ways of God which are purposely to try us. I need not say that it is not at all as if God had pleasure in our perplexities. Nor is it as if we had no sanctuary to draw near to, where we can rise above it. But still there is a great deal in the ways of God that must be left entirely in His own hands. The way of God is thus not only in the sanctuary, but also in the sea. And yet, what we find even in connection with His footsteps being in the sea is, "Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." That was through the sea; afterward, it was through the wilderness. But it had been through the sea. The beginnings of the ways of God with His people were there, because from first to last God must be the confidence of the saint. It may be an early lesson of his soul, but it never ceases to be the thing to learn.

How happy to know that while the sanctuary is open to us, yet God Himself is nearer still; and to Him we are brought now. As it is said (1 Peter 3), "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." This is a most precious thing, because there we are

in the sanctuary at once, and brought to God Himself. And I am bold to say that heaven itself would be but a small matter if it were not to God that we are brought. It is better than any freedom from trial, better than any blessing, to be in the presence of the One to whom we belong, who is Himself the source of all blessing and joy. That we are brought to Him now is infinitely precious. There we are in the sanctuary brought to God.

But still there are other ways of God outside the sanctuary - in the sea. And there we often find ourselves at a loss. If we are occupied with the sea itself, and with trying to scan God's footsteps there, then they are not known. But confidence in God Himself is always the strength of faith. May the Lord grant us increasing simplicity and quietness in the midst of all that through which we pass, for His name's sake.

"Child of God by Christ's salvation, Rise o'er sin and fear and care-

Joy to find in every station,

Something still to do or bear;

Think what Spirit dwells within thee-

Think what Father's smiles are thine-

Think that Jesus died to win thee-

Child of God, wilt thou repine?

"Haste thee on from grace to glory,

Armed by faith and winged by prayer;

Heaven's eternal day's before thee,

God's right hand shall guide thee there;

Soon shall close thine earthly mission,

Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days,

Hope shall change to glad fruition,

Faith to sight, and prayer to praise."

## The End of Christendom

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May God give us to see and mark the course which this world is running, and enable us to avoid all its influences! When one knows what will be the end of a thing, one avoids that which would lead to it. The end of Christendom is awful. God makes us acquainted with it in order that we may avoid it. The more I see what is taking place, the more I discover that things are hastening on that evil may have the upper hand and be judged, that God may judge it and purify the earth. The iniquity must be full before God strikes. We are in the last days in this respect. Men believe there is great progress taking place, yet they feel great uneasiness in the expectation of what is going to happen. Christians must keep apart, living according to the principles of their divine calling.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Selfishness

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In the first series of these papers we have already considered various simple doctrinal subjects of great interest and value to the young believer, connected with his standing before God, his place in this world, his future hopes, in short, his portion, his path, and his prospect. In the present series we propose, with God's help, to take up some of the special dangers or besetting sins to which young Christians (and old ones as well) are liable, and respecting which it may be helpful to see what Scripture has to say. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed," and these papers are written in the earnest hope and prayer that they may be practically used in pointing out and guarding some against those sins and failings which so often ruin a walk otherwise consistent, and bring reproach upon the name of Christ. It is by our actions in small matters that the world judges us—not by the amount of our knowledge of scriptural principles, but by our application of them in daily life.

### Selfishness is Anti-Christian

Let us then now briefly consider this emphatically anti-Christian sin of selfishness. We call it antichristian because it is expressly recorded of Christ our Lord that He "pleased not Himself" (Rom. 15:3). This strikes at once at the root of the matter, for when we read (1 John 2:6) that we ought to walk as Christ, and remember these are the words of GOD, and then turn to the scripture just quoted, we must at once see that all selfishness is truly anti-Christian. If, however, example is not enough, we have the precept as well. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth [or good]" (1 Cor. 10:24). "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:4). Most touching of all, perhaps, to the heart that has tasted the love of Christ, to whom He is precious, is 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ constraineth us....He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."

### A Sign of the Last Times

Selfishness is shown in many and various ways. As one of the signs of the days it is said, "Men shall be lovers of their own selves" (2 Tim. 3:2), or in other words, "selfish." This is the root from which every variety springs. The selfish man seeks his own things, not the things which are others, still less that are Jesus Christ's (Phil. 2:21), as the Apostle so touchingly writes to the Philippians, complaining that this sin was a great and crying evil in his day.

It is found everywhere, even among believers, although it is a vice so repulsive in its nature, that the man of the world out vies the Christian in despising it when shown in grosser ways. The latter only, however, can know what it is to be truly unselfish in spirit in all things. How ashamed we feel when we consider how often our best actions are blighted by the foul spot of selfishness.

### Self the Object

Pleasing ourselves, directly condemned in Romans 15:1, is a common form of seeking our own. It is seen in great and little things — in our choice of work for the Lord, in our choice of residence, of

companions, of dress, of occupation, and in many petty ways in which we daily indulge, instead of denying ourselves. Oh, how ashamed we feel when we just sit awhile and think of our dreadful self-pleasing in little things—always looking out for number one. So contrary are we in spirit to our beloved Lord.

### Seeking Our Own

Another phase of seeking our own (Phil. 2:21) is in eagerly pursuing some worldly advantage, being unscrupulous in money-making, or keen in money-saving. All this becomes much worse, terribly worse, if in any way hypocrisy comes in to aid our selfishness. Is it not fearful to think how the name of Christ is despised by men of the world through those who should be His “epistle,” who thus seek their own? for the worldly man well knows that Christians should be unselfish, though all the time he may be selfish enough himself. Paul was not like this—“Not seeking mine own profit” (1 Cor. 10:33). This line of conduct is powerfully described in Isaiah 56:11; “They all look to their own way, every one for his gain.” Surely it is a sign of the last times when one professing Christian is heard urging another to raise himself in the world by pushing others down. It may be there are not many bold enough to give such fearfully unchristian advice, but are there not hundreds who in the main practically follow it? Another form is seeking precedence of others. Such selfishness was displayed in Matthew 20:20, and gently rebuked by Christ. It is often seen, alas, in spiritual as well as worldly matters, and many have been the bitter parties or factions that have been developed from this form of selfishness. Let us judge ourselves as to this, seeking neither the chief seats in synagogues, nor the greetings in the markets.

### Not Caring for Others

Neglecting the poor (1 John 3:17) is a flagrant form of selfishness strongly condemned by the Word. Often it is unintentional, and arises simply from a habit of considering ourselves instead of others. In some cases selfishness may give to get rid of annoyance, but it can never give with true sympathy. That rare and tender plant of Christian growth (see 1 Pet. 3:8 JND) cannot grow in the same atmosphere as self.

In many cases we do not mean to be selfish, but being careless in following Christ and having naturally ourselves instead of Him as our object, this vice shows itself in little ways in almost all we do. We trust that to many of our readers a word will be enough to point out this un-Christ-like sin, which perhaps unknown to themselves has been undermining their Christian life and taking away from the power of their words to others. If we look at one of the characteristics of “love” in 1 Corinthians 13:5, “seeketh not her own,” and then turn and quietly look at our own lives by the side of it, the light of the Word like a sunbeam in a dusty room throws out into strong relief all the “little foxes” of small petty selfish deeds that have so spoiled the “tender” grapes of our spiritual life.

### The Remedy

What then is the remedy for selfishness? One might answer, To think of others, as in the parable of the good Samaritan. This is a good and Christian habit—to find a neighbor in every one whom I can serve, and to love him as myself. It is most important to acquire a habit of thinking of the comfort, convenience, and wishes of others on all occasions, and seeking to please my neighbor for his good unto edification at all times; but there is a more excellent way yet, and that is for Christ to become the center of my thoughts instead of myself, so that all my actions naturally have

reference to Him. In this way I not only become truly unselfish, but I become (not only negatively, but) positively like Christ.

Dear fellow believer, this is the sort of Christianity which is understood among men, and brings true glory to God. When a man gives up voluntarily the best place, to which he has an undoubted right, when he foregoes his own advantage, and to his own loss goes out of his way to show kindness to others, when he becomes poor, and not merely gives of his abundance, for the sake of Christ's people whose needs he provides for, and when he not only spends, but is spent for others, then indeed does he become an epistle of Christ known and read of all men. None can pass a man unobserved in whom the brand of selfishness has been obliterated by the fresh brand of Christ (Gal. 6:17).

Oh, may His love constrain us thus to live to His glory!

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Pride

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The sin of selfishness, of which we spoke last, may be specially characterized as the sin most unlike Christ; but the sin of pride is directly of the devil. The one is anti-Christian, and the other is Satanic. Such, indeed, is the calm language of Scripture. In 1 Timothy 3:6 we read that being lifted up with pride was the cause of “the condemnation of the devil”; and in Ezekiel 28 we read the detailed account of how the heart of one who was once “full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty” was lifted up because of his beauty, and his wisdom corrupted by reason of his brightness, and who therefore fell from heaven to hell.

### Pride Springs From the Heart

Pride is in every human heart; it runs in man’s blood; all are afflicted with this disease, though by too many, alas, it is regarded rather as an ornament than a blemish. The Word of God says simply of “a high look, and a proud heart,” so much thought of in the world, that they are sin (Pro. 21:4). They are hateful to God (Pro. 6:16-17; 16:5), and to Christ, typified by wisdom (Pro. 8:13).

The root of all pride is in the heart; “Out of the heart of men, proceed... pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:21-22). How can a young believer get rid of a proud heart? There is indeed but one way, that is by sitting at the feet of Him who is meek and lowly in heart until we are ashamed any longer to cherish a quality so unlike Christ, so like Satan.

### Spiritual Pride

Let us consider one or two varieties of pride spoken of in the Word. We find the type of one variety, spiritual or religious pride, in the Pharisees of old, who were not ashamed to come before God with words like these, “God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are.” Surely no vestige of such an expression finds a place in the prayers of our readers.

We must remember that pride is one of the characteristics of the last days (2 Tim. 3:2), and therefore we have need to be greatly on our watch against it. Spiritual pride is perhaps the worst variety, because it is not ashamed to show itself in connection with Christ’s name, a terrible thing when we think that such profess to be followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. Let this sin at least then be kept far from us, and let none who read these lines sin so fearfully against God as to use His truth to help them to commit the very sin of the devil—spiritual pride. When we really get into His presence, this can never be the case. “Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?” 2 Sam. 7:18. But when we are out of God’s presence, then boasting begins (2 Cor. 12:7).

### Pride of Position

Another sort of pride arises from riches and position. We may see an instance of this in Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:13), in Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:30), in Belshazzar (Dan. 5:22), in Herod (Acts 12:21), and in many others. The question is, Is it seen in us? Do we in any of our acts betray this mean, this debasing, this un-Christ-like spirit to any who are poorer and humbler than ourselves? Surely

not; for if spiritual pride is terrible, this is contemptible, and clearly shows that we have never really understood the place where God's sovereign grace has set us. It is alluded to in James 3.

### The Remedy

But it does not need riches to produce pride; this fatal seed is seen, alas, everywhere, and often those who are poorest are most proud; and this is especially the case among the Lord's people. Many having become Christians and mixing freely on equal terms as Christians with those they never could have met on any other, instead of increasing in humility, have lost what little they possessed, and developed a proud heart.

When we talk of having very sensitive feelings, and being hurt by remarks of others, it is often only pride, and shows how miserably we are taken up with ourselves. Another variety of pride is shown in outward adornment, dressing after the fashion of the world, and in a manner unsuited to Christian position. Another variety is being puffed up by any gifts God may have bestowed upon me.

But I am sure that we have spoken enough of the evil; for the remedy let us look for a moment at the Lord Jesus Christ.

We find in the first place that He Himself expressly declares that He is "meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). We find Him showing this in various ways — by taking our nature, sin apart (Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:16), in His choice of station in life (John 9:29). How many of us who profess to show His spirit, if left to ourselves to choose our place in this world, would have made such a selection? We are called to be conformed to the image of our Lord. Which among us is so? We may well ask this question when we see Christians trying to be more than their fathers were, and pushing their children still higher than themselves. We strictly obey the first half of James 1:9-10, but how many rich rejoice when they are made low?

### Christ or Self

There is a line visible from heaven whether we on earth can distinguish it or no. On one side of it are those who, be what they may, would still be something more, or seem to be something they are not; who cannot enjoy what they have, because they desire more, and cannot be gratified because they are not satisfied. There are those who are ashamed of the position their Master chose, and who are proud of one He refused to occupy. Christ and those that bear His image are not on this side of the line. It is not that we are called to change our station, but we are called to change our mind. But we must pass on.

The Lord took a lower place even than being a carpenter, and became the servant of all (Matt. 20:28; Luke 22:27), even washing His disciples' feet (John 13:5). On account of all this He was despised (Mark 6:3; John 9:29), and those who follow Him will be despised too. They will be called mean spirited, and will be pushed aside and trodden down by the proud and ambitious. It matters not. If they have but drunk at the pure spring of humility in Philippians 2, their souls will be so refreshed that they will be full of joy at bearing ever so little of the beauty of their Lord.

### What God Thinks of the Humble

Hear what God has to say of them. He hears them (Psalm 9:12), they enjoy His presence (Isa. 57:15), He delivers them (Job 22:29), exalts them (Luke 14:11; 18:14), gives them more grace (James 4:6), while He resists the proud. Saints are exhorted to put on humility and be clothed with it (1 Pet. 5:5) (a beautiful word, meaning that on whatever side we are approached, humility is seen), to walk in humility (Eph. 4:1-2), but to beware of false humility (Col. 2:18, 23), which is only pride in disguise.

Nothing perhaps shows more the transforming power of the grace of Christ than when a man naturally proud and haughty becomes really meek and lowly in spirit; and nothing tells more strongly of the way in which the letter of truth held apart from Christ corrupts, than when we see a humble quiet person after coming among Christians became vain and puffed up—a sight, alas, which is not rarer than the former.

We plead then, in closing, that our dear readers will seek to cultivate the two graces of which we have already spoken— unselfishness and humility—and thus get a long way on in becoming like Christ, putting away from them, as hateful things, the anti-Christian sin of selfishness and the Satanic sin of pride.

But who is sufficient for these things? Thank God, the answer is not far to seek, “Our sufficiency is of God”; the meek will He teach His way. May we look to Him there in all meekness to put upon us more of the grace of Christ, and fit us better to become humble followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Oh, may that mind in us be found,

That shone so bright in Thee—

The humble, meek, and lowly mind

From pride and envy free.”

## An Open Letter to Young Believers

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Beloved in the Lord;

If you have been led by the Holy Ghost to own the Lord Jesus as your Savior, allow me to exhort you in some particulars.

Let Him, not the instrument used for your blessing, have all the praise, for He alone is worthy, and His servants would be "carnal" indeed (1 Cor. 3:1-9) if they allowed you to think of them, when the praise and adoration belong only to Him.

You have been led to see that you know very little of God's Word - so all of us should candidly admit (1 Cor. 8:2). Then search daily to find in the Scriptures a deeper acquaintance with the Person to whom you are brought. You know what the work has done for your conscience; now learn about the divine Object for your heart. In this day of confusion and lawlessness the saint of God needs, as ever, to be commended "to God, and to the word of His grace" (Acts 20:32).

Loud talking and much disputing ill becomes followers of Jesus in this day. A quiet consistent walk in whatever relationship of life we are found will weigh much more heavily (1 Pet. 2:12).

Make it a habit when you meet together to avoid the gossip tendency of the day. The Person of the Christ, as shown to faith by the Holy Ghost in the Word, should be the only theme. This will exclude slander on the one hand, and creature worship on the other.

5) Next to thus living consistently before your relatives, persevere in prayer to God (Eph. 6:18) for them, and watch for a favorable opportunity to speak to them. This needs wisdom (Isa. 50:

4; Pro. 15:23).

Wait on the Lord to enlarge your hearts toward unconverted persons. To such as you know, watch your opportunity to commend a good gospel tract or book. Respecting this you should feel it your privilege to lay by, as the Lord prospers you, for the scattering of what you believe, according to God's Word, is the truth to help souls. So also, instead of wasting money on needless things, look after the poor- especially those who are the Lord's (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

I would last add that you should most earnestly find out what is the mind of the Lord respecting you in these last days. To gather round men - to aid in schism - would be simply to go counter to the truth in John 17, Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12, etc. If you are willing to do what is right, the Lord will make plain your path (Phil. 3:13-21). But surely every saint of God should feel that the present condition of the Church- God's Church - on the earth is anything but what it was when

"All were of one heart and soul,

And love to Christ inspired the whole";

when no names, and sects, and parties, severed practically, as to outward testimony, the "one body."

May abundant grace, mercy, and peace be yours, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yours truly in Him,

## 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 anything 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 Exodus 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 Exodus 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 the palpable mount were insuperable to man. "A man is not justified by the works of the law" (Gal. 2:16). Under the law there is no possible way of access to God. Keep of 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 Exodus 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 Exodus 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 Exodus 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 are no thunderings and lightnings, no blackness, darkness, and tempest surrounding the Blessed One when He appeared to 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 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 every one 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).

The 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 Exodus 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

Exodus 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 Field of Boaz

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Ruth did not forget the first lesson learned in the field of Boaz, "Go not to glean in another field," for we find in Ruth 2:23: "So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law."

She had taken her right place as an outcast, she had owned she was not like one of the handmaids of Boaz, and she found this to be the way of true blessing. In the field of Boaz, during the months between barley and wheat harvest, many happy and blessed lessons were learned.

She learned to keep her eyes on the field that was being reaped. She learned where to find refreshment for her thirst, and the mealtimes of the reapers, and found that Boaz was there to reach her a portion of parched corn more than enough to satisfy her own needs.

She learned to glean patiently after the reapers, and to beat out patiently what she had gleaned.

Last, she learned the name of Boaz, and the value of his word (vv. 19-21). These are simple but blessed lessons that flow from the work of grace when the soul has met with Jesus. Instead of the restless wandering and seeking for some object to satisfy, the heart finds a place where full satisfaction is known.

Instead of a thirst that cannot be quenched at the broken cisterns of the world, the heart finds abiding refreshment and joy in Christ enjoyed by the Holy Ghost, a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Then the joy is learned of gathering with the children of God in God's way, according to the Word, to find that the Lord is always in the midst of His own, to feed His sheep, and fill the heart with His preciousness.

The value of patient study of the Word, and the need of beating out with diligence and prayer the portions gathered are real things that the young Christian learns in the field of Boaz, nor does the older Christian ever cease to need them. But above and beyond all, and indeed through all, the great lesson is the knowledge of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and that His Word must be everything to the soul.

"The man's name... is Boaz." "He said unto me." These are the words that show what Ruth had learned, though the ephah beaten out bore witness to her labor, and the portion reserved bore witness to the gracious care of Boaz.

## Fragment: Bright and Morning Star

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"I am . . . the bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:16).

Dan Crawford used to tell how, when his Africans were on the march, and night was coming on, they would lie down to sleep. But before dropping off to sleep, there would pass from group to group about the fires the watchword "Lutanda" (morning star). It was a laconic agreement to be up and ready to move when the morning star appeared.

"He is coming, coming for us ; soon we'll see His light afar,  
On the dark horizon gleaming, as the bright and morning star,  
Cheering every waking watcher, as the star whose kindly ray  
Heralds the approaching morning, just before the break of day.  
Oh! what joy, as night hangs round us, 'tis to think of morning's ray;  
Sweet to know He's coming for us, just before the break of day."

## As He Is in the Light: God Revealed

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"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7.

Of old, God said "He would dwell in the thick darkness" (1 Kings 8:12). When He gave the law from Sinai, the mountain "burned with fire," and God was surrounded with "blackness, and darkness, and tempest." In the tabernacle and temple He dwelt between the cherubim, behind a veil, in unapproachable majesty. God was unrevealed and could not be approached.

Now, blessed be His name, it is no longer thus. That solemn question has been divinely settled in the sacrifice of Christ. All God's claims have been fully met. His majesty has been maintained - all His nature fully glorified in the death of Jesus, so that when Jesus died the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Indeed, the veil was Jesus' flesh (Heb. 10:20), in the rending of which God was revealed, coming down to meet man's need in that wondrous sacrifice, revealed in light, and known as a Savior God. In mercy to man He remained hidden until He could manifest Himself in the light, on the ground of that perfect sacrifice in which His righteousness and holiness were declared, as well as His unspeakable love to man. In that wondrous act in which man's sin was atoned for on the cross, God stood revealed in light, at once displaying His majesty and inflexible holiness in the judgment of sin, and His immeasurable love to man in providing for him the sacrifice that has put away his sin.

God has rent the veil and revealed Himself in grace, in cloudless light, to bring man to Himself in that light. It is in the sacrifice of Jesus, His beloved Son. On the ground of that sacrifice, God and man meet together in light which has no element of darkness in it, all guilt and sin gone forever, so that man can be in His presence in abiding and eternal relationship founded on this immovable basis:

"THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN."

Wondrous statement! We meet God in the light. The blood of Jesus is there. It has answered every question, met every claim, it "cleanseth us from all sin." The cloudless light and glory of God's presence can discover no spot, where that blood has been applied. If the light could be brighter still, it would manifest but the more clearly that there is not a spot upon us, that all is gone, and that we are in the presence of God in the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable value of the blood of Jesus. Oh! what a revelation is this! What infinite grace! What unspeakable love! And oh! what rest and peace for our once weary hearts and guilty consciences! Consciously brought into such a scene, well may we bow our heads in adoring worship.

But yet there is more than this. The scene into which we are brought is one where there is no element of darkness, no discord, no jarring note. We are in the light, and walk in it. Once we were in darkness and walked in darkness - walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience. But we are no longer there. We are now in the light and walk there.

And now what is so blessed is that "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." How could it be otherwise? We are brought into fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Here there can be but one mind, one thought - the mind of God, of Christ. It is an abstract statement of what belongs to the light into which we are brought, and where we walk. All is looked at according to the presence and nature of God, where there is no disturbing element to produce jarring or discord. There we walk in the light as He is in the light, and we have fellowship one with another. We are brought to God, are in the light, have eternal life, fellowship with the Father and the Son, and with one another. How immense the blessing! and how blessed the privileges! All is divinely perfect and without any flaw, and proclaims the pure grace and infinite love of God. Such is the truth presented to us in its abstract perfection according to the nature of God and His manifestation in grace; and the heart utters its praise to Him, and takes in the blessed revelation.

The life that has been manifested, and which is given to us, is perfect. The cleansing power of the blood of Jesus which enables us to subsist in the presence of God is perfect. Perfect and cloudless the light into which we are brought. And perfect the fellowship we have with God, and with one another, in the light, according to the relationship in which God has set us as His own children.

Now there is one more question before we close. How far are we living and walking in the power of this truth? This is the practical side for everyone who has been brought to God. This truth is the standard God has given us. Do we want a lower standard? Do we want something now that we shall not have in the joy and brightness and eternal blessedness of the Father's house? It only shows how little our souls have drunk in the truth. How the truth lays our hearts bare! If we brought our motives, our desires, our ways, our walk, into the presence of God, to measure and weigh all in the light, should we not be on our faces in confession before Him who "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"? Nor could He fail us, cleansing as well as forgiving; not only giving us a standing in the light in virtue of the blood of Jesus, but cleansing our ways by His purifying Word, according to the place we are in - cleansing from "all unrighteousness" as well as from "all sin." May His Word even now search our hearts and lead us to the judgment of all that will not bear the test of the light.

## Healing: What Saith the Scripture?

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As the end approaches, the power of the enemy is increasing, and he often seeks to display such by imitation. We are warned of this in 2 Tim. 3:8, where we are told of how the magicians of Egypt, under Satan's power, withstood Moses by imitation. This is the character of the last days.

The Christian who would be kept in an evil day, must learn the importance of meeting all the attacks of the enemy by the written Word of God. "By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." Psalm 17:4.

There is much false teaching around us about healing, and many dear children of God have been caught in this snare, and then led to wonder why they were not healed.

These lines have been written to bring out the teaching of the Word of God on the subject, so that we may be kept from making false claims. May we be like the men of Issachar of old who "had understanding of the times" (1 Chron. 12:32). Soon we shall be with and like Christ above, having glorified bodies like His, and meanwhile may we learn submission to all His ways with us, even in sickness.

It is well to remember that sickness and death came into the world through sin (Rom. 5:12).

The first mention in the Bible of disease is in Exod. 15:26. There it is stated that God had put such upon the Egyptians, but that such would not be put upon the children of Israel provided they walked in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.

Blessing on the earth was the distinctive promise to Israel (Deut. 7:13-15). When they walked in disobedience and forsook the Lord, then the government of God brought upon them all the diseases of Egypt of which they had been afraid (Deut. 28:58-61). Their promised blessings were earthly (Deut. 28:1-14).

God took knowledge of their ways, for under law every transgression and disobedience must receive a just recompense of reward (Heb. 2:2). We see this principle strikingly in the case of Jehoram

the son of Jehoshaphat, recorded in 2 Chron. 21:18, 19.

Satan may be the instrument to afflict, or bring disease, but it is God who has allowed it, yea, even sent it, in the wisdom of His ways, whether it be to awaken the sinner to his need of salvation, to correct that which His watchful eye sees needful in the child of God, or for some other reason. These principles of the ways of God are strikingly brought before us in the book of Job. This book is very precious instruction for us, and gives us these moral ways of God which are true at all times. May we be exercised by all that His wisdom and love may send to do us good at our latter end.

Man tested and tried (Israel is just a sample of man in the flesh) has failed so completely that he has forfeited every claim to blessing on the ground of faithful obedience. No one can claim

freedom from sickness on the ground of his own faithfulness. Grace alone is the ground of all blessing to ruined man. The first time the election of grace is mentioned in the Bible is on this principle (see Exod. 33:19; Isa. 1:9). It is of this election of grace that Paul speaks in Rom. 11:5.

Now God is never frustrated in His purposes, and all the counsels of God will have a full and blessed fruition; and so in the Millennium it is said, "There shall be no more curse" (Rev. 22:3). The healing waters will come from the south side of the altar (Eze. 47:1). The redeemed of the Lord will then be forgiven all their iniquities, and healed of all their diseases (Psalm 103:3). Then "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" (Isa. 33:24). They will enjoy the sabbath of rest according to the mind of God, for the sabbath is God's pledge of rest to the redeemed of the Lord on the earth (Eze. 46:1-3).

When the Lord Jesus presented Himself to Israel as their true Messiah and King, He showed them how He, "the LORD that healeth thee," could bring the promised blessing. He healed the diseases of all who came to Him, and, had the nation accepted Him, the kingdom would have been set up then. It is precious at this point to notice how He felt for those He healed with a perfect sympathy, entering into their sicknesses and sorrows in matchless grace. In this way it could be said of Him, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. 8:17). He even wept at the grave of Lazarus with the sorrowing sisters, Martha and Mary, before displaying His power as the resurrection and the life (John 11), in raising Lazarus from the dead. Truly He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3), and it was the compassion of His blessed heart that made Him so. But Israel rejected their King, saying, "We have no king but Caesar." They chose their sins, sickness, and death instead of Him; for the world did not and does not want Christ on any terms whatever.

Now we see this same power to heal manifested in Christ's name after His resurrection from the dead. This is in the book of The Acts (see Acts 4:26-30). Israel were given the opportunity as a nation of acknowledging their guilt; and Peter told them that, if they would, God would send Jesus and bring in the kingdom then (Acts 3:19-26). The gospel was therefore accompanied by signs and wonders in the name of the One whom they rejected, and thus the powers of the age to come were manifested (Heb. 6:5); but even this testimony was refused. Stephen was stoned, and thus they sent a message after Christ, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). Once again they chose their sickness and sorrows, refusing the Holy Spirit's testimony to Christ's death, resurrection, and glory at God's right hand. Nevertheless, since "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29), we see that the power to heal remained during the life of the apostles.

The blessings of the Church, however, in this present period, are expressed by the Apostle in Eph. 1:3, wherein he says that we are "blessed... with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Heb. 3:1 contrasts this with Israel's earthly blessings by saying that we are now "partakers of the heavenly calling."

Christianity is a calling out of the world of a people whose "conversation [citizenship] is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). The trial of man is completely over (John 12:31). The Christian is not called upon to build a better world, nor to interfere in its government, but to live Christ and to preach Christ while waiting for God's Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:5-10).

God is now training His children for the coming day of glory when all will manifest the wisdom of His ways, which perfect love ordered with a view to that coming day of manifestation. Infirmity, sickness, and trial are often used of Him to this end, as we shall see in what follows.

First of all, He chose us in Christ "before the foundation of the world," that we should be to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:4-6). Israel's blessings are "from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). The precious secret of the Church's blessing was hid in God, and revealed through the Apostle Paul by a special revelation from Christ in glory. Baptized by one Spirit into one body, we can now enjoy in blessed nearness all the affections of His heart, with a nature given of God. This nature will enable us to enjoy what the heart of God enjoys, forever. How precious! We shall also be the temple of God, reflecting His glory in all its moral excellence; for every glory is ours, except that which cannot be communicated; that is, deity itself.

God is preparing us now, by skillful training, for the place His grace has purposed for us in the building of God. He may pick up the most unlikely stone, one that entered the world physically deformed or deficient, and with such, display His marvelous skill as the Builder, in fitting it into the building of God (Eph. 2:18-22).

As the husbandman He must prune each branch of the vine of His planting with a view to fruit bearing. This is that we might in the communion of love bear fruit through the manifestation of the true nature of God as His children. How His heart rejoices when anything is done just to please Him, having learned what is pleasing through this communion in love (John 15:7, 8). His watchful eye that seeks this communion, sees when the old root of self has not been judged, and in the wisdom of love prunes each branch that it may produce fruit to His praise.

We also learn that grace may have communicated to some servant much of His mind, and of the largeness of His counsels, enabling such to communicate this to the beloved flock of God; but then with it He must give that which is a thorn in the flesh to keep "the pride of life" in the place of death (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Then we have chastening, which may take the form of sickness, and this has the thought of child-training (Heb. 12:5-8). The same word is translated "nurture" in Eph. 6:4. This is for the correction of our ways, and may call for "scourging," which is the wise and gracious voice of the Lord, "that we may be partakers of His holiness" (Heb. 12:10).

We also learn from Paul's comment regarding Epaphroditus, that sickness may be the result of devotedness. This dear man of God did not regard his life, that he might supply Paul's need, in the Philippians' lack of service toward him (Phil. 2:25-30).

It is evident from reading 1 Tim. 5:23, that Timothy had infirmities that remained with him, in the wisdom of God, and that Trophimus was left at Miletum sick (2 Tim. 4:20), so that the gift of healing which Paul possessed was not used on behalf of these two brethren, beloved in the Lord.

In all these various dealings of God with His children, we know that the same One who once entered into the sorrows of those He healed here upon earth, is now living, a glorified Man, as our Great High Priest above. Although our promised blessings are heavenly, and not earthly, yet He sympathizes with us in our physical infirmities, and ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:14-16). When tried in sickness and pain, we can look up to Him for comfort and

understanding, and for strength to bear up so that we do not become irritated and dishonor Him in the trial. The blessed Holy Spirit too, whose testimony the world rejects, as we have noticed, now indwells the bodies of all believers as the Comforter, to occupy our hearts with those heavenly glories that await us with Christ (John 14:26). He helps our infirmities too, and makes "intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). He, with us, is waiting for the day when He shall quicken our mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11); and then, freed forever from this groaning tabernacle, we shall enjoy in fullness our heavenly blessings. This will be when the Lord comes for His own. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22:17, 20.

The subject of healing again comes before us in Jas. 5:14, 15. Here it is a soul exercised about the sickness; and, where there has been failure, it is owned (v. 16). Then the prayer of faith on the part of the elders who are called (there are none officially now), suggests their communion with the mind of the Lord, for confidence in prayer is the fruit of "abiding in Christ" (John 15:7). It is evident here that the sufferer owns the hand of God in his sickness, judges the failure there may have been, and then seeks healing through communion with the mind of the Lord that it is His will to raise him up. Such faith honors God, for it is from Him; but to claim healing today in every case, as a Christian blessing, is to fail to understand true Christian position. God can and does answer the prayer of faith, and we ought to be exercised by every trial He passes us through, but let us not confuse our blessings in Christianity with Israel's as an earthly people.

It must never be forgotten that the child of God is now called to an inheritance reserved in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4). The work of Christ has given the believer a perfect standing before God (Heb. 10:14). The wilderness life of the child of God is to put Christ practically in the heart, so that He may be seen in our ways (2 Cor. 4:11). Every child of God needs this training, whereof all are partakers (Heb. 12:8). Let us seek to profit by all through which the wisdom of God may pass us, for there will never be a trial without a "needs be" on our part, and without a purpose of love on His part.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Envy

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Let us now consider briefly the examples of this dangerous sin that have been recorded for our instruction (1 Cor. 10). I say dangerous because we shall see that such is its character.

### The First Example

is that of Cain. He, seeing that his brother's offering was accepted (being with blood), while his was rejected, became envious of his brother; this led to anger, this to hatred, and this to MURDER; and in 1 John 3:12 this case is given as an express warning to us as Christians.

The next illustration we may take is in Genesis 26:14. The Philistines envied Isaac's earthly prosperity, just as Cain envied Abel's spiritual prosperity. (See Eccles. 4:4.) Their envy was shown by MALICIOUSNESS (vs. 15).

We pass on to Laban's sons (Gen. 31:1), who became envious of Jacob; Laban also became full of ANGER against him, though God did not permit him to show it (Gen. 31:2,24). It is worthy of note that, though Isaac and Jacob were both envied for their riches, we do not find that Abraham (although equally rich) ever was, a fact that says a great deal for his character. The next example is that of Joseph's brethren in Genesis 37:11; and the result is, first they stripped him and threw him into a pit to perish, and next sold him into slavery for twenty pieces of silver, acts which we can only characterize as INTENSE CRUELTY, springing solely from envy.

We now pass on to Numbers 11:28- 29, where we find the first instance of

### Envy in a Child of God.

Joshua is one of the last we should have expected to find this evil in, but the seed is, alas, in all our hearts; and we actually find Joshua here trying to HINDER GOD'S WORK, led on by this fearful and dangerous spirit. It is, however, only just to add that it is possible that the envy was not for his own sake, but for Moses', whose servant he was. We have only, however, to go on to the very next chapter to find an undoubted instance of envy, in no less a one than Aaron, the high priest, and in Miriam also. They did not like the growing nearness of Moses to God, and the difference of the way in which the Lord spoke to him and them; and envy led them to DESPISE GOD'S SERVANT. The Lord, however, did not leave Moses to fight his own battles, for Miriam became leprous, white as snow. The sin of Korah which follows closely in chapter 16, was also entirely prompted by envy (Psalm 106:16), and led to still more awful consequences. Envy in this case led Korah, Dathan, and Abiram into fearful LYING against and REVILING of Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:13-14), and brought upon them a most appalling death (Num. 16:32), so swift was God to visit their sin upon them.

### Envy Leads to Murder

Let us now pass on to Saul in 1 Samuel 18:8. Envy here seems to possess Saul so fearfully that it obtains a complete mastery over him, leading him three times to ATTEMPT TO MURDER David.

To one who does not know how rapidly and fatally the poison of envy works, it seems almost incredible that for such a trivial reason Saul could have sought to kill the very one who had just delivered Israel. Yet I am sure there is not one of us who knows anything of his own heart, but can trace the seeds of great crimes in the feelings prompted by envy.

In Ezekiel 35:11 we find in the case of Edom that envy leads to HATRED. In the case of Daniel (chap. 6:3, 4) it is, I think, clear that envy prompted the presidents and princes to their cruel course, which cannot be called anything but WICKED and UNSCRUPULOUS. We now pass on to the most fearful thing envy ever accomplished, in Mark 15:10.

Jesus, the Son of God, was delivered up to Pilate, from the wretched miserable feeling of envy, that had eaten away all that was even human in the hearts of God's professed servants, the chief priests. Here envy led them to CRUCIFY CHRIST.

In Acts 13:45 we find the same horrible sin, leading the Jews through hatred of the success of the gospel to LYING and BLASPHEMING; and in Acts 17:5, a similar company led away by the same feelings were guilty of RIOTING and VIOLENCE!

#### The Sins That Envy Leads To

Let us now just sum up from the few examples that we have selected, the crimes which are actually recorded in the Word, as having been committed through the sin of envy. We have seen that through ENVY Christ was crucified—Abel was murdered—Joseph and David almost murdered—that it led at different times to hatred—wicked and unscrupulous conduct—lying and blaspheming—rioting and violence—hindering God's work—despising God's servants—lying and reviling—maliciousness—anger—and intense cruelty.

Surely, now that we have laid some part of the horrible form of this vice bare from Scripture, our readers must shudder to think that the root of all these crimes lurks in their hearts. James does not hesitate to say that envy is a root of every evil work (James 3:16). It is worse than wrath or anger; none can stand before envy (Prov. 27:4). It hinders growth in grace (1 Pet. 2:1-2); is a proof of carnal mindedness (1 Cor. 3:1-3); it is one of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:21); and one to which our spirits are especially liable (James 4:5), being produced by the prosperity and good deeds of others (Eccles. 4:4), and also by arguments and disputes (1 Tim. 6:4). Now to be forewarned is to be forearmed. Never let us give place to the devil, in allowing envy to sprout and germinate in our hearts; but let us ever check the first risings of an envious spirit.

#### A Cure for Envy

Seek to rejoice in the prosperity of others; seek to be unselfish, for, after all, envy is only a form of selfishness. Seek the good of others, not your own. Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession—Christ Jesus—who was not envious like Adam (Phil. 2), but emptied Himself (JND Trans.), and ended a life of self-abnegation on the cross.

Ask yourself the question, Shall I allow for a moment in my heart the feeling of envy, a feeling which prompted the crucifixion of my Lord?

There is no saying to what length even a child of God may not be led, who once willingly allows this feeling. It grows so very rapidly that, from only beginning to be envious of the success,

prosperity, and position of another, we may soon begin to hate him, and then plot against him.

As with pride, so it is with envy; its most horrible and deadly form is when it conceals itself under a cover of zeal for the Lord, and under this or some other religious subterfuge, seeks the evil of another. Oh, what unmaskings of all such actions will take place at the judgment seat of Christ!

Seek, beloved reader, to be pure from this vice at least, after the fearful warnings the Word of God has given us (remembering especially that it is one of the five sins that hinder our love of the Word of God itself [1 Pet. 2]). Real occupation with Christ's glory and interests instead of our own, effectually, though unconsciously, checks not only this but many other sins. It is only the self-seeker who is envious. The servant who can truly say, like his Master, "I seek not Mine own glory," is surely delivered from a spirit of envy.

May the Lord preserve us from this sin, which is, alas, by no means uncommon among young as well as old believers.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Anger

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Unlike the three subjects we have already considered— selfishness, pride, and envy—this is spoken of in two ways in Scripture. The one points out when it is right to be angry, and the other, when it is a grievous sin. Perhaps the most interesting as well as the most profitable way of looking at the subject will be to consider first a few examples of each.

We will begin with anger as a sin, and observe from the instances selected what are its results when indulged in.

### The First Instance of Anger

is in the case of Cain. He was “very wroth, and his countenance fell,” the result being the MURDER of Abel.

In Genesis 27:41, in the case of Esau, we find another instance of how anger is akin to murder, as the Lord pointed out in Matthew 5:21-22. When anger is sinful it is always the result of some previous sin. When it is righteous, it is the result of a righteous and holy feeling. Bearing this in mind in going through these examples, it will be interesting to observe not only the results, but the causes of anger. In Cain’s case the cause was ENVY, in Esau’s, JEALOUSY. In Numbers 20:10-11, we find the meekest man in all the earth betrayed into anger by his IMPATIENCE, the result of his anger being DISOBEDIENCE, the punishment he received being exclusion from the promised land. Many might justify Moses on this occasion, but God does not. It is true that he was provoked, but followers of Christ here see that

Provocation is No Excuse for Anger.

It must be remembered that God’s anger is always righteous anger—ours surely is not. Hence we frequently have the expression “provoked Him to anger,” applied to God, rightly; but man who is dependent, should not give way to anger, but leave the matter with God as supreme. Jesus when on earth took the place of man; hence He bore all with perfect patience and meekness, committing His cause to Him who judges righteously. The punishment in Moses’ case may seem severe, but we must remember that Moses was a great saint, “Moses, the man of God”; and that a little sin in a great saint is worse than a great sin in a sinner. God cannot lightly overlook outbreaks of natural passion in His people, even when provoked; for He has given them power to restrain it.

In 1 Samuel 20:30 we find Saul angry with Jonathan and seeking to kill him, his anger being caused by HATRED of David. In Ahab’s cruelty to Naboth (1 Kings 21) we find that

Anger Leads to Murder,

being caused by COVETOUSNESS. In 2 Kings 5:11 we find the anger of Naaman stirred up by his PRIDE, and leading him to despise God’s message to him.

We might easily multiply these examples, for the seeds of them are in every human heart (of the actions of which the Old Testament is such a wonderful mirror), but we will only select one or two

more. In 2 Chron. 16:10 we find Asa very angry with Hanani, because the latter had rebuked him for his DISOBEDIENCE. This leads Asa to put Hanani in prison, an act of gross INJUSTICE. In the case of Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:19), his wrath was caused by his being rebuked for committing SACRILEGE, for which sin he was immediately punished by God with leprosy. These last two instances show us how often anger is a result in our hearts of being rebuked or faithfully reprov'd for some sin that we have committed. Let us be on our guard against this. It is enough to have committed the sin; but it is far worse, when reprov'd of it by some servant of God, to add to it by a second, and possibly a third, as Asa did. We feel sure that if our readers will but carefully weigh these instances of anger, and compare them in cause and effect with their own history, they will find what a wonderfully accurate mirror of the human heart the Word of God is. In Esther 3:5 we find

Anger Caused by Pride,

in the person of the wicked Haman, and leading to the attempted destruction of an entire people. The same cause, PRIDE, in Nebuchadnezzar's case, filled him with rage and fury, so that the form of his visage was changed (like Cain's), and led to INTENSE CRUELTY on his part against his victims, which, however, God miraculously overruled. In Jonah's case we find great anger caused by IMPATIENCE, which led him to speak against God. He appears to have so completely given way to it, that in chapter 4:9 he actually justifies his unrighteous anger to God. In the New Testament we find the anger of Herod leading him to murder the children of Bethlehem. We further see, in Luke 4:28, that the Jews stung with JEALOUSY of God's favors to the Gentiles (vss. 24-27) sought to MURDER Christ on the very spot; and in Acts 7:54 we find the Jews again filled with HATRED AGAINST CHRIST, actually gnashing on Stephen with rage and stoning him to death.

Causes and Results of Anger

From these illustrations we find that anger is caused by envy, jealousy, impatience, hatred, pride, covetousness, and by the just rebukes of God's people; that, if unchecked, it tends to cruelty and murder, also to disobedience, injustice, and despising God's Word.

Turning for a moment to what is said about it in Scripture, we find that it is expressly forbidden (Matt. 5:22; Rom. 12:19); it is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20); it is characteristic of fools (Pro. 12:16; 14:29; 27:3; etc.); it brings its own punishment (Job 5:2; Pro. 19:19); it is often stirred up by bad words (2 Sam. 19:43, etc.), but pacified by meekness (Pro. 15:1); that we should not provoke others to it (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21).

We will now briefly consider some instances of

Righteous Anger.

In Mark 3:5 we find the Lord angry, "being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." How instinctively we feel in this case, the unselfishness of the anger. It is all for their sakes and for God's glory. Righteous anger never has self in any shape or form for its cause. Moses was angry in Exodus 11:8, but it was for the indignities offered by Pharaoh to the Lord and His people, unlike his anger in Numbers 20, for which he was punished. We also find Moses angry in a similar way in Exodus 32:19 and Leviticus 10:16. In Nehemiah 5:6 we find Nehemiah very angry against gross injustice done by others, and to others, not against himself; hence, he did "well" to be angry. In

Ephesians 4:26 we get the exhortation to “be... angry, and sin not”; that is, not to treasure up anger and malice in our hearts.

We have now before us the two sorts of anger, the one generally the fruit of some other sin, always having self for its ultimate cause; the other springing from zeal or indignation for the Lord, and having Him or His people for its cause. We thus find that the first anger, like other sins we have considered, is a selfish sin; and the surest way of being saved from it is to be free from oneself. This should be at conversion, but does not practically take place till

Christ reveals Himself in sufficient power to the heart to replace the wretched idol of self (2 Cor. 4:10). A Christian can only be happy in proportion as this is the case, for a selfish Christian is a most miserable object, and is indeed a contradiction in terms. The surest way, therefore, to overcome the sin of anger is not by cultivating a placid disposition, which is only dealing with externals, but by striking at the root, which is self, and replacing it with Christ. The true Christian is zealous for his Master’s interests, not his own, and may be righteously angry when His glory is concerned, but not for his own sake. May the Lord make us all more zealous for Him, and deliver us from serving and pleasing ourselves.

## Some Thoughts on Education

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Christian parents who have a godly care for the welfare of their children may well be concerned as we approach 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; J.N.D. 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.

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. 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" are 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; J.N.D. 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." 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 Hebrews 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.

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 threefold 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.

## Repenthes

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Far away in the tropics there grow some remarkable plants, called Nepenthes. They are veritable death-traps to flies and small insects, from which they largely derive their growth.

Their method of catching these insects is one of the wonders of nature, and affords a striking example of how Satan allures and traps unwary Christians.

At the end of a long stalk is held out a jug-shaped flower, having a narrow neck, but widening out below. In the neck are spikes, all pointing downward; and these, along with the outer rim, are coated with honey.

The insects are attracted by the honey, and, in their eagerness to drink it in, they gradually enter the neck of the flower, going lower and lower till all at once the honey ceases and they find themselves prisoners. Escape is well-nigh impossible, as the inside of the flower is slippery and affords no foothold, while the spikes pointing downward form an effectual guard preventing a return to the entrance.

It is in exactly this way that Satan ensnares young believers. Enticing them with that which is sweet to the natural taste, but not according to God, he gradually encloses them in his grasp a little at a time, but each leading farther away from the heart that loves them.

The ways of Satan are always seductive; he knows our natural hearts, and will offer all kinds of things as sweet as honey to our taste, to lead us on a wrong path. The spikes are unnoticed as we go his way, but they will assuredly be felt on the way back, should we be restored in self-judgment to the Lord.

It is worth remarking that only hungry insects are caught in these death-traps, and we may rest assured that as long as our hearts are filled with Christ and His love, Satan is powerless; and no matter how seductively he offers his "Nepenthes," we shall, through grace, be able to turn away, conscious that we have that which is sweeter than honey, even the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7).

## 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 parlor, the factory or the office, 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.

## Psalm 22

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This beautiful psalm at once opens up to us a scene which, to every Christian, must be especially precious, namely, "the cross." It is the cross in connection with the awful question of sin-bearing, and the consequent forsaking of Christ, on the part of God. There are several ways in which we can look at the cross and the blessed One that hung there - ways which tell out the fullness of that scene which can never be forgotten in time or eternity. At the time of its transaction, though the face of Heaven was turned from that Holy Sufferer, yet, the thought of Heaven was concentrated there. Would that we knew how to tread while gazing at such a scene; and as we meditate upon this portion of the Psalms, may we do it in that spirit which becomes those who are absolutely dependent upon it for salvation.

I have said that there are various ways in which we can look at the cross, and the blessed Lord in connection therewith. At the least, there are five ways in which we can view the cross. In the first place then we see the expression of human guilt in the crucifying of the Lord Jesus Christ. From man's standpoint we see it to be but the unfolding of the human heart - the terrible disclosure of the contents of that heart- desperate wickedness! It is viewing the cross thus, we see the true state of ourselves naturally. It tells me what I am as a part of that old creation that failed to appreciate the holy Son of God when down here in perfect grace and love. It expressed its thoughts of God's Christ by putting Him on the cross as a malefactor. Oh! how awful is this disclosure of man - this expression of the state of his heart! It is here we see that not only is the fruit of the tree corrupt, but the tree itself. Man is that tree - a corrupt tree that cannot bring forth good fruit!

When the representatives of the human family raised up the Son of God upon the cross, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us," the trial of man was finished, and the verdict of Heaven was returned - the whole world standeth "guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19). He now sees the first Adam creation an utterly ruined thing under condemnation. The Lord in view of the cross had decided this, when He said, "Now is the judgment of this world" (John 12:31).

Second, we may view the cross as the scene of the expression of Satan's hatred and seeming triumph. There it was he bruised the heel of the seed of the woman; but his seeming triumph was to return upon his own head in everlasting defeat. If the judgment of the first Adam race was expressed there, the ground of Satan's defeat and his being banished from God's domain forever was found there also. Christ had said in view of the cross, the scene of His conflict with death, and him who had the power of death, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31). Ah! yes, the head of the serpent was bruised even at the time of his seeming triumph. Blessed be God, all the powers of darkness were foiled - yea, every foe of God and man was conquered when that Holy One gave His brow to the thorns, His hands to the nails, His side to the spear, and bowed His head and died! On the third day He stands in resurrection - the proof of His having vanquished all. All praise be to His peerless name!

Third, in Christ's going to the cross we see His perfect love and obedience to the Father expressed. How this is told out in the two following scriptures! "Hereafter I will not talk much with

you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." John 14:30, 31. "Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God." Heb. 10:5-7. From the manger to the cross we see in the blessed Lord Jesus one continuous display of perfect love and obedience to the Father. He was in life a whole "meat offering" (Lev. 2), and in death - that death viewed as the expression of His love and obedience to God - "an offering... of a sweet savor unto the LORD" (Lev. 1). Redolent with frankincense was that sacrifice, and appreciated by God the Father with an infinite appreciation. The cross viewed in this way was the culminating point of Christ's love and obedience to God. He could go no further down in the path of self-surrender He had reached the lowest point - the lowest possible depth! And all this, as a matter of love and obedience, that the world might know that He loved the Father, and the heart of the Father might be satisfied - refreshed by such expression of love and obedience in man. The first Adam had failed in love and obedience; here was a recompense for it all, in the last Adam. God is satisfied: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:9-11. This is the glorious answer of God to the love and obedience of His dear Son. He went down to the lowest depth; now He is raised to the highest possible height. Shall not our hearts exclaim, He is worthy! He is worthy!

Fourth, in looking at the cross we view it as the infinite expression of God's love to a guilty world. As it is written, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. Here God makes known to a guilty world the fact that He loves it. He gives them to see His heart! Precious display of God! Blessed making known the love of His heart!

Unasked for and undeserved, yet, it is seen exhibiting itself-flowing out in the gift of His Son. Unworthy man is the object toward which this love is shown - toward which it flowed in all its mighty fullness.

"Could I with ink the ocean fill,  
Were every blade of grass a quill,  
Were the whole world of parchment made,  
And every man a scribe by trade,  
To write the love of God above,  
Would drain the ocean dry;  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky."

Creation might display His power and wisdom, and Providence the beneficence of His being toward His creatures; but it is in the gift of His only begotten Son we learn the fullness of His love toward man - guilty, lost, and undone man! God, standing upon the lofty height of His throne, viewed man in his ruin and misery; and, He loved him. His dear Son was given up to express that love so infinite and so boundless. God's delight from all eternity was given up as proof of that love. The Father would give that bosom companion up, that poor sinners might know that He loved them. Oh! how overwhelming is the thought of all this - this display of pure, infinite, and undeserved love on the part of an offended God. May we know its blessed actuating power in our souls; may it constrain us to yield ourselves unreservedly to Him who loved us even unto death!

Fifth, we view the cross where the great question of sin was settled between God and Christ, the sinner's Substitute. It is viewing the cross in that light, that we are brought back to the 22nd Psalm, where we see the blessed Lord in the circumstances of a sin-bearer. How solemn are the opening words: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? why art Thou so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." Could anything be more solemn? From all eternity up to this moment there had not been a single bit of distance between God and His dear Son; but here all was changed. It was, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and, "Thou hearest Me not." Why this change? Had the Son faltered? Had the Father's complacency in His Son diminished? Neither. What then? Sin was in question. Christ had taken the sinner's place; sins and iniquities were laid upon Him; He must be treated as the sinner (substitutionally); and until God was glorified about sin, there could be no communion between Him and the Holy Sufferer.

Let none for a moment suppose that God's delight in His Son has lessened in the least degree; that could never be; but rather, while sin was upon His Son, the very holiness of His nature demanded a suspension of communion, and a distance between them. It is here we learn the true nature and deserts of sin - what it is in itself, and what was needed to put it away.

When we speak of distance coming in between God and the blessed Lord on the cross, it was not that there was anything in Him personally to cause that distance. No, He was emphatically "the Holy One and the Just." He knew no sin, personally. It was that sin was imputed to Him, and iniquities laid upon Him, which caused the distance between the Father and the Son. He voluntarily took the place of infinite moral distance which belonged to the sinner, and there became subject to the wrath and judgment of God due to the sinner, and which He endured as made sin for him.

This is the subject of the 22nd Psalm - not that man is not seen, but God is referred to throughout - all is received as from Him. Bulls may beset Him, and dogs may encompass Him, but He receives death at God's hands; "And Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death." Man did his worst with God's Lamb; but as to atonement, man was not in the scene save as a spectator, then with no power to comprehend what was passing. He might behold the physical eruptions at the time, but was perfectly incapacitated to enter into the moral force of all that was going on in that place of infinite distance, between a holy God and the sinner's Substitute. In those three hours of darkness, none can tell, but God and the One who suffered, what was endured.

This was what the blessed Lord was contemplating when prostrated in the garden of Gethsemane He there was anticipating what He here is seen enduring. There the dark shadow of the cross and

the outlines of that cup passed before Him, which brought Him into agony of soul; but here, He is overwhelmed in the horrors of the judgment and wrath found in that bitter cup. Alone, at infinite distance from God, and enwrapped in impenetrable darkness, He experienced the unutterable woes of the lowest pit, the darkness, and the deeps. God's wrath lay hard upon Him. He was afflicted with all His waves. The fierce wrath of a sin-hating God passed over Him. His terrors cut Him off (Psa. 88). Yes, it was then those words were fulfilled which said, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me." Psalm 42:7. Such was God's holiness, and such was God's hatred of sin, that nothing short of all this could put it away, and open up a way for the blessing of salvation to flow out far and near. Infinite claims needed an infinite sacrifice to meet them. This was done when the lowly Lord Jesus Christ laid Himself on the sin-offering altar of Calvary. There sin was perfectly atoned for and put away; the curse of a broken law was borne; the justice of God was satisfied; the throne, majesty, and glory of God were all vindicated; yea, in a word, God was infinitely glorified about sin, man's need perfectly met, and the ground laid for the righteous carrying out of all the purposes and counsels of God.

Now the Holy Sufferer and forsaken One is heard from the horns of the unicorns; "Save Me from the lion's mouth: for Thou hast heard Me from the horns of the unicorns." v. 21. And so it was, the work being finished, redemption accomplished, Satan vanquished, death robbed of its sting, and the grave of its victory, God raises the blessed One up from among the dead; and then that mighty Conqueror began immediately to dispense the spoils of the victory: "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." This was literally fulfilled when Jesus said to Mary after He arose, "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." John 20:17. Raised up from the low depths of that death, and standing in resurrection, it was His great joy to bring His people into a new relationship with Himself, and declare the Father's name in a way that it had never been declared before. Blessed family oneness, expressed in those words, "My Father, and your Father;... My God, and your God." He is not ashamed to call us brethren, saying, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee." Heb. 2:12.

Is there not something inconceivably precious in the thought that this was the first act after He arose from the dead - to declare the Father's name to His brethren, and to make them acquainted with the fact of their new place before God in family association with Himself? Hitherto His disciples had been members of a nation brought into outward nearness to God, individually the people of God (it was what characterized the people of God before the resurrection of Christ); but now they are brought into corporate oneness with the risen Lord Himself. How precious to know Jesus thus, and also to know Him as the leader of our praises in the assembly. How acceptable must be those praises to our God, that are tuned by His ever blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Would that we remembered this on every occasion when gathered together to celebrate His praise; how high and holy our strains would be, and how sweet would be the flowing forth of that which God delights to accept from grateful hearts.

But, it is not the province of our psalm to introduce us into the glories belonging to the Church, and the calling and privileges of the same. In fact, the Church is not the subject of the psalm; it simply states in the 22nd verse, Christ speaking prophetically of Himself, that He would declare the Father's name to His brethren, and sing praises in the midst of the congregation, which is

interpreted as the Church (Heb. 2:12), and then passes on with what the psalm is occupied with: Israel's restoration and blessing; and the nations' and the earth's blessing in the millennial period yet to come, "And the LORD shall be King over all the earth: in that day there shall be one LORD, and His name one." Zech. 14:9. When it shall be said, "Ye that fear the LORD, praise Him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all ye the seed of Israel." Psalm 22:23. This evidently takes us into the age to come-not into eternity, for nationalities cease there, but into the age to come, when Christ shall

have taken away the joint heirs to glory, and have returned with them to judge the living, restored Israel, and those saved of the nations; when Satan will be bound, and the "earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." Hab. 2:14.

It is this that our psalm points to, from verse 23 to the end. And how interesting to know that this present sin-blighted scene shall be so relieved and refreshed under the righteous sway of its rightful King. Not only will God bring the now scattered tribes of Israel from the north and the south, from the east and the west (Isa. 43:5, 6), and establish them in their own land, and make Jerusalem the joy of the whole earth, He will also bless the nations, and cause them to serve and worship the King - the Lord of Hosts that reigns in Mount Zion. "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and He is the governor among the nations." And what then? "My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation. I will pay my vows before them that fear Him." Not now the Church, as in verse 22, but the mighty millennial gatherings, when the center of the nations' and Israel's gatherings shall be "Zion,... the city of the great King," and the King Himself the object of universal adoration. Blessed time! Blessed release from Satan's power and trail!

Then shall the waves of blessing roll forth from the grand center, and which shall not expend themselves until they have reached the utmost limits of the King's vast domains. His kingdom shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth; and the tide of blessing shall wash the utmost limits. Not then the waves of demoralizing evil, but those of wondrous, ennobling, and exalting blessing, which shall result in the acknowledgment of the supremacy and worthiness of the then reigning One.

Blessed are the purposes of God! He will not stay until all is found in blessed acknowledgment of that once lowly Lord Jesus; for it is the mystery of His will that He has so graciously made known to us, "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." Eph. 1:10. God has purposed that His dear Son, the once rejected and cast-out Jesus, should be the grand center of heavenly and earthly glory, that every nation of the earth should worship Him (Zech. 14:16), and that the angels of God should be ascending and descending upon Him (John 1:51). Thus will God honor the One who honored Him even to death!

But in contemplating this vast scene of future and coming glory, we do well to remember that it is the fruit of that death of the cross that God's blessed Son endured. All is based upon and flows from that death, and the atonement made by it. There can be no blessing for the fallen race and a sin-blighted creation, apart from the cross. That must be endured first, with the cup-draining and forsaking; and then blessings infinite and universal can flow forth without a hindrance; yea, the whole scene shall exult in blessing under the righteous scepter of the King of kings.

Thus does this wonderful psalm introduce us to not only the ground of blessing; namely, the forsaking and wrath-drinking of Christ upon the cross; but it also spreads before us the whole scene of future millennial blessing and glory, the precious fruit of that cross endured by Him. Then, not only shall the heavens adore and worship Him, but everything beneath the sun shall bow down before Him and own Him Lord of all.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou once rejected but now enthroned One, Thou art worthy, Thou art worthy of all!

"Hark! the sound of Jubilee,  
Loud as mighty thunders roar,  
Or the fullness of the sea  
When it breaks upon the shore!  
Hallelujah! for the Lord  
God omnipotent shall reign;  
Hallelujah! let the word  
Echo round the earth and main."

## Christian Newsletter

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My Dear Friends,

Recently I was challenged thus: "If the Bible is God's Word, why didn't He double its contents to include all of our unanswered questions regarding the creation, the flood, etc.?"

One was reminded of the scripture, "I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25). Also of the answer that Abraham gave to the man in torment who wanted his five brothers to be warned of hell ahead; "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

There is in the Bible a vast reservoir of testimony for the honest, searching heart; but all its proof and detailed evidences cannot convince a man against his will, when his will is set against God. "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40).

The Bible is unjustly criticized on many points, but it is doubtful if it has ever been accused of vagueness or wishwashiness. In fact, its outspokenness has probably been the greatest single contribution to its unpopularity. It takes an honest and opened heart to accept the Bible's testimony; for those who are inclined toward flattery, or who close their eyes to their true selves as guilty sinners, won't like what the Bible says to and about them. Yet, it is the only source - the only Book - that really "tells it like it really is." "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Rom. 3:23. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1).

Let us understand that men do not ignore or refuse God's Word because the facts of life deny HIM or contradict His existence. They deny Him because they are "enemies in... mind by wicked works" (Col. 1:21). They want a life free from divine restraint.

The question has been asked, "Why are so many educated people unbelievers?" The answer is: "For the same reason that so many uneducated people are unbelievers."

At the cross of Calvary the heart of man was fully exposed, and it has never changed. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ in all its horror was the act of the human heart. All were represented- the whole world-around the cross (compare Acts 4:26, 27). The cross presented man's fullest hatred, and there this was met by God's fullest love.

Why then will men not look at the crucified One and live? Why do they utter the words of the fool, "No God"? Because they are the captives of Satan, the "god" and "prince" of this world (compare 2 Cor. 4:3, 4; John 12:31). To be sure, he has carefully portrayed himself as a comic-like character with horns, tail, and pitchfork; but he is as really a living person, as is anyone.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. An opened heart (compare Acts 16:14) would surely grasp quickly and gratefully the freedom God offers. But men - the willing dupes of Satan

-serve him effectually by doing their own will.

If this letter should fall into the hands of an unbeliever, may he see his desperate need of the Savior of sinners, and call upon Him; and He will deliver him from the power of darkness, and cause the light of the glorious gospel of Christ to shine into his heart.

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15); "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11:28. Why not call upon Him now? Jesus loves you. He has never refused a seeking soul. His words are still, "Come unto Me." One day soon this gracious invitation will no longer be given. Then His word will be, "Depart from Me."

My dear Christian friend, may you and I be more aware of the power of Satan and his malevolent intent to undermine the faith of the people of God.

"Keep us, Lord, O keep us cleaving

To Thyself and still believing,

Till the hour of our receiving

Promised joys with Thee."

Affectionately in the Lord,

## The Resurrection of Christ: the View in the Gospel of Matthew

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The resurrection of the Lord is, we know, a grand central mystery. It speaks of the end of the old creation, and begins the sure, immovable foundations of the new. It has, however, its various results. Some of its power will display itself in heavenly places - some in earthly - some of it will be known in the power that sets the enemy aside - some in the grace that saves the lost, and brings them to God forever.

It is presented differently at the close of each of the gospels.

In Matthew (chap. 28) we have the resurrection in its power over the adversary. The sealed stone and the set watch represent the power and enmity of the world; but the angel that witnessed the risen Jesus, as it were, laughs them to scorn, puts the sentence of death upon them, letting them know that it was hard for them to kick against the pricks - self-destruction for them to resist the Son of God in power.

And this is one great result of the resurrection. It is judgment against the world. It shows that there is direct collision between God and the world, and that God is the stronger, because the world had put Jesus to death, and God had raised Him from the dead - two simple facts which indicate the entire collision between God and man, and that the strength and victory were with God, the result of which facts must be the judgment or doom of the world; and such judgment is here expressed by the angel rolling away the sealed stone and putting the sentence of death on the keepers of it.

But this same chapter shows the resurrection in its results on earth. It puts Jesus in possession of all power, and gives Him a claim upon the discipleship and obedience of all the nations.

This claim, I know, is not now made good, nor is this power now exercised. But it is His, and in the coming millennial days of the kingdom it will be realized. Power which is His by right, as the risen One, will be exercised by His hand then; and the nations of the earth, from the rising to the setting sun, will own Him.

This is very distinct and very characteristic of Matthew's gospel - so perfect are the oracles of God in their variousness, as in their unity.

But here you have nothing of the effects of the resurrection upon heaven - no peopling of heavenly places with the redemption and grace which the resurrection has sealed and accomplished.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Covetousness

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An insatiable sin, a sin that grows by that on which it feeds, a sin that leads to all sorts of other sins, the one sin of the heart directly forbidden by the ten commandments, a hidden secret sin coming from the heart. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed... covetousness” (Mark 7:21). Applied to money it is “the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10); it is never satisfied. It leads to injustice and oppression (Mic. 2:2), to departure from the faith (1 Tim. 6:10). It is abhorred by God (Psalm 10:3); it excludes from the kingdom of God, being classed with such sins as theft, idolatry, and adultery (1 Cor. 6:10). It is one of the sins of the last days (2 Tim. 3:2; 2 Pet. 2:1-3). Such is covetousness, and yet so deceitful is this sin that but few are aware of its dangerous and awful character. In the world, indeed, it is hardly accounted a sin at all; and it is therefore difficult for a worldly Christian to understand how coveting what is another’s is as bad before God as theft or drunkenness. The fact is, that it is only the standard of the Word of God that shows what sin is; and in a measure the world at large has profited by this. Theft and adultery are now everywhere admitted to be wrong, but in other ages they were not. It is only within the last century that drunkenness has begun to be classed as a sin by the world, while covetousness and other sins of the heart (though equally condemned by the Word) are, as yet, totally unrecognized as such.

### Covetousness Is Theft by the Heart

Writing, however, as we do, for those who take the Word and not the world’s code of morality for their standard, we would earnestly warn them against this sin, which may be called theft by the heart. But, you say, it is very hard not to covet when I am poor and struggling, and see others so well off. This is true, but, though hard, you must get the victory; and by setting your affections on things above, you will find you are as rich and, it may be, far richer than they, so that the positions are reversed; and the rich man, discontented with his riches, covets the calm and happy mind of the humble Christian. God has made us so rich that it can be only through ignorance of our wealth or through earthly tastes that we covet at all; this we see in Psalm 73, the whole of which is written to prove this very point.

### Examples of Covetousness

Before, however, saying more about it, it may be well for us to listen, as we have done before, to what the Word of God has to tell us by way of example concerning this sin, carefully observing to what sins it especially leads. The first sin, the parent of all other sins, was partly due to covetousness. Eve saw the fruit was good for food; she knew it was not for her, but she coveted, and she took, and fell. Covetousness is frequently the result of looking at things we ought not. If we let our eyes drop from Christ to the world, we shall soon find our poor hearts running after it; and covetousness, and a whole host of other sins, will follow. In Joshua 7:21 we find a fearful instance of covetousness in Achan. “When I saw...then I coveted... and took.” How like Eve, and how terrible in its results, causing not only his own death, and that of thirty-six others, but the defeat of Israel before their enemies; for God could not lead them to victory with a covetous man in their midst! Observe in both these cases, covetousness leads to direct DISOBEDIENCE to God.

Have any of my believers any hidden sin, like Achan's, destroying their happiness, eating away their spiritual life, and perhaps injuring and distressing others? Oh, let us judge ourselves, that we be not judged by the Lord.

### Covetousness Leads to Many Sins

Passing on, we may notice it was the greed and covetousness of Samuel's sons, Joel and Abiah that led the people to demand a king (1 Sam. 8:1-5). This king, Saul, was dispossessed of his crown and kingdom through direct disobedience to God, into which he was led by covetousness (1 Sam. 15:9-19). Passing down the stream of time we come to Ahab who, through covetousness of Naboth's vineyard, was led to commit judicial MURDER, led on by Jezebel. Gehazi's covetousness led him into a course of LYING and DECEIT, and brought upon himself the fearful plague of leprosy (2 Kings 5:20-24).

That covetousness was one of the besetting sins of Israel, we may see from Jeremiah 6:13. "From the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness." But let us remember that this covetousness in Israel was not nearly so bad in character as it is among us; for, after all, what they coveted was merely an undue share of that which God had given to them all, for their blessings were earthly, and none could blame them for highly esteeming money and property. The Christian's possessions are spiritual, but it is a very rare thing for Christians to be striving to get an undue share of these, as the Jews did of their temporal blessings. On the contrary, the object of the covetousness of Christians too often is the world and the things that are in it—things on which they should not set their heart or affections at all, still less envy those who possess more than they. What a tale, therefore, it tells of spiritual deadness, when a child of God, an heir of glory, is seen to covet the poor riches of earth!

Babylon, a type of this world in its prosperity, was full of covetousness.

Turning now to the New Testament, we find in the fearful history of Judas, that it was covetousness of money that led him to BETRAY his Master, a character of sin of which any of us may also be guilty, though of course not in the same way. The Pharisees are branded as covetous, and this led them to reject and despise the faithful, searching words, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Covetousness is also the sin of Balaam (2 Pet. 2:15); those whose hearts are full of covetous practices are said to follow the way of Balaam.

We have thus seen that the effects of this sin are uniformly bad, seeing that it leads to disobedience to God, rejection of His Word, lying, deceit, and murder. None are exempt from this sin; those who have little would have much; those who have much would have more. It is wonderful, therefore, to possess

### The Sure Remedy for This Sin

is in simply having the enjoyed possession of so much, that not only can we not wish for more, but cannot even hold what we have. Such a portion is the Christian's, and, were our hearts more true to Christ, we should be but little troubled with low covetous desires; for in Him we have more than we could wish, more than our hearts can contain. Hence, if we are really filled with all the fullness of God, what room is there for a covetous thought, however selfish we may be, if, as must be the case, occupation with Christ not only fills us, but transforms us. Covetousness is not absent so

much because we are full, as because we have ceased to desire for ourselves, what we desire being for Christ's glory, His interests having supplanted our own. Christ then is the cure for covetousness, by virtue both of His satisfying and His transforming power. We are sure that the lives of many Christians are miserable mainly from the effects of this one sin; for, unlike other sins which may make those who commit them happy for a time, this sin makes its victims wretched, so that there is no more unhappy object than a thoroughly covetous man; while, on the other hand, there is no happier object than a Christian who is satisfied with Christ.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Deceit and Lying

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This is one of the special sins connected with the tongue, that unruly member which no man can tame. Over and over again it is emphatically forbidden and condemned by the God of truth (Col. 3:9; 1 Pet. 3:10; Pro. 24:28; Pro. 12:22).

### No Deceit in Christ

When Peter speaks of the life of the Lord Jesus as an example for us to copy, he emphatically points out that no deceit was found in His mouth. Those who are deceitful are therefore evidently most unlike Christ. As we write for those who are professedly children of God, in looking at a few examples of this fearful sin in Scripture, we will only take those where a child of God, or at least, a professor, is concerned.

### Lying Through Fear

We find in Genesis 18:15 Sarah telling a direct lie through fear. How often is this the case, resulting from having done or said something we are ashamed of. It may be a right thing, and we are thus ashamed of Christ; or, it may be a wrong thing, and we are ashamed of being found out. In either case a lie slips from our lips ere we are aware. The radical cure for this is not to do what we are ashamed of; or, if the thing is right, not to be ashamed of what we do. If, however, we have slipped into a sin, let us not add to it by another, but just as the lie is about to leave our lips, let the thought, GOD HEARS ME, instantaneously arrest it. A lie of this sort to screen oneself is, perhaps, the most contemptible kind, despised alike by Christians and men of the world. Having thus looked at it, let us resolutely avoid it, even in the smallest things, and never lend our tongues to such mean deceit.

### Lying for Our Own Advantage

The next instance is in Genesis 27:19, when Jacob tells a direct lie for his own advantage—another despicable variety of this hydra-headed sin. Mark too, Jacob was a child of God, and the result is that through the next thirty years of his life he suffered from the consequences of his sin, by which too he gained nothing, for God would have given him all in due time. Have any of my readers fallen victim to this sin? Making haste to be rich, or improve their position, or in some way run in advance of God, have they ever, through selfish motives, told a lie? If so, I am sure they have suffered since; and there can be no real restoration until that lie is confessed not only to God but to man. Too often, alas, one lie leads to another, as in Jacob's case; and once embarked on this fatal course, who can tell what the end will be? O beloved reader, I plead with you; never, never allow yourself to tell a lie for your own advantage. Think for one moment what a horrible denial such a sin is of all that Jesus ever was or did.

### Lying to Cover a Sin

Passing over several, we come to David, who was guilty both of lying (1 Sam. 21:2) and deceit (2 Sam. 11) of the most fearful character, by which he sought to cover up an awful sin, thereby

making it twice as bad. Oh, how often some previous sin is the cause of a long course of deceit and lying. Beloved friends, let us, above all things, seek to be straight with God, with our fellow men, with ourselves; and should we fall into a sin, never, never seek to cover it up by another, still worse than the first. A course of deceit positively blights the soul, destroying all simplicity, all joy, all communion. The result of these sins in David's case was a course of sufferings almost unparalleled in their severity, from the hands of his own children. Let us not, therefore, think to escape the all-searching eye of God.

### Lying From Habit

We find in 1 Kings 13:18 a prophet of God lying in a most wanton manner, without any apparent reason. We find such characters now, even among God's people—some who apparently have no regard for the truth, and find it easier to tell a lie than to avoid it. The only remedy when the disease has so developed is to go straight to God, and cry to Him for strength and daily watchfulness to overcome it. One such case I remember. I noticed that a person was almost always silent, and one day asked the cause. He said that he had been so addicted to lying that he was determined now not to speak at all if he could not speak the direct truth; and, therefore, he seldom opened his lips, and always considered well before he spoke. Deep-rooted sins require some such radical measures.

### Two Solemn Cases of Lying

In the New Testament the two solemn cases, one of lying and the other of deceit, in Peter and Ananias, stand out above all others. Peter, forewarned by the Lord, yet strong in his own strength, told three lies to save himself, actually going the length of denying the Saviour while He was standing dumb before His accusers. Such sins are, alas, not unknown even now. Many of us are ashamed of showing our colors, and when suddenly asked an unexpected question, through fear or shame, are betrayed into a lie, to the triumph of Satan and the grief of our Lord. Let us watch earnestly against this; and, if entrapped, let us follow Peter in his path of restoration. It is remarkable to see that the very one who fell himself, is so perfectly restored as not only to be able to charge home the very same sin to the Jews (Acts 3:14), but was also chosen by God to be the executor of His justice on the flagrant deceit of Ananias. This too was a wanton sin—a course of deceit being practiced merely to give others a false impression of his generosity, and to appear other than he was. This, alas, is another common variety of this sin. Anxious to stand well in the eyes of our fellow men, rather than in those of God, we do not hesitate sometimes to descend to deceitful practices to appear other than we are, and so get praise from men that we do not deserve. Surely, such a course needs only to be named to be condemned by every upright heart. All these instances have been selected from the lives of professing children of God, and will well repay careful consideration, giving, as they do, striking illustrations of the main causes of deceit and lying among Christians. Lies may be told without using the lips; we may act so as to deceive, and seek to excuse ourselves because we have not said what is untrue. This is a worthless subterfuge, and will not stand before God for a moment. All such refuges of lies will He sweep away.

The only way to be happy before Him, and to be in any degree like Christ, is to turn our backs firmly and resolutely on deceit in every shape and form by word or deed; and determine, in God's strength, that we will earnestly seek to say and do nothing that is not absolutely true, thus saving

ourselves from reaping the bitter fruits of shame and sorrow that will some day follow. May God help each one of us that is tempted by this sin to overcome it in His strength, and to learn to abhor and hate it because it is so hateful to Christ, and so dishonoring to His name.

“The lip of truth shall be established forever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment” (Pro. 12:19).

## Your Daily Habit: Bible Reading

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I earnestly urge you to make Bible reading your daily habit. Let it be a fixed principle with you that you need the words of His mouth for your soul's nourishment and health.

You have found forgiveness through faith in the atoning blood of Christ, and you are supremely happy. But forgiveness is not food. And if you have no food you will have no strength. You will hunger, and the hungry will eat anything.

If you do not go on applying yourself to the daily reading of your Bible, your famished soul will readily eat of the world's dainties. But if you are nourished by the hidden manna, you will have no heart for the world's allurements.

Young Christian, if you would stand before the enemy, if you would walk humbly and happily with your God, if you would be useful in the Lord's vineyard, search the Scriptures daily and diligently.

## One More Honorable Than His Brethren: Jabez

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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. 4:9, 10). 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 honorables. 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."

## Loins Girded and Lights Burning

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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 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 built a city in order to make himself as comfortable as he could without God. Workers in brass and iron and music were 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, O 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 give 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!

## My Cup

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"The LORD is the portion... of my cup" (Psalm 16:5). Such is the language of the psalmist. Tell me, is it yours? Look now into your cup. You may have youth in that cup, beauty, friendship, honors, and riches in that cup; but, if you have only these, you have nothing-nothing but a mere earthly sediment which can never run over but will be emptied at death.

Look now into the cup of the believer. There may not be youth there, nor beauty there, nor friendship there, nor honor there, nor riches there; but CHRIST is there, a portion infinitely great and inexhaustibly fresh. The believer can say, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." No mere sediment this! for, adds the psalmist, "My cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:5).

## Are We Expecting Our Lord?

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Do we really expect, wait for, the return of our Lord? Is this our constant attitude of soul? Just as a man may read the Scriptures and, seeing clearly, assent to the truth that all are guilty sinners, and yet never take the place of such before God for himself, so is it possible to hold the doctrine of the second coming of Christ without being influenced by it. Indeed, we might be able even to state the truth to others without one particle of response to its claims. We need to challenge ourselves on this point. Are we then, we ask again, in the power of the expectation of seeing our blessed Lord? Is this blessed hope daily before our souls? Does it govern our actions? mold our conduct? Does it detach us from the world and worldliness? show us the vanity of the world's distinctions, manners, and ways?

The Apostle Paul could write of some in his day, "In every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." 1 Thess. 1:8-10. Would this description in any measure be true of us? Do our ways before the world proclaim that we have no resting place here? that we are only sojourners waiting to be fetched by our Lord? Do our homes and households, in their ordering and arrangement, proclaim this blessed truth? In a word, is this the testimony of our lives, of our walk and ways?

Questions like these may soon be answered if we are honest with ourselves, and the very attempt to answer them would lead to blessing. For in how many instances would it lead to the painful discovery that with this truth on our lips we have been denying it in the life; that while we have been saying that we are but strangers and pilgrims here, we have been settled down in ease and comfort, making plans for worldly advancement, if not for ourselves, yet for our families, seeking to raise ourselves higher in the social scale, and striking root in every direction in the soil of this world? Is it not possible that God has a controversy with us on this account? that this will explain the sorrows that have befallen us - the sicknesses that have so often visited ourselves and our families? For God must have reality with His people. He loves them too well to permit them to go on in self-deception - deceiving themselves and deceiving others also. Therefore He is speaking to us by His manifold dealings and chastenings, warning us of our danger, and recalling us to the sense of our responsibility as His witnesses in this world. May He Himself give us the opened ear to His voice, that we may humble ourselves before Him in lowly abasement and self-judgment, and seek His restoring grace, so that in all the fervor of our first love we may testify once again in living power to the truth of our Lord's return.

Another observation may be permitted. Nothing so tends to obscure our vision of the bright and morning star as the thought that signs are to be expected before He descends from heaven. We have been plied with temptations of this character. Voices other than that of the Good Shepherd have beguiled even saints. Pyramids and conjunctions of planets (which after all were of no

extraordinary kind) have been adduced to prove that the Lord is at hand. The carnal wisdom of men has thus been allied with the teachings of the Word of God. If we build upon such things, our faith will soon be rudely shaken. God needs no confirmation from, nor will He be indebted to, men. These things, indeed, are a wile of the enemy to divert our gaze from the coming One to circumstances or to earthly events. No; our hope rests alone on Christ and His Word. According to the words of a French hymn, "He has promised, He will return"; this, and this alone, is the foundation of the "blessed hope." It is quite true that the moral characteristics of the "perilous times" will be discerned by the instructed soul, but they are detected by a knowledge of the Word of God. Our danger lies in being lured from the voice of our living Lord to listen to the words of men. The more we are shut up to the Lord Himself and His own Word, the more intense will be our expectation of His coming.

To some it may seem that He has tarried long. But if He yet wait, it is but while God is still working in the activities of His grace to gather in His elect—the coheirs with Christ. While, therefore, He would have us to be ever waiting and ever expecting, it must be in full fellowship with His own heart. If we wait, He also waits; if we desire His return, much more ardently does He look forward to the moment when He will rise from His seat to claim His own. But the moments of waiting will soon be over. Louder and louder the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and it is He Himself who puts this word into our lips, while He responds, "Surely I come quickly." What then can we do but bow our heads in His presence as we reply, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus"?

"And now, at length, behold, He comes

To claim thee from above,

In answer to the ceaseless call

And deep desire of love.

"Go, then, thou loved and blessed one;

Thou drooping mourner, rise!

Go; for He calls thee now to share

His dwelling in the skies.

"For thee, His royal bride, for thee,

His brightest glories shine;

And, happier still, His changeless heart,

With all its love, is thine."

## The Best Things in the World

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The tendency of everything, even the best on this earth, is to make us forget that we do not belong to it. You may think that very sweeping; but, I repeat, it does not matter what it is, even the best thing that belongs to this world has the tendency to make us forget that we do not belong to it. Thus everything becomes a test to us; mercies test us, favors test us, and we find that we cannot trust ourselves even for a moment.

## Come!

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What power and sweetness in this little word "come!" How it lets us into the very secret of the bosom of God, and tells of the loving desire of His heart, that any and every poor lost one who hears it, should take Him at His word, and "come." "He, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Isa. 55:1.

Here, every thirsty, needy, penniless one is invited to come. It is the desire of the loving heart of God that he should come - come now - come just as he is and drink at the living fountain of water, so freely opened by the hand of redeeming love. There is no hindrance. Grace has removed every difficulty out of the way. The very fact of God's sending forth the invitation to come, proves that He has taken away every barrier. He would not, He could not say "Come" if the way were not perfectly open - perfectly free. And not only so, but we may rest assured that when God says "Come," He means what He says. He expresses the language of His heart. In a word, not only is the way open, but God earnestly desires that every thirsty, needy, helpless soul that reads these lines should come now and drink - come and draw water out of those wells of salvation which are freely opened to every creature under heaven.

Take another lovely passage culled from the prophet Isaiah. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Chap. 1:18. Here, it is not merely a question of thirst and poverty, but actually of scarlet sins - guilt of crimson dye. Even these need be no hindrance, seeing that God in His infinite grace has found a means whereby He can righteously cleanse the guilt and blot out the sins, and render the soul of the poor guilty sinner as white as snow, as the wool just pure from the washing.

And let the reader especially mark the grace that shines in the words, "Come now, and let us reason together." Only think of the high and mighty One that inhabits eternity - the Maker of heaven and earth - the Creator and sustainer of the universe - the One who has power to destroy both soul and body in hell - think of His condescending to reason with a poor guilty sinner, covered from head to foot with scarlet sins! What grace is here! What loving-kindness and tender mercy! Who can withstand it? Who can refuse to come? Who will harden his heart against such love as this? God grant the reader may not do so! Oh! that he may come now and trust in the perfect, because divine, efficacy of that most precious blood - even the blood of God's own Son, which cleanses from all sin, and makes the soul clean enough to stand in the full blaze of the holiness of God.

Take a sentence or two from the gospel - from the very lips of Him who spake as never man spake - the lips of our adorable Savior and Lord. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11:28. Here the laboring and the heavy laden are called to hearken to the same most touching, gracious, winning word, "Come!" Every weary, burdened heart, every crushed and broken spirit is invited to come to Jesus, who alone is able and willing - willing as He

is able, and able as He is willing-to give rest. Oh! what a soothing word is "rest!" How it falls upon the poor heart like showers upon the parched and thirsty ground!

If the reader is one who has not yet come, we beseech you, Come now, and have your thirst quenched, your burden removed, your sins forgiven, your guilt canceled. Come, we earnestly entreat you, now. Do not linger. Time is very short. Eternity, with all its tremendous realities, is at hand! Oh! do come now!

## Joseph Wept

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Gen. 50:15-21

After the death of Jacob we thus find the brethren of Joseph in great distress. The remembrance of their past conduct might well, indeed, be overwhelming, for they understood not the grace in Joseph. They thought of their sin, but entirely lost sight of the forgiveness and grace of Joseph; and they said that Joseph would certainly requite them "all the evil which we did unto him." Surely they deserved all this. There was no excuse for their sin. It had been terrible. They had as good as killed their brother by casting him into that pit. There was no pity in their hearts when they took him out of that pit, and sold him into slavery, though they saw the anguish of his soul; he besought them and they would not hear (Gen. 40:11-21).

But had not their sin been brought to their consciences? Yes, in the very presence of Joseph, though they knew him not. He was dealing with them; he understood their thoughts and their words. Judah had said, "What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." It is an awful moment, thus to be brought into the presence of God, and all laid bare!

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren." Oh, what grace! "And he wept aloud." He said, "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence." It was not now that they prayed to be forgiven, but "Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." Then did he make known unto their astonished ears the purpose of God, in their salvation from famine. "Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him."

What a life picture of the wondrous ways of God in grace! God the Spirit uses various means to bring sin so home to the conscience that there is no escape. But when sin is not only felt, but confessed to God, what a revelation in Christ, the true Joseph! Our sins are felt to be loathsome, and we abhor ourselves in His holy presence. It is He who is dealing with our souls. We own all to Him; and He says, Yes, it was for those very sins I sent My beloved Son to be the propitiation. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Thus the Antitype goes infinitely beyond the touching type of Joseph.

There was not, however, one thing lacking to show and prove the forgiveness of Joseph; yet, after years of kindness on his part, they feared the reality of his forgiveness. How was this? No doubt, the better they knew their relationship to Joseph, and all his righteous conduct, the baser would their own appear; but, as we have said, they could not fathom the grace in Joseph's heart. And is it not so with those who are brought to know their relationship with the risen Jesus? The more we know Him, while we abhor the flesh and all its sad fruits, the more we rest in His grace.

If they looked at their own past conduct, they might give way to gloomy unbelief, until they sank in despair. If they looked at his past conduct and love to them, how could they have a doubt? Past failure often gives Satan a great handle, and he will ever use it, if possible, to drive the child of God to despair. By this mark we may always know it is his work. The Holy Spirit may have to humble us, and deepen in us a sense of what sin is, and the need of greater watchfulness and dependence; but then He will also deepen in our souls a blessed sense of that mercy which endures forever. "Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even Thy salvation, according to Thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in Thy word." At such a time it is of all importance to be able to say, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear."

With these thoughts, let us look at our deeply interesting scripture. No doubt the brethren of Joseph deserved punishment. And if God dealt with us in judgment, what do we deserve? They had thought of this, and reasoned from it, until doubt and unbelief had got a strong hold upon them; but they did not despair. There was the lingering sense of his grace; they went to Joseph, whereas despair would have led them to depart from him. It is so with God; the lingering sense of His grace draws us near to Him. Despair would drive the soul to utter darkness.

They said "unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin." It was terrible to have sinned as the brethren of Joseph. It is this that gives sin its deep aggravation-to have sinned as the brethren of the risen Jesus. And mark, it is much easier to pray for the forgiveness of sins, than to believe in the forgiveness of sins. Many there are who continue for years to pray for forgiveness of sins, just like the brethren of Joseph, who never believe their sins are eternally forgiven.

This then was their position; long ago their sin had been brought home to them; they had stood self-condemned before Joseph. He had fully revealed his grace to them, and given to each the kiss of forgiveness. But little understanding the grace in Joseph's heart, they now pray for forgiveness. Now look at Joseph; does this please him? "Joseph wept when they spake unto him." What a picture of Jesus! What a touching scene! How deeply his heart felt their unbelief! How could they doubt his love? No doubt God greatly overrules - yea, uses this humiliation for blessing to His children. "And his brethren also went and fell down before his face." They also did what the prodigal thought of doing. "And they said, Behold, we be thy servants." Thus the poor unbelieving heart is ever ready to take the place of serving, in order to be deserving.

Surely it is far better to be thus humbled and broken in the presence of our Joseph, than to be indifferent about sins. But, oh, how sweet to a crushed, broken spirit are those words, "Fear not." And again, "Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them"; or, as in the margin, "spake to their hearts." Is not this what our Jesus does? Full well does He know that even His own words would fail at such a time to comfort, unless applied by the Spirit to our hearts. Let us not, however, forget the grief it gave to Joseph for his brethren to doubt his forgiving love.

With our eyes we do not see our Jesus weep; we do not thus, as they, see the pain- if we may use such a word- it gives to doubt His love; but do we not hear Him say, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." They had just heard, for the first time in resurrection, those words, "Peace be unto you." Yes, words spoken on the first day of the

new creation. Now why were they troubled? What, thoughts would arise, if they looked back only for one short week? Oh, what a week! - never such events had taken place, or can take place in one short week.

They were now the brethren of the risen Jesus. He had sent them the message to assure them of this. They had never been, and never could be, in that relationship until He had died and risen again (John 12:24). They had not yet grasped or understood this marvelous grace. And as Joseph wept, so the risen Jesus could not bear to see them doubt His love.

If they thought what they had done, even in those few past days, what cause for trouble in His presence! If they thought what He had done, what cause for eternal joy! Yes, how much depends on whether we are occupied with ourselves, or with Him! What had they done? All had forsaken Him; one had denied Him in the presence of His enemies. All had loved Him, and did love Him; but, oh, how weak is the flesh in the hour of temptation! And more, they had known His love, and yet they had sadly failed to stand by Him. Had He not deeply felt all this? Yes, He says, "I looked on My right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know Me: refuge failed Me; no man cared for My soul." Psalm 142:4. Yes, if they looked at their own conduct, they could only feel troubled in His presence. But if they looked at what He had done, had He not spoken to their hearts? Yes, after warning the boldest of his fall, before it came, in infinite grace, He turned to His disciples, and said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." He was going away, no more to be seen with them in the flesh; but He speaks to their hearts, to trust Him even as God, whom they did not see. Yes, He spoke to the heart. He said again, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Did He not then go up to the cross, and accomplish their and our eternal redemption? Did He not bear their and our sins in His own body on that cross? Had not those words been heard, "It is finished"? Had He not risen from the dead, Head of the new creation, the first-born from among the dead? Had He not sent the joyful message, that they were now His brethren - that they stood in the same relationship to God the Father in which He stood, alive from the dead? Yes, He had said to Mary, "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." Old things had passed away, all things had become new, and all of God. As yet they understood it not, and were therefore troubled when He stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be unto you." If Joseph wept, Jesus said, "Why are ye troubled?" Did He not speak to their hearts? Yes, He says, "and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Had He not borne their sins, to be remembered against them no more? He showed them His hands and His feet.

It might be asked, How could they know, and how can we know, that all that would otherwise give trouble is gone forever? Surely His own word, spoken to the heart, is enough-"Peace be unto you." Satan and memory would bring up the past. Jesus says, "Peace," and He had made it by the blood of the cross. Joseph had not done this for his brethren. Jesus has for His. Peace and forgiveness is now proclaimed through Him; and, as it was with Joseph's brethren, it is much easier to pray for forgiveness of sins, than to believe the forgiveness proclaimed. "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are

justified from all things." It does not say, Whosoever continues praying for forgiveness of sins shall at some future time be forgiven, but, all that believe are justified. And if praying for forgiveness, long after they were forgiven, made Joseph weep, may we never grieve the heart of Jesus by a single doubt! God grant that we may hear Jesus speak to our hearts in these scriptures. It was wondrous grace in Joseph, but have we less in Jesus? Far be the thought. All the types of the Old Testament were but figures, or pictures, but in Jesus we have the infinite fullness- God manifest. Ever then may these words abide in our hearts-"Peace be unto you."

## **Let Us Not Sleep ... but Let Us Watch: Drowsiness in Others May Affect Us**

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It is no uncommon weakness in the child of God that the non-reception of the truth by others leads him to question it. Aroused to the apprehension of the coming of the Lord, he is chilled by the torpor and indifference of those about him. This sensibility to external impression may arise because walking too little in the power of individual communion. The Spirit's witness through the Word is the fullest persuasion; and we depart from His guidance when the heart asks for collateral testimony. But the Word of God has obvious teaching in this respect. "All Scripture is given by inspiration."

An antediluvian world was heedless of the preaching of Noah. "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." Luke 17:27. So in Sodom, when Lot went out and spake unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, "Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law." Gen. 19:14.

Indifference to the testimony of God and the warnings of His Word betokens the proximity of judgment. We who believe in the speedy advent of our Lord will do well to take heed that nothing from without, or even from within, distract the attention from the solemn cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." The warning brought many into active service, and drew them outside the camp, bearing the reproach. The Word reached their consciences. They sought to be prepared. But fellowship has its snares as well as its blessings. Much of joy, and no little of danger. Individual energy may give rise to corporate fellowship, but the latter may decline into individual apathy. Association may deaden, as well as revive.

The position which God gave to many of His people in our day, was taken when escaping from a chaos of confusion. They had light, and a measure of faith, and this ensured a blessing. Sympathy of soul with others about the Lord (unless the eye is kept single) may degenerate into sympathy with one another, and unity occupy the soul instead of the object of union, and thus individuality be crushed for a season, and the torpor of others affect ourselves. But "The word of God is quick, and powerful" (Heb. 4:12). Blessed that it is so!

The return of the Lord was to be the hope of the Church. The measure of faithfulness in testimony depended upon the brightness of this hope; His love brought Him into the world, where He was set at naught and crucified. His people are given Him out of the world, and left here to witness of the grace which was ready to pardon the vilest sinner, but also of certain judgment on the impenitent. "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." 2 Thess. 1:7, 8.

The coming of the Lord will surprise the world, as the flood did its inhabitants in the days of Noah, or the destruction of Sodom in the days of Lot. It will be as unlooked for as the change from the

banquet in the palace of Babylon to the midnight slaughter of Belshazzar, and the transfer of the kingdom to Darius the Mede (Dan. 5). And this judgment will take place when the iniquity is at its height. Repeated testimonies are being superciliously disregarded. The cry, Behold He cometh, the subject of merriment! "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" 2 Pet. 3:3, 4. And Jude declares, that there shall be mockers in the last time (v. 18). Let not then the non-reception of the truth by others lead us to doubt it, but the rather, to see that Scripture speaks of the coming of Christ surprising a careless, professing people and a guilty world, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." 1 Thess. 5:6.

## How Many Loaves Have Ye?

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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 away empty.

## As He Is

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Nine simple words, but they speak of the profound blessing of all believers. They are among the most wonderful words in the whole of the Word of God:

"As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

"As He is." As Christ IS. He has endured the wrath and judgment. He has died. He lives again.... He is past all the suffering and woe which He endured for us. He sits at God's right hand in the fullest favor of God.

"As He is, so are we." His place is our place through God's wondrous goodness. The believer is accepted in the same acceptance in which Christ is accepted.... Is He in the full favor of God? "So are we." Is He in nearness and relationship with God as Father? "So are we."

"As He is, so are we in this world." Yes! the blessing is ours now. Not only will it be ours when we reach the glory of God, but it is ours "in this world." Already God would have us to enjoy the boundless privilege. He writes by His servant to tell us of the blessing in order that our joy may be full, and that we may be set free from every fear and be able to delight before His face.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Worldly Amusements

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We have seen in a previous paper that the Christian is not to identify himself with the world, as such, religiously or socially, and have had abundant Scripture proofs that all such associations are condemned by God. If such connections then with the world, many of them for good and unselfish objects, are condemned by the Word, it is easy to see there can be no justification of joining with the world merely for one's own pleasure.

### Clubs, Societies and Lodges

In the present day, when nearly all forms of recreation and entertainment have their special clubs and organizations, a young Christian is often very hardly pushed to join one or another. Some, indeed, may join willingly from various reasons, such as better to enjoy themselves, or perhaps thinking to do others good by a little Christian influence. Instances, however, are exceedingly rare where any good has been effected by this means; too often the result is the other way, and the Christian soon acquires the worldly tastes that characterize his associates. When this is the case, he has only himself to blame for taking the wrong step at the outset; for with the Bible (2 Cor. 6) in our hands, we must characterize as wrong, contrary to, and beneath true Christian walk, any alliance for pleasure with the world.

In this, reluctant as we are to lay down any law, or to make any path narrower than God has made it, we must repeat that for any to join a worldly club for any purpose of pleasure or amusement is beneath their calling as Christians, and contrary to the Word of God.

### Recreation and Exercise Are Profitable

Recreation and exercise are recognized by the Word as profitable for a little (1 Tim. 4:7 JND), meaning, we believe, for a short time (that is, this life); but these can be taken and enjoyed without joining clubs. No doubt there is not the same scope or the same advantages that there would be, humanly speaking, where larger groups are brought together. Whether this is true or not, the child of God must here take his stand and, deliberately counting the cost, be prepared to suffer all inconveniences that may arise from his being true to Christ.

An old Christian may not think it much for a young man to refuse one club after another, that is pressed upon him, for he, if not too devoted a Christian, is at any rate too old to care for such things. But Christ knows, and Christ will not forget, what it costs at such a time to refuse resolutely for His sake, and His smile and approval is surely well worth the inconveniences that may follow. As the Christian grows in years, however, he begins to feel that to spend hours in mere recreation and amusement is no longer necessary; and he finds that he can combine some variety of work for the Lord with his recreation, so as not absolutely to spend all the time on himself. Long walks can often be combined with profitable visits, and change of scene and air with looking up the scattered saints of God, that seldom get a help; in many ways the believer who seeks to redeem the time, and who feels that "the Lord is at hand," can and will seek to turn even his hours of recreation to good account.

## A Christian in the World

But what shall we say if we look at the other side of the picture, no longer considering those who desire in all things to glorify Christ, but those who, though still His (at least professedly) are worldly in heart, who seek the world's entertainment for its own and if not actively engaged, at least pleased spectators, surrounded with worldly friends, and being for the moment not only in but of the world? What a description we get of the world in Job: "They take the timbre and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" (Job 21:12-14)! And can you feel happy in making one of such a company? Oh, how true it is for a believer when seeking his amusement in such a way, "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness" (Pro. 14:13). The reflections next morning when the Word is opened, and we are alone with God, are not pleasant; and too often the amusements of the evening lead to the neglect of the Bible in the morning. This is repeated until the soul becomes deadened under the round of worldly gait and want of spiritual food, while the outward course can only be characterized by "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4). Surely all would shrink from such a brand!

### Satan's Devices

But Satan is clever; he is subtle; and if we turn from worldly amusements, he will mix them with religion to suit us; and the deluded Christian, following his own will, and not guided by the Spirit, substitutes that which may sound pious, for that which is openly worldly, and thinks himself at last consistent. Alas, he has only made matters worse! At first sight it certainly does seem incredible that any true Christian could be found willing to listen to precious portions of His Word used or sung, even by the most talented of professional entertainers. The mixture seems so horrible that surely it is a masterpiece of Satan's skill to lead Christians to believe that their presence at such occasions is commendable. In Christendom we often see the church adopting worldly customs on account of not discerning that in the Word of God the cross of Christ has clearly separated His church and this present evil world. The one who is following Christ could not go on with these things with a good conscience; he could not have pleasure in them. His happiness is in Christ and in Christ's people. How then can he find it in that world that crucified his Lord? Besides, he is better employed. He does not stand about idle, waiting for Satan to send him off on some errand, for surely it is true that "idlers are the devil's workmen"; but he is busy in work for his Master, seeking to send to a good account of every day that he lives, and to account to Him fully for every talent entrusted to his charge. We trust enough has been said to show that although recreative exercises are perfectly legitimate and needful for the young Christian, all distinctly worldly amusements, clubs, and other associations are not for the one who desires to be true to Christ, and to obey the Word of God.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Relations With the World

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It is evident that the limits of this short paper will only enable us to consider this vast subject in the briefest possible manner. The Christian is in the world, but not of it. He is surrounded with those who know not God, and it is a most important thing for him to know how to conduct himself in relation with worldly people, both publicly and privately, in social life, business life, and religious life. Before, however, speaking briefly on this, we will just take up very shortly a few examples of relationship with the world, and its effects as seen in Scripture.

### Worldly Marriages

In 1 Kings 11:1-8 we find the sad result in Solomon's case of marrying strange wives, idolatrous women. No doubt, as many a child of God since, he trusted in his wise heart, in the splendid temple he had built, in his own long religious life, to lead him aright; but instead of that they led him astray. And so it is in nine cases out of ten. A Christian marries a worldly girl, an idolater; that is, one who has her heart set on earthly things called idols (1 John 5). He hopes, no doubt, to set her straight, but having committed a sin by marrying her, he is soon led by her into another; for not only has he all her influence to lead him wrong, but that of his own deceitful heart as well. It is, indeed, lamentable to think how many ships, starting on their heavenward voyage, have been shipwrecked on the quicksands of this life, through sailing in company with an enemy's vessel. For, hard as it is to believe, the young and attractive are equally Satan's slaves with the gray-headed sinner. Beware of worldly marriages, which are condemned and forbidden by God (2 Cor. 6); perhaps few sins so surely meet with heavy chastisement, too often lifelong. Most earnestly then would we warn young believers of this most fatal of all worldly alliances. Other false steps can be retraced at will, this NEVER. It may be these lines are read by someone whose affections are already engaged by some worldly person. We would warn you against such a marriage at your peril. Better far to have a broken heart for God's glory, and one that He can heal, than to have a heart broken later on, as you surely will, through seeing with your eyes open, and discovering when TOO LATE, the fearful error you have committed.

### World-bordering

In Jehoshaphat we find another case of worldly alliance; this was in joining to fight a common enemy (2 Chron. 17)— no great sin apparently. The king of Syria was a foe to both of them, and the victory of one would help the other. Nevertheless, what saith the Lord? "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." Has this no voice to those Christians who, like Jehoshaphat, would join the world to fight some common enemy? There are common enemies: drink, vice, poverty, disease, are such to a great extent. It will then be seen at once that this one example strikes a fatal blow at all alliances of a social nature between believer and unbeliever. In this it is evident the Christian is not to join in improving or bettering the world. He must walk in his way, and the world in theirs. Indeed, if the Christian is true, they cannot work together; for the ultimate end of the one is the advancement of the world, and the good of mankind, that of the latter, the glory of Christ. In a place, therefore,

where He is despised and still rejected by the world at large, it is evident that there cannot be much harmony in common pursuits.

In Jehoram we get another instance of the evils of a worldly match (2 Chron. 21:6). Many as are the instances of the unbeliever leading the Christian astray, we do not remember a single case where in such a marriage the Christian brought the unbeliever right. In this case the evil is worse still, for not only is the husband led wrong, but the child also is led astray (2 Chron. 22:3) by the evil counsels of his mother. This too will often be found to be the case, especially when the mother is the unbeliever; and thus the result of one false step may descend to generations.

Again, in Ezra 9, do we get fatal instances of these unholy alliances. But surely we have had enough to show us what are almost invariably the results of thus dishonoring God.

#### Worshippers Must be Christians

In Ezekiel 44:7, we come to another class of worldly fellowship, and that is in religion. One of the crying sins of Israel of old was that they brought in unbelievers in the temple worship, and the prophet is bid to "mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary"; and further, "No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into My sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel." Our sanctuary, we know, can only be entered by believers (Heb. 10) in reality; but surely this plainly shows that in outward worship we cannot place believers and unbelievers together before God. It is not for us, of course, to try the hearts, and a hypocrite may creep in anywhere; but surely divine worship ought to be confined to the children of God. Indeed, none else can worship; and it is an awful mockery to see those who have no pretensions to be saved (not even the lip profession) joining with God's people in singing His praises. This is strangely like this very sin of Israel of old. We do not now speak of preaching the gospel. At all such services unbelievers have their right place; but these are surely perfectly distinct from the worship of believers, spiritually within the veil. In religion, therefore, we cannot place believers and unbelievers on a common footing.

Neither can we seek the aid or help of the world (pecuniary or otherwise) in the Lord's work.

Nehemiah avoided the danger of worldly help in Nehemiah 6, and one reason why he was so blessed was because he was so separate to God. The people of Israel too at this time entered into a curse and an oath, not to marry unbelievers (Neh. 10:29). Would that everyone "having understanding" (Neh. 10:28) followed (without legality) the same course! Separation from worldly company is the result of having the Word as the enjoyed portion of the heart (Jer. 15:16-17). The joy of the world and delight in the Word cannot go together. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers [wicked], nor rejoiced." We have now seen enough to show us, without quoting the many precepts in the Word on the subject, that worldly marriages are in every way to be condemned and avoided, that all philanthropic and social worldly alliances are expressly condemned, however good their object (of course it is understood that only real alliances are here spoken of; that is, believers and unbelievers publicly banded together). We have also seen that no religious mixture is to be tolerated, either in worship or service (such as giving money, for example); God's people must be separate. The path is a narrow one still, and not less so because we live in Christendom. Indeed, now one needs to be walking

closely with God to learn how to keep one's feet separate from all such evil alliances, and have one's heart wide enough for all right sympathies and feelings. May the Lord enable each of us, who desires to be true to Him, to discern the path of wisdom through this world, so as to be kept from all "unequal" yokes, learning at the same time to bear more of the equal yoke of Matthew 11:29, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

## 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." Rom. 8:18.

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 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.

## The Christian and Politics

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When political campaigns wax hot, and the world is besieged with claims and counterclaims, the Christians who are conscious of their heavenly calling can go on serenely, knowing that men are merely working out "whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:28). Even though Satan is the god and prince of this world, and is blinding the minds of those that believe not, God is still supreme and is moving behind the scenes to work out His own purposes and counsels. These may not be what men think are best, but we must remember that this world, as it is now, is not going on to a bright future, but to certain trouble, the like of which will never have been known before. It is guilty of casting the Son of God out, and has not repented of its deed; God's righteous judgments hang over it, ready to begin to fall when the true Christians are taken out.

What a mistake it is for real Christians to think that they can improve this doomed scene by political means. When the Lord Himself was here, He did not try to improve it; He refused to be a judge between two brothers, to remove an iniquitous Herod, or to stop a wicked Pilate. He left this world as He found it, except that when He left it, it was guilty of rejecting Him. Can we suppose that we are to do what the Lord did not do? Have God's thoughts about the world changed? He sent His Son into the world to testify for Him, and in the same manner the Son has sent us into the world.

How thoroughly unlike Christ it would be for a Christian to help select or to wield political power. Christ is the Heir of this world, and we are joint heirs with Him; shall we, the joint heirs, have a place here before the Heir does? We are but followers of the rejected One, waiting for the moment when He will take us home. Our position is much like that of the Israelites who were sheltered by the blood of the lamb in an Egypt under divine sentence, while they themselves were awaiting the command to depart. How incongruous it would have been for those Israelites to be absorbed in Egyptian politics, or to help to improve that doomed land!

The Christian is bound to respect all who are in authority, and to treat them as established by God, but at the same time to pass on as a stranger and a pilgrim. His home is elsewhere; he is but passing through. He is here to represent One who is in heaven - to manifest Christ and His ways, which were always full of grace and truth. It would be as completely out of place for a Christian to mingle in earthly politics as for the British ambassador to Washington, to become entangled in American politics.

One writer has translated Phil. 3:20 thus: "Our politics are in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." How comforting! How encouraging! The sense of this should free us from all participation, and even from all anxiety in any political agitation, regardless of how or where. Soon we shall hear that shout and be off to meet our Lord in the air. May we be found feeding on Christ the "roast lamb" who underwent the judgment for us, and by whose precious blood we have been sheltered, while we are girded (shoes on the feet and staff in the hand) ready to depart. (See Exod. 12:8-12.)

## A Few Comments on Epaphroditus

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We want the reader to turn with us for a few moments to Philippians 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 supposed 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. 2:25-30.

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 hath 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 abound; 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." Phil. 4:10-18.

Herein 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 or of railway travel. 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.

## Tax Exemptions

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A tax auditor came many years ago to a poor servant of the Lord to determine the amount of taxes he would have to pay.

"What property do you possess?" asked the auditor. "I am very wealthy," replied the Christian.

"List your possessions, please," the auditor instructed. "First, I have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"Second, I have a mansion in heaven" (John 14:2). "Third, I have peace that passes understanding" (Phil. 4:7).

"Fourth, I have joy unspeakable" (1 Pet. 1:8).

"Fifth, I have divine love that never fails" (1 Cor. 13:8). "Sixth, I have a faithful wife" (Pro. 31:10).

"Seventh, I have healthy, happy, obedient children" (Exod. 20:12).

"Eighth, I have true, loyal friends" (Pro. 18:24). "Ninth, I have songs in the night" (Psalm 42:8).

"Tenth, I have a crown of life" (Jas. 1:12).

"Eleventh, I have a Savior, Jesus Christ, who supplies all my need" (Phil. 4:19).

The tax auditor closed his book and said, "TRULY YOU ARE A VERY RICH MAN, BUT YOUR PROPERTY IS NOT SUBJECT TO TAXATION!"

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

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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 has 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, or 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 Spirit 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 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; J.N.D. Trans.). Comforting 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.

## 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 Spirit. 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

## Notes on Exodus

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In the book of Genesis we learn that the conduct of Joseph's brethren toward him was that which led to their being brought down into Egypt. This fact is to be looked at in two ways. In the first place, we can read therein a deeply solemn lesson, as taught in Israel's actings toward God; and, second, we have therein unfolded an encouraging lesson, as taught in God's actings toward Israel.

And, first, as to Israel's actings toward God, what can be more deeply solemn than to follow out the results of their treatment of him who stands before the spiritual mind as the marked type of the Lord Jesus Christ? They, utterly regardless of the anguish of his soul, consigned Joseph into the hands of the uncircumcised. And what was the issue as regards them? They were carried down into Egypt, there to experience the deep and painful exercises of heart which are so graphically and touchingly presented in the closing chapters of Genesis. Nor was this all. A long and dreary season awaited their offspring in that very land in which Joseph had found a dungeon.

But then God was in all this, as well as man; and it is His prerogative to bring good out of evil. Joseph's brethren might sell him to the Ishmaelites, and the Ishmaelites might sell him to Potiphar, and Potiphar might cast him into prison; but Jehovah was above all, and He was accomplishing His own mighty ends. "The wrath of man shall praise Thee." The time had not arrived in which the heirs were ready for the inheritance, and the inheritance for the heirs. The brick kilns of Egypt were to furnish a rigid school for the seed of Abraham, while as yet "the iniquity of the Amorites" was rising to a head amid the "hills and valleys" of the promised land.

All this is deeply interesting and instructive. There are wheels within wheels in the government of God. He makes use of an endless variety of agencies in the accomplishment of His unsearchable designs. Potiphar's wife, Pharaoh's butler, Pharaoh's dreams, Pharaoh himself, the dungeon, the throne, the fetter, the royal signet, the famine—all are at His sovereign disposal, and all are made instrumental in the development of His stupendous counsels. The spiritual mind delights to dwell upon this—it delights to range through domain of creation and providence, and to recognize in all the machinery which an all-wise and an almighty God is using for the purpose of unfolding His counsels of redeeming love. True, we may see many traces of the serpent—many deep and well-defined footprints of the enemy of God and man—many things which we cannot explain or even comprehend; suffering innocence and successful wickedness may furnish an apparent basis for the infidel reasoning of the skeptic mind; but the true believer can piously repose in the assurance that "the Judge of all the earth" shall do right. He knows right well that

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,

And scan His ways in vain;

God is His own interpreter,

And He will make it plain."

Blessed be God for the consolation and encouragement flowing out of such reflections as these. We need them every hour while passing through an evil world in which the enemy has wrought such appalling mischief, in which the lusts and passions of men produce such bitter fruits, and in which the path of the true disciple presents roughnesses which mere nature could never endure. Faith knows of a surety that there is One behind the scenes whom the world sees not nor regards; and, in the consciousness of this, it can calmly say, "It is well," and "It shall be well."

The above train of thought is distinctly suggested by the opening lines of our book. God's "counsel shall stand," and He will do all His pleasure" (Isa. 46:10). The enemy may oppose, but God will ever prove Himself to be above him; and all we need is a spirit of simple, childlike confidence and repose in the divine purpose. Unbelief will rather look at the enemy's efforts to countervail than at God's power to accomplish. It is on the latter that faith fixes its eye. Thus it obtains victory and enjoys abiding peace. It has to do with God and His infallible faithfulness. It rests not upon the ever-shifting sands of human affairs and earthly influences, but upon the immovable rock of God's eternal Word. That is faith's holy and solid resting place. Come what may, it abides in that sanctuary of strength. "Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation." What then? Could death affect the counsels of the living God? Surely not. He only waited for the appointed moment-the due time-and then the most hostile influences were made instrumental in the development of His purposes.

"Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land." vv. 8-10. All this is the reasoning of a heart that had never learned to take God into its calculations. The unrenewed heart never can do so; and hence, the moment you introduce God, all its reasonings fall to the ground. Apart from or independent of Him, they may seem very wise; but only bring Him in, and they are proved to be perfect folly.

But why should we allow our minds to be in any wise influenced by reasonings and calculations which depend for their apparent truth upon the total exclusion of God? To do so is, in principle, and according to its measure, practical atheism. In Pharaoh's case we see that he could accurately recount the various contingencies of human affairs-the multiplying of the people, the falling out of war, their joining with the enemy, their escape out of the land. All these circumstances he could, with uncommon sagacity, put into the scale; but it never once occurred to him that God could have anything whatever to do in the matter. Had he only thought of this, it would have upset his entire reasoning, and have written folly upon all his schemes.

Now, it is well to see that it is ever thus with the reasonings of man's skeptic mind. God is entirely shut out; yea, the truth and consistency thereof depend upon His being kept out. The deathblow to all skepticism and infidelity is the introduction of God into the scene. Till He is seen, they may strut up and down upon the stage with an amazing show of wisdom and cleverness; but the moment the eye catches even the faintest glimpse of that blessed One, they are stripped of their cloak, and disclosed in all their nakedness and deformity.

In reference to the king of Egypt, it may assuredly be said, he did "greatly err," not knowing God or His changeless counsels. He knew not that, hundreds of years back, before ever he had breathed

the breath of mortal life, God's word and oath-"two immutable things"-had infallibly secured the full and glorious deliverance of that very people whom he was going, in his wisdom, to crush. All this was unknown to him, and therefore all his thoughts and plans were founded upon ignorance of that grand foundation truth of all truths, namely, that GOD IS. He vainly imagined that he, by his management, could prevent the increase of those concerning whom God had said, They shall be "as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore." His wise dealing, therefore, was simply madness and folly.

The wildest mistake which a man can possibly fall into is to act without taking God into his account. Sooner or later, the thought of God will force itself upon him, and then comes the awful crash of all his schemes and calculations. At best, everything that is undertaken independently of God, can last but for the present time. It cannot, by any possibility, stretch itself into eternity. All that is merely human, however solid, however brilliant, or however attractive, must fall into the cold grasp of death, and molder in the dark, silent tomb. The clod of the valley must cover man's highest excellencies and brightest glories; mortality is engraved upon his brow, and all his schemes are evanescent. On the contrary, that which is connected with and based upon God, shall endure forever. His name shall endure forever, and His memorial unto all generations (Exod. 3:15).

What a sad mistake, therefore, for a feeble mortal to set himself up against the eternal God-to rush "upon the thick bosses" of the shield of the Almighty! (See Job 15:25, 26.) As well might the monarch of Egypt have sought to stem with his puny hand the ocean's tide, as to prevent the increase of those who were the subjects of Jehovah's everlasting purpose. Hence, although "they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens," yet, "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." Thus it must ever be. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Psalm 2:4. Eternal confusion shall be inscribed upon all the opposition of men and devils. This gives sweet rest to the heart in the midst of a scene where all is apparently so contrary to God and so contrary to faith. Were it not for the settled assurance that "the wrath of man shall praise" the Lord, the spirit would often be cast down while contemplating the circumstances and influences which surround one in the world. Thank God, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor. 4:18. In the power of this, we may well say, "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass." Psalm 37:7. How fully might the truth of this be seen in the case of both the oppressed and the oppressor, as set before us in our chapter! Had Israel looked "at the things which are seen," what were they? Pharaoh's wrath, stern taskmasters, afflictive burdens, rigorous service, hard bondage, mortar and brick. But then "the things which are not seen," what are they? God's eternal purpose, His un failing promise, the approaching dawn of a day of salvation, the "burning lamp" of Jehovah's deliverance. Wondrous contrast! Faith alone could enter into it. Naught save that precious principle could enable any poor, oppressed Israelite to look from out the smoking furnace of Egypt to the green fields and vine-clad mountains of the land of Canaan. Faith alone could recognize in those oppressed slaves, toiling in the brickkilns of Egypt, the heirs of salvation, and the objects of heaven's peculiar interest and favor.

Thus it was then, and thus it is now. "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). "It doth not yet appear what we shall be" (1 John 3:2). We are "here in the body pent," "absent from the Lord." As to fact, we are in Egypt; yet, in spirit, we are in the heavenly Canaan. Faith brings the heart into the power of divine and unseen things, and thus enables it to mount above everything down here in this place where death and darkness reign. O for that simple, childlike faith that sits beside the pure and eternal fountain of truth, there to drink those deep and refreshing drafts which lift up the fainting spirit and impart energy to the new man, in its upward and onward course!

The closing verses of this chapter present an edifying lesson in the conduct of those God-fearing women, Shiphrah and Puah. They would not carry out the king's cruel scheme, but braved his wrath; and hence, God made them houses. "Them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 2:30). May we ever remember this, and act for God under all circumstances!

## The Form of a Servant: Perfection Found, Proved, Read, Known

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"The form of a servant" was a reality just as much as "the form of God" in Christ Jesus - as truly an assumed reality as the other was an essential, intrinsic reality. And being such, His ways were those of a servant; just as, being the Son, His glories and prerogatives were those of God. He prayed; He continued whole nights in prayer. He lived by faith, the perfect pattern of a believer, as we read of Him, "the leader and completer of faith" (Heb. 12:2; J.N.D. Trans.). In sorrow

He made God His refuge. In the presence of enemies He committed Himself to Him who judged righteously. He did not His own will, perfect as that will was, but the will of Him who sent Him. In these and in all kindred ways was "the form of a servant" found and proved and read and known to perfection. It is seen to have been a great and living reality. The life of this Servant was the life of faith from beginning to end.

"I will put My trust in Him" may be said to have been the language of the life of Jesus. But His faith was gold, pure gold, nothing but gold. When tried by the furnace, it comes out the same mass as it had gone in, for there was no dross. Saints have commonly to be set to rights by the furnace. Some impatience or selfishness or murmur has to be reduced or silenced, as in Psalms 73 and 77. Job was overcome; trouble touched him, and he fainted, though often he had strengthened the weak hands, and upheld by his word them that were falling. "The stoutest are struck off their legs," as an old writer says. Peter sleeps in the garden, and in the judgment hall tells lies and swears to them; but there has been One in whom the furnace heated seven times, proved to be precious beyond expression.

Read Luke 22; see this One in that great chapter; see Jesus there in the hour of the trial of faith. He is first in company with the sorrow that was awaiting Him, then with His disciples, then with the Father, and then with His enemies-and mark it all, beloved. How unutterably perfect all is! this faith in its unalloyed preciousness when tried in the fire! But all the life of Jesus was the life and obedience of faith. In one light of it, it was most surely the life of the Son of God in "the form of a servant," humbling Himself even unto death, though "in the form of God," and though He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God"; but in another, it was the life of faith - "I will put My trust in Him." "I have set the LORD always before Me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." These are His breathings, and we celebrate Him, after our own way, in His life of faith, and sing together of Him-

"Faithful amidst unfaithfulness,

'Mid darkness only light,

Thou didst Thy Father's name confess,

And in His will delight."

And all this precious life of faith was answered by the care and keeping of God. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The faith of

Him who was serving on earth was perfect, and the answer of Him who dwelt in the heavens was perfect. (Psa. 91.)

## Two Golden Sentences

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The first is: "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89. The second is: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." v. 11.

These are in good truth golden sentences for the present moment. They set forth the true place for the Word; namely, settled in heaven, and hidden in the heart. Nor is this all; they also link the heart on to the very throne of God by means of His own Word, thus giving to the Christian all the stability and all the moral security which the divine Word is capable of imparting.

We do not forget - God forbid we should - that in order to enter into the power and value of these words, there must be faith wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost. We would remember this. But our present subject is not faith, nor yet the precious work of the Spirit of God, but simply the Word of God in its eternal stability and its holy authority. We esteem it an unspeakable mercy and privilege - in the midst of all the strife and confusion, the discussion and controversy, the conflicting opinions and dogmas of men, the ever shifting sands of human thought and feeling-to have something "settled." It is a sweet relief and rest to the heart that has, it may be, been tossed about for many a long year on the troubled sea of human opinion, to find that there is, after all, and in spite of all, that on which one may lean with all the calm confidence of faith, and find therein divine and eternal stability.

What a mercy, in the face of the unrest and uncertainty of the present moment, to be able to say, "I have gotten something settled - settled forever - settled forever in heaven." What effect, we may ask, can the bold and audacious reasonings of infidelity, or the sickly vaporings of superstition have upon the soul that can say, "My heart is linked to the throne of God by means of that Word which is settled forever in heaven"? None whatever. Infidelity and superstition - the two great agents of hell in this very day in which we live - can only take effect upon those who really have nothing settled, nothing fixed, no link with the throne and heart of God. The wavering and undecided - those who halt between two opinions, who are looking this way and that way, who are afloat, who have no haven, no anchorage - these are in imminent danger of falling under the power of infidelity and superstition.

We invite the special attention of the young reader to all this. We would sound a warning note in the ears of such. The present is a moment of deep and awful solemnity. The archenemy is putting forth every effort to sap the very foundations of Christianity. In all directions the divine authority and all-sufficiency of Holy Scripture is being called in question. Infidelity is gaining ground to a fearful extent at our seats of learning, and polluting the fountains whence the streams of religious thought and feeling are emanating over the land. Truth is at a discount, even among those who ought to be its guardians. We may nowadays behold the strange sight of professing Christian teachers taking part at meetings where professed infidels preside. Alas! alas! men who are professed infidels themselves may become pastors and teachers in that which calls itself the church of God.

In the face of all this, how precious, how weighty is our motto, "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven"! Nothing can touch this. It is above and beyond the reach of all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils. "The word of our God shall stand forever." The Lord be praised for the sweet and solid consolation of this!

But let us remember the counterpart: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Here lies the great moral safeguard for the soul in this dark and evil day. To have God's Word hidden in the heart is the divine secret of being preserved from all the snares of the enemy, and from all the evil influences which are at work around us. Satan and his agents can do absolutely nothing with a soul that reverently clings to Scripture. The man who has learned in the school of Christ the force and meaning of that one commanding sentence, "It is written," is proof against all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Dear reader, let us earnestly entreat you to ponder these things. Let us remind you that the one grand point for the people of God, now and at all times, is obedience. It is not a question of power, or of gift, or of external show, or of numbers; it is simply a question of obedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice." To obey what? The Church? No, the Church is a hopeless ruin, and cannot therefore be an authority. Obey what? The Word of the Lord. What a rest for the heart! What authority for the path! What stability for the whole practical career! There is nothing like it. It tranquilizes the spirit in an ineffable manner, and imparts a holy consistency to the character. It is a divine answer to those who talk of power, boast of numbers, point to external show, and profess reverence for antiquity. Moreover, it is the divine antidote for the spirit of independence so rife at the present day, for the haughty uprisings of the human will, the bold assertion of man's rights. The human mind is tossed like a ball from superstition to infidelity, and can find no rest. It is like a ship without compass, rudder, or anchor, driven hither and thither. But thanks be to God for all those to whose hearts the Holy Ghost has interpreted these two sentences. "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven." "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee."

## That I May Win Christ

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The brief sentence which forms the heading of this article presents to us the earnest aspiration of one who had found an absorbing and commanding object in Christ - the utterance of a soul whose one desire was to grow in the knowledge and appreciation of that blessed One who fills all heaven with His glory. The whole passage from which our motto is taken is full of power. We quote it for the reader: "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.

Let us especially mark the words, "what things were gain to me." The Apostle is not speaking of his sins, of his guilt, of things of which, as a man, he might justly be ashamed. No; he is referring to his gains, his honors, his distinctions - his religious, his intellectual, his moral, his political advantages - of such things as were calculated to make him an object of envy to his fellows. All these things he counted but loss that he might win Christ.

Alas! how few of us understand anything of this! How few of us grasp the meaning of the words - the real force of the expression, "That I may win Christ"! Most of us rest satisfied with thinking of Christ as God's gift to sinners. We do not aim at winning Him as our prize, by the surrender of all those things which nature loves and values. The two things are quite distinct. As poor, miserable, guilty, hell-deserving sinners, we are not asked to do, or to give, or to surrender anything. We are invited, yes, commanded, to take - take freely - take all. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "If thou knewest the gift of God,... thou wouldest have asked of Him."

All this is blessedly true, thanks be to God for it! But then there is another side of the question. What did Paul mean by winning Christ? He already possessed Christ as God's free gift to him as a sinner. What more did he want? He wanted to win Christ as his prize, even at the cost of all beside. As Christ, the true merchantman, sold all that He had in order to possess Himself of what He esteemed "a pearl of great price" - laid aside His glory, stripped and emptied Himself of all-gave up all His claims as man, as Messiah, in order to possess Himself of the Church; so, in his measure, that devoted Christian, whose words form our thesis, gave up everything in order to possess himself of that peerless Object who had been revealed to his heart on the day of his conversion. He saw such beauty, such moral glory, such transcendent excellency in the Son of God, that he deliberately surrendered all the honors, the distinctions, the pleasures, the riches of earth, in order that Christ might fill every chamber of his heart, and absorb all the energies of his moral being. He longed to know Him not merely as the One who had put away his sins, but as the One who could satisfy all the longings of his soul, and utterly displace all that earth could offer or nature grasp.

Reader, let us gaze on this picture. It is indeed a fine study for us. It stands out in bold contrast with the cold, selfish, world-loving, pleasure-hunting, money-seeking spirit of this our day. It administers a severe rebuke to the heartless indifference of which we must be conscious - an

indifference expressing itself in numberless and nameless ways. May the Lord exercise us so that each of us might be able to honestly say that the desire of my heart is, "That I may win Christ."

## Gleaning

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Whatever the mind is most fixed upon, and is ever turning to, gives its impress to the mind; if my feelings and thoughts are fixed on Christ, I get the impress of Christ. If I am ever turning to Him in all His heavenly measure of love, I shall get the impress of it; and if my soul then rises to Christ in that freshness of love which can say, "Come, Lord Jesus," there is His answer in all freshness, "Surely I come quickly." He does not forget us toiling through the wilderness and the sands of the desert; He is with us all the way, and all freshness is in Him. If the heart turns to the heart of Christ, the heart of the Son of God, I find that heart immeasurably fuller than mine of love-there, there is always freshness of love. I may be a way worn pilgrim, there I shall find freshness-a spring of cold water to refresh me just when fainting in the wilderness. Oh, that love in the heart of Christ, that knows no weariness, no dragging steps, no hanging down of the hands! I may always turn to Him, and say, "Come!" His heart can always answer, "Surely I come quickly." Oh, the freshness of Christ's love, and the brightness of that water forever flowing in incomparable purity and freshness!

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: a Start in Life

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Our readers are necessarily divided, with regard to this subject, into two classes— those who have started in life, and those about to start. It is for the benefit of the latter that we especially write. There is no doubt that the most critical moment for a young believer is when he is called upon to make a start for himself, to begin a voyage across the great ocean of life, with apparently no hand on the tiller but his own; we say apparently for reasons that will be seen further on.

### The Start

To start is a very real thing, but may take place actually in a variety of ways. To young men, for whom we now write, it occurs when the well-thumbed lesson books are finally laid aside, and he goes to the factory or the office for the first time, or the apprentice gets his first instructions in the future trade, or the high school graduate leaves home to go to college. That which makes the act so serious is not the mere fact that the steps which were only yesterday directed to the well-known school, are now turned to the office, the factory, or the college, but that the boy has all at once sprung into the man. It is true that at times he seeks to blossom into the “genus homo,” even at school, but this is distinctly premature. But when once a boy enters a profession, a trade, or any other calling, and begins to fight the battle of life, he justly expects to be considered and regarded, at least, a young man.

### The Dangers

Herein lies the chief danger for the young Christian. Up to this time he has taken all that his parents have told him for granted. He has steadily attended the well-known church, chapel, meeting, or Sunday School, where he first learned the value of the blood of Christ; and, shielded in a comfortable home from temptation, he has caught, hitherto, but stray glimpses of the sea of wickedness without. But now comes the time when his principles are to be tested. He is sent away to a strange city, he lives in lodgings, he is thrown among a set of godless, careless, and often immoral young men; he is surrounded on every side with new and strange temptations. Oh, how many dear bright young believers have made shipwreck of their faith on these fatal rocks which are met with on first sailing out of the harbor of home! The first month at a time like this, very often has a great influence on a young man’s life for years to come.

### How to Meet Them

If being forewarned and therefore forearmed, he leave his home a bright, happy Christian, prepared to stand for God, and test, in a fiercer fight, the strength already gained in many a little skirmish at school; if he firmly believes in the truth that if the devil is resisted, he will flee from him and shows his colors at the first opportunity at his work and in his leisure hours; if on the first night in his lodgings he opens his Bible, and, after reading God’s Word, prays to his Father in heaven, the victory is as good as won. In the first place, he is at once saved from a thousand temptations by showing his colors, for the really vicious at once shrink away from an openly declared Christian, and will seldom long trouble a man who at once stands up against them. In the second place, the

stand he has taken, to a certain extent commits him for the future, and makes his life comparatively easy in the days ahead. Third, he having honored God, God will honor, protect, and strengthen him.

### We Have a Father to Guide Us

But now there is another matter, and it is this. We spoke of the young man starting on the voyage of life, his hand apparently holding the tiller, and guiding the ship. Now many a young man, and even a young believer, thinks that this is not only apparently, but is really so, and that he is the architect of his own fortunes, and that it is his will that is to direct his future life. Many accept Christ as their Saviour, who have but a very faint idea of what it is to accept God as their Father; and yet the one relationship is as true as the other. And if the one makes them happy for eternity, the other is certainly the secret of true happiness for time. There is a wonderful difference between the young man who goes forth rejoicing in his own strength and sagacity, and thinks that he can outwit the world, and the humble Christian who leaves home placing the tiller of the little vessel of his life into his Father's hand, and trusts Him to guide him aright through the dangers and difficulties of each day. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." Do not think that any detail of your new life is too small for God to guide you in. The choice of your business, of your future home, of your companions, should all be entrusted to Him; and He will greatly own and honor such confidence, and lead you in the very best path. For it is folly to suppose that if we have a loving and all-wise Father, He would or could do anything else. The poet's words are indeed true:

"All that God does, or suffers to be done,  
That we ourselves should do,  
Could we the future of our lives as clearly scan,  
As He does now."

### The Bible Our Chart

Start then in life with a definite trust that God will guide, and though you apparently are steering the ship, get all your orders from above, so that, after all, it is His hand, not yours, that is really holding the tiller. One other word and we have done. A ship requires a chart and compass as well as a rudder. Now the Christian's chart is the Word of God, which shows him his course plainly down here, telling him that his first object should ever be, under all circumstances, the glory of God; that he is left here for this very purpose, not to please himself, but Christ. The compass is the conscience, instructed by the Word of God, that tells me in an instant when I am out of the true course.

### Make a Good Start

We would again entreat every young man just about to sail out of the harbor, to make a good start. If he wavers at first, or yields a little for the sake of peace, he will not get it; but, on the contrary, he may be drawn on, little by little, from bad to worse, until no outward sign of Christianity is left at all. A bold front at first, saves a great deal of trouble and fighting afterward. Be sure, however, that the trust is not in your own strength but that every step is taken with prayer and dependence on God.

As for the future, leave that with your heavenly Father, seeking only to live each day more truly to His glory than you did the day before. Such a course is worth a hundred sermons, for who can tell the mighty power of the unconscious influence exercised by a consistent Christian life?

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Marriage

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Before closing this chapter, we would bring before you a few thoughts on the important subject of marriage. To young men marriage seldom comes as a beginning in life; for, generally, they have been out in the world some years before. But to girls, and especially to those who are not compelled to labor for a livelihood, marriage is often the portal through which they are introduced from the quiet seclusion of home into the vast world without. Many children of God have from time to time borne witness as to the vast importance for good or evil of this momentous step. It has been shown by instances drawn from real life, and by the direct Word of God, how this union, to be blest, must be in the Lord (that is, both husband and wife children of God), and of the Lord (that is, both naturally and spiritually suited to each other, and His guidance sought in the matter). We do not now allude further to this, save again to point out that more young Christians are wrecked, and the fair promise of their young lives blighted, by hasty and ill-assorted marriages, than by anything else. To those who read these lines who are yet unmarried, we would earnestly say, above all things honor God in this step. Let no inclination, no apparent worldly advantage, lead you to overlook the fact that as surely as you are God's child, and as surely as He is your Father, so surely as you sow you shall reap; and if you, with your eyes open, disobey Him to please yourself, you must inevitably suffer deeply for it, whereas if you seek in this truly to glorify Him, He will uphold you.

### How to Act in Married Life

We will suppose, however, that you have taken the step, and that no objection is to be made to your marriage, there still remains the question, How are you to act in your new relationship? In the first place, never let the new scenes and occupations interfere with the old duties—daily private reading and prayer. This is the anchor of your soul, and if you have already experienced the blessing of it in your youth, it is worse than folly to neglect it now. Next, as in business, so here—it is the first step which is all-important. Let it be plainly understood at the outset by your new connections and friends that you are a believer. Finally, have a definite object before you for attainment, and that is to glorify God in the new sphere in which He has placed you. Let nothing obscure this object, but let it quietly underlie all your actions, and you will be blessed in all your relations. Not that such a steady course is easy. You will have to strive through many crosscurrents, especially when your interests, or those of your children, seem to point one way, and God's glory another. But if it is the constant habit of your life to know and feel that this is your object, you will be greatly helped at such times, and—by God's grace—ever gain the victory.

## 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 Chronicles 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 (in type) 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 would 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 Preface to Luke's Gospel: Critics

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There is nothing inconsistent with the thought of inspiration in the full sense of the word in Luke 1:1-4. "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

Infidels have asserted that inspiration was not required to record matters of history and biography. In a general sense this may be true, but inspiration insures perfect accuracy in the record, which no unaided historian can afford. But it has been asserted that Luke admits his own non-inspiration. He does nothing of the kind. In these verses we find three sources of information whereby we may know those things that concern the life of our blessed Lord and Savior.

First and foremost there are those who "from the beginning were eyewitnesses"; these were the apostles who narrated the facts of our Lord's life, death, resurrection, and ascension, not merely as intelligent men, but as "ministers of the word." In other words, their oral testimony was inspired.

In the second place, there were those who undertook to set down in writing the things communicated to them by these inspired apostles - things which were received among the Christians with full certainty ("surely believed").

These many writers, while pious in their motives, were nevertheless not inspired writers.

The apostolic oral testimony of verse 2 had given to the many writers of verse 1, and to the whole Christian company of that time, a sure ground of belief. But for the good of the whole Church in all ages something further was needed, and this we have in the four inspired gospels.

Hence we have in the third place the written testimony of Luke (vv. 3, 4), who contrasts himself with the writers of verse 1, and compares himself with the inspired apostles of verse 2. His motive was not only a pious one, but was divinely directed in its execution, so that believers in all ages might "know the certainty of those things." Luke had what the writers of verse 1 had not; namely, "perfect understanding of all things from the very first." Luke, therefore, did not need what the others did before he could write; he did not require to be told the facts by the apostles; he himself had a perfect understanding of every detail from the very commencement. This was a claim to absolute accuracy which could only be by divine inspiration.

## Luke 12:36

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How does the Lord deliver His own from the power of tradition and every other source of attraction for the heart? He opens out the communications of His own mind, and casts the light of the future on the present. How often worldliness unjudged in a Christian's heart betrays itself by want of relish for God's unfolding of what He is going to do! How can I enjoy the coming of the Lord if it is to throw down much that I am seeking to build up in the world? A man, for instance, may be trying to keep or gain a status by his ability, and hoping that his sons may outstrip himself by the superior advantages they enjoy. On some such idea is founded all human greatness; it is "the world," in fact. Christ's coming again is a truth which demolishes the whole fabric; because, if we really look for His coming as that which may be from day to day - if we realize that we are set like servants at the door with the handle in hand, waiting for Him to knock (we know not how soon), and desiring to open to Him immediately ("Blessed are those servants")-if such is our attitude, how can we have time or heart for that which occupies the busy Christ forgetting world?

Moreover, we are not of the world, even as Christ is not; and as for means and agents to carry on its plans, the world will never be in lack of men to do its work. But we have a higher business, and it is beneath us to seek the honors of the world that rejects our Lord. Let our outward position be ever so menial or trying, what so glorious as in it to serve our Lord Christ? And He is coming.

In the cross we see Christ humbling Himself - the only One of all greatness stooping low to save my soul-the only One who commands all, becoming the Servant of all. A person cannot receive the truth

of the cross without having in measure his walk in accord with the spirit of it. Yet how much saints of God regard the cross, not so much as that by which the world is crucified unto them and they unto the world, but rather as the remedy by which they are set free from fear, to make themselves a comfortable place in the world! The Christian ought to be the happiest of men; but his happiness should consist in what he knows is his portion in and with Christian. Meanwhile our service and obedience are to be formed according to the spirit of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ

## God Came Down to Deliver

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Exod. 3:1-8

One thing that is brought before us in Exodus 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 Exodus 3 with Luke 2, and you may wonder why. In Exodus 3 Moses is in the backside of the desert, where he had led the flock. In Luke 2, a wonderful thing 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 Go 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 ca 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 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 burnt." And as he turns aside there is a voice which cal him by name, "Moses, Moses And he said, Here am I. What is the burning bush to that one whom He is no' 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 sow way or another, to remind us of what is due in 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 Exodus 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 burnt." 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 Josh. 5:14, 15. 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 Numbers 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 into 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." Eph. 1:3; J.N.D. 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 - "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.

## Faith and God's Revelation: Infidelity and Reason Opposed

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Feeling as we do the deep solemnity of the present time and the danger which besets the Christian's path on every side, we press upon our readers the immense importance of the Word of God, and implicit subjection to its holy authority in all things. We do not exactly feel called upon to take formal notice of attacks upon it. We look upon all such as the direct and positive work of Satan, who is seeking in every possible way to shake the foundations of our most holy faith, and to pave the way for the march of infidelity and blasphemy, which, as we believe, will ere long darken the whole civilized world. It is surely most appalling to think that the professed pastors and teachers of Christianity should be the very men to rise up and lay impious hands upon the pillars upon that which Christianity reposes. May the Lord have mercy upon them and open their eyes that they may see their folly, guilt, and danger, and flee for refuge to that precious blood which cleanses from all sin!

Still, though we do not deem it our place to review or expose infidel books, we cannot refrain from raising a warning cry against the influence of infidel principles. We see in all directions an effort to humanize everything divine and sacred - to bring everything down to the level of man's blind and perverted reason - to exclude all that is mysterious-all that is heavenly and divine - to exalt reason and insult revelation-to shut out God. Yes, beloved reader, this is the enemy's grand effort- to shut out God, and upset God's revelation. We look in one direction and we see professedly Christian teachers seeking to undermine Christianity. We turn our eyes to another quarter, and we see some daring to approach the profound mystery of the cross, to speculate, as medical men, upon the causes of the death of Christ!

We confess we shudder at the contemplation, and ask, What will come next? Is God to be shut out in everything? Must He not speak at all? Is He to be refused a hearing if He utters a word which man's stupid reason cannot understand? Does faith come by reason, and reason by the word of man? It would seem that many think so, and that the rare and exquisite touches of the pen of inspiration must be tried by the clumsy rules of arithmetic, or the far more clumsy rules of the infidel's moral sense; and the precious sacrifice of the Son of God must be treated more as a subject for a doctor's case-book than as a holy mystery revealed in the pages of the Book of God.

May God preserve His saints in these perilous times! May He fill our hearts with a very deep sense of the solemnity of the present moment, and lead us to keep close to Himself and to His Word! Then shall we be safe from every hostile influence. Then shall we not regard the sneer of the skeptic or the arguments of the infidel. We shall know whence all such things come and whither they tend. Christ will be our enjoyed portion, His Word and Spirit our guide, His coming the hope of our hearts.

## Two Choices

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"O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Deut. 32:29.

Satan does not like people, especially those on the threshold of life, to think about death, and offers to all a multitude of varying attractions to keep them from looking ahead. God's words, quoted above, show that He desires that they should be wise with that true wisdom which does not simply take everything at its face value, but weighs it in the light of eternity.

There are two worlds that claim the attention of all, especially those who are starting the journey of life. The first is the tangible world around us, of which Satan is morally the god and prince, with its alluring tales of ambition and progress, religious and otherwise, but which, in spite of all its fair appearance, is yet spoken of in Scripture as "this present evil world." The second is the unseen world of which Christ is the

Head and Center, with its glorious and incorruptible future, but involving a pathway of present trial and suffering to reach it.

Unquestionably the person who goes in for the former will get the best time materially now; but everything here is passing away, and what of the latter end?

We desire to draw the reader's attention to two extracts from the writings of two different men, each of whom was a real exponent of the world for which he lived, and the amount of satisfaction it could afford.

The following lines were found among the papers of the late Professor B, at the close of a life of devotion to the quest of honor and fame, a life which would, no doubt, be highly commended by the children of the world. The lines speak for themselves with a seriousness and intensity which cannot be overstated, and stand as a solemn warning to all who would walk ambition's glittering highway.

"Why labor for honor? Why seek after fame?

Why toil to establish a popular name?

Fame! aye, what is fame? a bubble-a word,

A sound, that's worth nothing, a hope that's deferred;

A heartsickening hope that's too often denied

Or withheld from the worthy, to pander to pride.

Then out upon fame! let her guerdon be riven,

Nay-hold-let me strive as I always have striven.

Out, out upon fame! too late will she come,

Her wreath mocks my brow, will it hang on my tomb?

Too much have I labored, too willingly gave

My thoughts to the world AND HAVE EARNED BUT A GRAVE."

Such lines need no comment, and we would turn from them to an extract from the last writings of one who had renounced the most ambitious career, to take up the cross and to follow the Lord Jesus into the place of rejection. At the end of a life of trial and suffering, such as few are called upon to undergo, he was cast into a Roman dungeon. Almost all his earthly friends had forsaken him. He had appeared once before that cruel tyrant Nero, and before him lay the lions or perhaps some other fiendish torture; truly it was a "latter end" to 13( naturally greatly dreaded. But what had HE earned? N( thoughts of the grave filled his soul when he wrote to hi: young friend Timothy, as follows:

"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: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

Again no comment is needed; the language of Paul the Apostle is too sublime to require human praise.

In conclusion, we would earnestly ask every reader of these lines to ponder well the striking contrast, remembering alway that he cannot serve two masters.

"Choose you this day whom you will serve" (Josh. 24:15) God or the world. He wants you to be wise, to understand tin truth, and to consider the latter end of these things

## From Strength to Strength

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How is it that some Christians break down? How is it their needs are not met? How is it some get into confusion and perplexity?

The answers to these questions are in many cases because they have gotten out of the path of God's will. In that path, we get full supplies, provided we are in constant dependence on Him. We must always be receiving from Him.

It is like a water wheel going round. What makes it go round? The water that went over it yesterday? No! The stream that may flow tomorrow? No! What then? The water passing over it just now. If that stops, the wheel stops. So we are dependent moment by moment.

Let me illustrate this. Some years ago, when I was a little boy, my father took me to India. I well remember many of the incidents of the journey. For instance, between Cairo and Suez -there was no railway or canal then-we had to travel a hundred miles over a dry, arid desert. But we had no provisions with us, no change of horses. We needed these things in such a long journey. How did we manage? There was a certain path marked out for us, and in that path provision was made for our needs all the way along. If we kept that path, we had stage by stage, refreshment, fresh horses, and so on; but we had to keep the path, else we should have had no supplies.

So there is a path of the will of God for us, and in that path there is full provision. Out of it, we need not wonder if we do not find constant supplies. Remember, then, one great secret of success is to be learning more and more perfectly how to be kept in the path of God's will.

"Teach me Thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path" (Psalm 27:11).

## The Sphere of Human Misery: the Power of God Within

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Exceedingly blessed is the grace that the Lord is come, the power of God within the sphere of human misery, which, extreme as it may be, does but make that power evident. If look around as a man, I am lost. I cannot unriddle the history of the world: abominations in Christendom committed in the name of the Lord; Himself rejected by His people Israel, and crucified by those Gentiles to whom God had entrusted the government of the world; Mohammedanism; heathenism. What kind of God have you? says the reasoning heart, when it is such a world. But in the gospel I see the Lord came down into all the wretchedness, sickness, sin; and my heart is drawn away from pleasure and sorrow to Him. How beautiful to see heart after heart brought around this One, the only true center, soon to be the risen Head of the new creation, Himself the Object drawing out feelings and affections of which He alone is worthy-Him who by His excellency gives excellency, and by His gracious thoughts toward us produces and draws out gracious thoughts in us.

Next, our hearts are fixed just so far as we have an object -fixed according to God when we have Christ Himself before us. How can I love if I have nothing to love? A man is what he feels and likes and thinks. If my soul lives and feeds on that which is most excellent, Christ the bread of God, Christ becomes in a practical sense formed in the heart. In Him- the man Christ Jesus-God has had all His delight, and the display of it too.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Backsliding

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We have three great enemies ever seeking to overcome us the world, the flesh, and the devil. And in proportion as we give place to any of these, we depart from God. These three we find in Peter's case in Luke 22. In verses 45 and 50 he is led away by the flesh, in sleeping when he should have watched, in striking when he should not have resisted. In verses 54 and 55 he is led astray by the fear of the world: first, in straying far from Christ's side; second, in fellowship with His enemies. And, last, in verses 57, 58, and 60, he is thrice led astray by the devil: to deny Christ, to swear, and to deny Him again.

One might, indeed, say such a course is foreshadowed in the first Psalm. The counsel of the ungodly, the dictates of fleshly reason, led to the smiting with the sword; standing the way of sinners is illustrated by standing and warming himself; while sitting in the seat of the scornful is found in verse 55.

The Path of the Backslider

And now, what about yourself? Listen to the following words:

There is no heart in the wide world so unhappy as his who has been drawn aside from the holiness and joy of obedience to paths of self-seeking and of sin.

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,

How sweet their memory still!

But they have left an aching void

The world can never fill."

And such is the language, in poetry or in prose, of the soul whose earliest love has been left; who has, alas, in some way or other, forsaken the Lord for the enjoyment of the favors of the world.

"My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13). Such was God's lamentation of old. How rightly He styled Himself

"THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS"—the source and spring of blessing; and how solemnly descriptive is the expression, "broken cisterns, that can hold no water," of the experience acquired by departing from Him.

He knows where the blessing is found. We, alas, often through seas of sorrow, have to learn that the cisterns to which we have recourse are, in truth, broken, and that they hold no water, and that there remains, as the only result of our declension, an aching void, a distracted and discontented heart — a state of soul, indeed, which had no parallel in the most wretched hours of our unconverted days.

Ah, beneath many a smiling face, behind many a ringing laugh, underlying much forced activity and unnatural effort, there is to be found a heart of misery, that seeks by these means to conceal the fact of its departure from God.

And yet how vain that effort—how hollow that laugh! The stag may continue to bound gaily over crag and moor, and the bird may soar awhile swiftly on high, but the gunshot wound is doing its work, and, sooner or later, the gay bounding will cease, and the strong wing will droop. So, too, the Word of God will prove effectual, though long slighted; and the wayward soul, though brought by paths of deep and searching trial, will find that the love wherewith it was loved was an “everlasting love”; such a love as could turn its eye, full and forgiving, on a poor failing Peter, and effect by its silent, yet wounded look, his entire restoration.

#### Thou Hast Left Thy First Love

Do you not own and feel the truth of these words? Can you not recall, with an aching heart, the bright and holy memories of the past, the once loved Bible, the place where “prayer was wont to be made,” the happy work for your Lord? It may be some poor, cold, formal task, professedly for Him, still occupies you, but all the time you hear His voice ever saying, “Thou hast left thy first love.” You have gradually not only left the things you once loved, but returned to those you once hated for Christ. The ensnaring novel, eating away your brain and time, the worldly song, the amusements of this world, are all binding their chains around you, and you are not happy. You try to be, but you cannot succeed. You envy the happy carelessness of the dead souls around you. They feel no remorse; the pleasures of the world contain no hidden sting for them. They have never known and loved the Saviour you have forsaken. The voice of conscience is not ceaselessly saying to them, as to you, “You are doing wrong. You are sinning against the light.” Consider now, where was your first step of departure? Was it not so small as to be almost imperceptible? You did not begin by throwing away your Bible for a romance; you did not at once exchange the meeting for the concert hall. No! the first thing was a gradual neglect of private reading and prayer. As your heart got cold, and you lost your interest in it, the devil whispered, “Give it up; it is no use going on with a form; wait till your heart gets warm again,” well knowing that in saying this, he was cutting you off from the warmth and light. And you obeyed him. You did not read or pray this morning when you arose, nor yesterday, nor the day before. O, beloved reader, truly yours is a sad case; but yet, there is abundant grace to meet it.

## Plain Papers for Young Believers: Restoration

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In Christian life we must distinguish between two things that differ: daily defilement, and positive backsliding. From the one we need cleansing, for the other we need restoration.

Touching a dead body unawares brought defilement to the Israelite under the law, and so any contact of spirit with this world and evil is defiling. There is no excuse, however, for it for we are called to walk in spirit above it all; and if we get defiled by inadvertence or carelessness, we have only ourselves to blame. Still these constant defilements, practically almost inseparable from our walk in this world of sin, are quite distinct from a gradual departure, first in our heart, but after in our walk, from the living God. We have already dwelt on the steps of failure. It is our happier task now to describe the return of a soul to full joy and communion.

In the first place, we must observe that daily defilements contracted and not cleansed, are a bar to fellowship with Christ, and thus tend to lead us astray altogether. No soul that is in communion with Christ strays away. Communion (maintained by the Word and prayer) must cease ere backsliding begins. And it is because many of us are content to go on for so long without enjoying real communion in our souls with Christ that we are in such danger of backsliding. Restoration, therefore, means restoring communion. The daily defilement, in fact any contact with evil, is met by the constant washing of the Word carried on by Christ, who as Servant forever (Ex. 21:6), loving His wife (believers collectively, Eph. 5), and His children (believers individually, Heb. 2), cleanses us by the washing of water by the Word, as shown in the lovely scene in John 13.

A special provision, however, exists for the restoration of a believer, after having fallen into sin, which is set forth by the type of the red heifer in Numbers 19. The essence of this type is that it presents the application of the cleansing power of the Word, in special connection with the death of Christ (typified by the ashes of the heifer in the running, or living, water), in whose death, on reference to Numbers 19:6, we also find that all that is of this world, from the highest to the lowest (cedar and hyssop; see 1 Kings 4:33), as well as all its glory (the scarlet), has been consumed. Thus our heart is reminded not only of the wondrous love of Christ in dying, but of the separating power of this death, which we in our sins had forgotten. (The water is called the "water of separation.") We find that these ashes were sprinkled twice, on the third day and on the seventh day, the first doubtless showing the convicting power of the Word on the conscience, leading to true confession, and the other bringing the full sense to the heart, of the love that has put all our sin away.

In the history of the Apostle Peter, we get the first of these sprinklings, when the Lord turned and looked on His erring disciple. That look broke Peter's heart; it brought all the enormity and heartlessness of his sin to his mind, and he went out and wept bitterly. The Lord, however, did not cease His work of restoration at this point. When He rose from the dead on the third day, one of His first thoughts was for poor, erring, brokenhearted Peter. He appeared first to Simon Peter. Then, in that secret interview of which we have no details, the Lord completed the work of grace He had begun. One thing which we may learn from the secrecy of this interview is that restoration

is a secret work between the soul and Christ. Another point of great practical interest is to remember that, although there may have been years of backsliding, there is no need for years of restoration. There is no such a thing as gradual restoration to Christ. When once His love has melted and conquered the starving heart, all the coldness of years is gone in a moment. And what a moment for the soul when once more the long silent voice of our Beloved is heard speaking to our hearts again, the same yesterday, today, and forever; and then at last we know the deep meaning of those words, "He restoreth my soul."

The active work of the Lord in our soul, however, is not the first work of His grace toward us.

We must remember that from Revelation 12:10, and from other scriptures, it appears that in some way Satan has access at any rate to the outer courts of God's presence, and his hateful business is to accuse us to God day and night. But we have One there ready to answer every charge on our behalf, on the ground of His accomplished redemption. Hence it is written, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." This advocacy of Christ may long precede His work of restoration which leads us to confession according to 1 John 1:9. The one is what He does for us in heaven, the other what He does in us down here, leading to true self-judgment. A soul truly restored has a deep sense of the love of Christ, just as we get a far greater view of the death of Christ in the red heifer than we have in the paschal lamb. Two things always accompany restoration — a deeper horror of sin and all that hinders communion with Christ, and a deeper sense of His changeless love.

It may be that now the eye of someone is reading these lines who has strayed from Christ. The heart has become cold, hard, and apparently dead; and yet it is not really dead, for some feelings have passed through it, even while reading these few lines. And still, as the gradual steps of backsliding are thought over, the distance that separates us from Christ seems so vast that return seems impossible. Do not, beloved reader, rise with this hopeless thought. You may be fully restored at this moment. All that is needed is that you should turn from your sin to Christ, and fully own and confess to Him all that you have done. He will not keep you waiting years, or months, or weeks, or even days. Let there be but true, full confession, and He is faithful and just now to forgive you, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

## The Swallows Are Gone

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"Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the LORD. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made He it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?" Jer. 8:7-9.

The end of the year is near. The swallows are gone; the cold blasts of winter are come; but not one swallow is left behind. We saw them gathered together, and they were seen to fly higher as the time to depart drew nearer. No one saw them go, but they are gone to sunny lands of the south. The frost and the snow, the sleet and piercing winds of winter never reach them there. Very remarkable is this instinct of the birds. "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the LORD."

Is there not a lesson for us in this instinct of the birds? It was pleasing to watch the swallows as the winter drew near, gathering in companies, seeming to wait for the wanderers. Then they would fly high, as wanting to be gone. We thought, Is not the Holy Spirit now gathering Christians together in little companies to Christ? Now here, now there, a wanderer is coming in. Should we not fly higher? We, like the swallows, are about to leave this scene below. Already signs of this world's judgment begin to flit across its autumn sky. And now every swallow soared ready to depart, moved by one common instinct. Oh, that every Christian were seen manifestly ready to depart, moved by the Spirit of God.

But will it be with the, whole Church of God as with the swallows? Yes, the Holy Spirit is already gathering them in little companies to Christ. He has revealed to them fresh, after many centuries, the heavenly Bridegroom, and the heavenly calling of the Church. He is leading their thoughts and hearts higher and higher yet. And soon, very soon, though the world will not see them go, yet every one shall be gone, not one left behind. "For 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. Are not these the sober words of inspired reality? Yes, brethren we shall all be gone-not one left behind-forever with the Lord. If the swallows are gone to more sunny shores, oh, what will it be to be caught up away from the scenes of this world's wintry woes and judgments, and in peaceful rest enter the glory of our Lord!

And if God never fails to take by instinct at the appointed time the stork, the crane, and the swallow, can He possibly fail at the appointed time to take the saints to meet their Lord? Is it not sad and humbling that the Lord should have to complain, that though the swallows should know their appointed time, "My people know not the judgment of the LORD"? Is not this as true now of Christendom as it was of Israel then? What profound ignorance there is on this important subject.

"My people know not." Men go on dreaming of continual summer, yes, of increasing sunshine, peace, temperance, prosperity, just at the very time when the saints are about to be gone like the swallows of autumn; and the storms of this world's wintry blasts are about to take them all by surprise (1 Thess. 5:1-9).

It is incredible how utterly unaware the learned of this world are of the wintry judgments about to be poured out on the nations of the earth. "How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us?"

Never was there a day of more boasting, "We are wise." It is quite true the Word of God is in men's hands; but who believes it? The rapture of the Church before the day of the Lord is clearly revealed. God has said it. He has made it perfectly clear-both the departure of His saints to meet the Lord in the air, and the terrible judgments that shall follow. Has He made it clear? Yes; but, "Lo, certainly in vain made He it; the pen of the scribes is in vain." Yes, in vain has God spoken in His Word; men will not believe Him. "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition" (Mark 7:13).

Let us now pass on to the December of this world, before the new era of the millennial kingdom begins. "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?" v. 9.

Let us anticipate what these learned men, these rejecters of the Word of God will say. "How strange this is; those Christians we despised are all gone, like the swallows of autumn. Not one of them can be found on earth. How we laughed and hated their gathering together! What fools we thought them because they would fly higher; as they said, their Lord was coming to take them. They spoke of their heavenly calling, and would have nothing to do with our earthly societies and politics. We scorned them because they would not join our various schemes for the improvement of man. We hated the thought that we were not to glory save in the cross of Christ. They gathered together - poor little despised companies- and told of the coming Savior to the wanderers all around. Not one saw then go, but they are gone. Any now the world's wild, fierce, wintry blasts are blowing. Where is all our boasted wisdom? Peace is taken from the earth. All that we hear on every side is, that men are killing one another. Famine and pestilence, sword, hunger, and death are all around. Woe, woe to us, the winter of the world is come.

["And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains,... hid themselves in dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. Rev. 6:15, 16.]

"We rejected the word of the Lord, but now the Christians are gone, and the great day of His wrath is come; we seek death and do not find it (Rev. 9:6). Where is now our boasted wisdom? We are worshiping devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood (Rev. 9:20). And what is the end of all our politics? What strange events since the winter set in, and the Church is gone! It is not forty-two months yet since the new last head of the Roman Empire appeared. But oh, what months! The dragon has given him his power. Ten kingdoms have sprung up and given their power to this Satanic head. When he opens his mouth, it is in blasphemy. And all that dwell on earth worship him. And all that refuse are boycotted and put to death. It is true, all this was distinctly foretold in Scripture, but we were far too wise then to believe what God said to His

servants in Rev. 6; 9; 13, and 17. Certainly there never was such a winter as this since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be. Jesus said it would be so, but we did not believe Him" (Matt. 24:21).

Yes, "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?"

And now, beloved reader, where are you, and what is the condition of your soul? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb, and ready to be gone like the swallows in autumn? Are you following the wise men of this world, who will so soon be ashamed and confounded? Is Christ the center of attraction? Are you separated to Him, and waiting for Him from heaven? Great is the last effort to draw Christians from Christ to join the confederacies of men. Oh, let us seek to get higher and higher. The Word of God is utterly disregarded. On no account will men allow it to be Christ alone. They would have Christ and circumcision, Christ and the world's various confederacies, or even Christ and profanity. All these things hide the coming of the Lord to take His saints. Every doctrine of human improvement denies the utter ruin of man through sin, and the fast approaching winter of divine judgment on the rejecters and despisers of the Word of God. It is solemnly true of the great men and the wise of the world, "They have rejected the word of the LORD." The mark of a Christian is, Thou "hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name" (Rev. 3:8). Which is true of you, beloved reader? Whatever name you may bear, if you have not kept His Word you are not a Christian, and will surely be left behind when the Christians depart like the swallows that are gone.

Can you for a moment admit that the instinct of a bird is more sure than the words of the Savior? As this world's winter approaches, let us then dwell on the words of Jesus. He cannot fail to fulfill His promise. We may not know where the swallows go; but Jesus says to us, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2, 3. Do we hear you saying, "Yes; Jesus says so, but our learned, wise teachers do not say so"? Remember the word, "They have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?"

It is a solemn fact that God by His Spirit has sent forth the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matt. 25:6) and they have rejected word of the Lord. God grant we may cease from man; for what wisdom is in him?

May the saints of God be now gathered together like the swallows in autumn. May we love to dwell on His sweet words of promise. Has He not gone to prepare the place? Oh, those scenes of radiant glory, far away from earth's cold wintry blasts! And will He not come to take us to Himself? With Himself! How soon, like Moses and Elias, shall we be talking with Him! Glorious reality! Soon we shall be gone; not one will be left behind; and poor deceived, apostate Christendom will be left to "become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. 18:2) Blessed comfort - "The Lord knoweth them that are His," 2 Tim. 2:19, and none shall be left behind.

"Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. 5:14.

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

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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." 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 Genesis I, 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 anything 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 come to be in the state of sin any 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 recognize 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."

## Psalm 23

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A few of the blessings every Christian may have:

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." v. 1.

I shall not want REST. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."

I shall not want DRINK. "He leadeth me beside the still waters."

I shall not want FORGIVENESS. "He restoreth my soul."

I shall not want GUIDANCE. "He leadeth me in the path of righteousness for His name's sake."

I shall not want COMPANIONSHIP. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me."

I shall not want COMFORT. "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

I shall not want FOOD. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

I shall not want JOY. "Thou anointest my head with oil."

I shall not want ANYTHING. "My cup runneth over."

I shall not want ANYTHING IN THIS LIFE. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

I shall not want ANYTHING IN ETERNITY. "And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Faith never yet outstripped the bounty of the Lord.

## When He Writeth up the People

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Psalm 87:6 and Colossians 4:7-18

We are all going to be written up. That process is going on now. In the close of the epistle to the Colossians we get a little foreshadowing of that kind of thing. The Spirit of God has been pleased in the verses referred to in Colossians 4 to give us a few remarks about some of the brethren. These remarks are the estimate that the Apostle Paul by the Spirit of God put upon them. You will notice that no two of these men are characterized alike. Each one has that that is distinctly his. No two of us are expected to be duplicates. The Spirit of God has been pleased to put these records here that we might pick up a bit of profit from them.

If the Lord tarries and you live for several more years, what kind of a record will God be able to write of you at that time? If the Apostle Paul were going to close one of his epistles and wanted to mention you, what kind of a record would he be able to give?

Tychicus has a nice recommendation. Here is a "beloved brother." There was something about that man that made him very dear to the heart of Paul. He was a beloved brother. There are some of our brethren whom we can scarcely speak of without using that word. We always think of them as beloved brothers. Perhaps there are others about whom we would not be so ready to speak in that way. Of course, we are all beloved of the Father, but that is not the side of things before us here. It is not what we are in Christ, but what is manifested in our practical everyday life.

"A beloved brother, and a faithful minister." Wouldn't we all like to be that? I believe our hearts ought to long for that kind of thing. You would like to be that some day, wouldn't you, dear young Christian? That kind of thing is made up of a lot of very small threads. It is like one of the great hawsers that they use on the ships. They are as big as your arm ; but if you were to examine that great rope, you would find that it is made up of lesser ropes, and these are made up of still lesser ropes ; and finally you get down to the fibers. Our Christian character is like that.

Why do you think that Tychicus was a beloved brother

and faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord? How could the Spirit of God call him that? His life had been made up of daily faithfulness. Day by day he had been weaving that cord, that rope of testimony and service. Now he is rather mature in his Christian experience, and the Apostle can call him "beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord." He did not suddenly become that. That was the result of a life of pruning. How nice that he could be spoken of in that way.

Are you faithful? Are you faithful in the little things God gives you to do for Him? Faithfulness is a great thing. It is a great thing to be faithful to the meetings. Have you a seat at the reading meeting, and are folks disappointed if you are not there? Would they miss you if you were not at the prayer meeting, or would they be surprised if you were there ? Faithfulness is made of small obediences. It is woven of individual acts of faithfulness - faithfulness for Christ in the least bit of

responsibility that falls across your path. Perhaps there are some here this afternoon who had some little bit of service you were discharging for Him, and you were happy in it; but you have let it slip. Would the Lord have liked you to give it up, or was it spiritual sloth? Did you become cold in your soul? Oh, if there is anyone here like that, go to the Lord about it and ask Him to freshen up your affections. When you go back home, take up that little service for Him. If He has given it to you, it is your individual responsibility - it has your name attached to it. Someone else might step in and do the work, but that will not be discharging your responsibility.

Onesimus is another faithful man, another beloved brother. It doesn't say anything about his being a fellow servant, but he is a faithful and beloved brother. We read quite a bit about him in the epistle to Philemon. He had not always been a faithful and beloved brother ; he had been a very unfaithful man. He had run away from home, and perhaps helped himself to his master's funds. He probably thought he had worked hard and got no pay, and was entitled to a little cash. Anyway, he ran away from his master, arrived in Rome, and got converted there. That man was transformed by the grace of

God into a beloved and faithful brother.

So it doesn't make any difference what our past has been, if the grace of God comes into our lives, all the privileges that belong to any children of God lie before us. We can appropriate them. Don't be discouraged by thinking how bad you have been. Onesimus certainly had a bad name. Probably they said some very harsh things about him where he came from, but here the Spirit of God is pleased to record, "Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother." His name means "profitable." He certainly had not lived up to his name in the early part of his life. He had been unprofitable. He had been a liability to his master. Now he goes back - no longer unprofitable, but profitable. I wonder how the Lord would write you up - as profitable, or unprofitable? In one sense we are all unprofitable servants, but we want to distinguish between things that differ. That doesn't mean that we are to slump down, fold our hands, and say, "I am an unprofitable servant," and stay still. That scripture does not mean that we should not have an earnest desire that we might be enabled to do something to please the Lord, something that He can own as for Himself.

Aristarchus - "my fellow prisoner." He had endured hardship for Christ. He knew what it was to suffer for Christ. He had identified himself with a man of God. At the close of his own life, Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Those wounds and scars that Paul had in his body showed that he had suffered for Christ. Aristarchus had the honor of sharing some of those sufferings for his Lord and Master. Oh, young folks, that is a privilege. If we suffer, we are going to reign. Have you ever had the privilege of suffering for Christ? I wonder if we try to avoid it. Oh, remember, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Shame on us if we seek to avoid that path. Shame on us if we keep our mouths closed when we should speak. Shame on us if we would rather not be associated with those who are godly, if we are ashamed to be characterized as a saint.

Marcus, or Mark. There is something very encouraging here. Have you ever made some kind of a blunder in that little meeting where you come from? Have you ever made a mess of things? Have you ever been humiliated in the midst of your brethren? Take courage. Here is a man who has done the same thing. His name was Mark. He started out to serve the Lord, and he became weak-kneed. He got homesick and turned back. That was a sad thing. He certainly missed the

mind of the Lord in that. At the time the Apostle Paul was very much disappointed in him, and did not have much confidence in him. He had turned his back on the work of Christ. Isn't it nice to find the Apostle Paul here, near the close of his life, telling the Colossians that Mark was coming, and if he came, to receive him. In a later epistle he says, "He is profitable to me for the ministry." Mark recovered himself, or perhaps I should say the Lord recovered Mark. Because he had made a colossal failure, that was no sign that the Lord was through with him.

I remember saying to a brother a good many years ago, "How is it that we never hear your voice in any addresses to the young folks, or any ministry?" "Oh," he said, "I tried it once and made a miserable failure, I made up my mind I would never try again." I sought to encourage him and tell him that because he failed once was no reason why he should always fail. That brother became one of our most valuable and esteemed brothers-one of our most able brothers. We do not need to think that God is through with us because we have failed. Paul did not hold against Mark his past failures.

Jesus, or Justus. Paul gave him his full title-Justus the just one. That man's outstanding characteristic was that he was a just man. Well, that is not to be despised. We should all seek to be just. If there is anything that should characterize a Christian, it is moral integrity-downright honesty -by the grace of God to speak the truth and be men of our word-to be those that can be trusted-those upon whom our neighbors can look as honest men-men who pay their debts-men who have no unfulfilled obligations.

Epaphras-"a servant of Christ." We are all servants of Christ in a sense. If you are a Christian, you are a servant of Christ. Oh, what a privilege! There is no such thing as an unnecessary member of the body of Christ, as a useless member. In biology they try to tell us that we have certain things in our bodies that once were functional, but they have ceased to be so-they do not mean anything any more. I am not saying that I agree with the biologists. There are no needless remnants hanging to our bodies. So in the body of Christ, every member has a functional responsibility. We are all servants of Christ-not servants of men, but servants of Christ-and our orders come from up there. You cannot go to a brother and ask him what you should do. You have to get your directions from Christ. Epaphras was a servant of Christ. What did he do ? He was a mighty man of prayer. He was a laboring brother in a very special sense, and you can be a laboring brother or a laboring sister in this sense. This is an avenue of service open to every Christian, and it is a most valuable one.

There is a brother present who said something to me a number of years ago, and I have never forgotten it. He was speaking about prayer and how to pray ; and he said, "Well, the best way to learn to pray is to pray." You will never learn to pray by reading a book on it. You will learn to pray by praying. Here is a man who prayed, and it says he labored earnestly. It takes real purpose of heart to pray, and the fact that we do so little of it proves that. Oh, how Satan likes to keep us from our knees. What will our service amount to if it is not sanctified by prayer? A prayerless life is a barren life. You may be so active in Christian service that you have no time to pray, but it will be a barren life regardless of all activity. Epaphras was not satisfied to see every believer brought to the Lord's table. The burden of his heart was that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Don't we all need praying for when we look at it from that angle?

Luke, the beloved physician. Isn't that a lovely title ? I suppose Luke's business was that of a physician, but he discharged this business responsibility in such a way that he could be spoken of as Luke, the beloved physician. His secular occupation was not out of keeping with his Christian profession. One meshed right into the other. There was no inconsistency ; he carried Christ with him into the sickroom. He was Luke, the beloved physician. Perhaps you are a carpenter, and you might be the beloved carpenter, because you carry Christ with you ; or you might be a stenographer, but you could be the beloved stenographer, because you take Christ with you to the office. You do not divorce your secular employment from your Christian profession. They both go together. They run parallel, like the two rails that carry the train across the continent. If one left the other, you would have catastrophe. So there will be catastrophe in your Christian life if the rail of your profession leaves the rail of your practical godliness.

Demas. Ah, there is pathos there. When it comes to Demas, all we get is "and Demas." Thereby hangs a tale. It was not so long afterward that Paul had to write, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." 2 Tim. 4:10. No doubt Paul was apprehensive at this moment. He knew there was something wrong. Perhaps he did not know what it was, but all he could say was, "and Demas." Oh, dear young Christian, that is very sad. Nothing could be said. There was just the mere mention of his name. As we go about the country, we come to a meeting where we have not been for a year or so, and we say, "Where is So-and-so?" Oh, didn't you hear that he left the meeting?

And Demas! What can you find that will attract you more than Christ? What do you think will ever be presented to your soul as long as you are in this scene that will compete with Christ in your affections ? Do you think anything can ever be offered to you that is comparable to that precious name? What causes young folks to drop out of the meeting? Christ has lost His charm to the soul. Perhaps they have not given Him up, but they want "Christ and-." We could mention a hundred different things. Perhaps it is Christ and service. I hear of some who have left the place where Christ is in the midst of two or three gathered to His name, because they wanted to be in places where they could serve Him better. What a sad thing to let service rob you of loyalty to Christ! Remember, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Others drop out because they find the world attractive. I suppose if I were to canvass this meeting, I would be told of some who dropped out since I was last here ; and you might say, "He wanted this," or "She wanted that." It might be service; it might be marriage; it might be popularity ; but it was something else than Christ. Demas loved this present world.

Archippus. "Take heed to [fulfill] the ministry which thou hast received." Oh, dear young Christian, how is it back in your little gathering? Are you fulfilling the place where the Lord has put you ? Are you walking before His eye? Are you taking heed to fulfill what has been committed to you? It is possible for us to have received a distinct commission from the Lord for a certain work we are to do for Him. It is possible to receive that, and not do it. Archippus was in danger of becoming careless and giving up. Perhaps he was thinking, "This little work I am doing is not very important after all." He was slipping, and the Apostle by the Spirit says, "Archippus, Take heed."

Now suppose you put your name in there. Let us every one put our names in there this afternoon. Everyone has his bit to do in the path of witness and testimony for Christ; just as when this building was erected, each one came and did his bit. Perhaps one man worked here for months, and

another for ten minutes. Each one was necessary in order that this great structure might be here today. So it is in the work for our blessed Lord. Now is the time to do it. He is coming, and what we leave undone we will never be able to do. Remember, the only place to testify for your blessed Lord is here. You can't do it in glory. Now is the time to seek to witness for Him and to live for Him.

Going back to Psalm 87-"The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people." We are all being written up. Let us hear the word to Archippus. C.H.B.

## The Holy Bible

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The Bible is all for the Christian, but not all about him. God in government, or Messiah and the kingdom, might express the general character of the Old Testament, while God in grace, or Christ and the Church, would characterize the New Testament. Moses, by inspiration of God, opened the canon of divine revelation; Paul completed the subjects of which it treats (Col. 1:25); John closed it with the Revelation. This blessed Book is assailed on every hand - its inspiration is openly denied, its divine authority unblushingly called in question, and its heavenly doctrines made the sport of an unbelieving world. Yet its subjects are grand, momentous, and divine; its themes are heavenly and eternal. It is the Word of God, and therefore it lives and abides forever.

Its Title: The title, "The Holy Bible," now everywhere happily accorded to the whole collection of the sacred writings, was first used in the middle of the fourth century. The titles "Old Testament" and "New Testament" were probably borrowed - the former from 2 Corinthians 3: 14, and the latter from Matthew 26:28. These expressions originally contemplated the relationships in which the Jews and Christians stood before God-the former before, and the latter after, the work of the cross. They then came to be applied to the books in which these covenants were expressed; hence, the "Old Testament" and "New Testament."

Before the Holy Bible was spoken of as such, it was generally termed "The Scriptures," or "The Holy Scriptures." The Apostles Peter and Paul so speak of the sacred writings (2 Pet. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:15). Philo, a philosopher and very learned Jew residing at Alexandria, and Josephus, the Jewish historian, equally learned, especially in all matters pertaining to his nation, and residing at Jerusalem, were both unbelievers; but both regarded the Old Testament as of divine origin, terming it "The Sacred Scriptures"; both, moreover, were contemporaries, and flourished in the middle of the first century. . . .

The Truth Gradually Unfolded: For a period of four thousand years and more, God at "sundry times and in divers manners" successively revealed His mind and will to man. This He did by revelations and communications, orally or otherwise delivered, from Adam to Moses; and then from Moses to the Apostle John (with an interregnum of about 500 years) in writing, thus fixing the truth and giving it a settled and definite form and character. What a mercy to hold in our hands not a but the Word of God! What a blessing to know the absolute certainty of those things whereof we are fully assured!

From Adam to Noah we have a period of more than 1600 years ; again, from Noah till Abraham there is a period of about 400 years, and from Abraham till Moses about 500 years. Now carefully observe the facts. Adam lived 930 years (Gen. 5:5), and only died about 56 years before Enoch was translated. Noah too could have enjoyed several years intercourse with Enoch. Thus the man who "walked with God" could have held the hand of Adam with one hand, and that of Noah with the other. We thus bridge the first period of the world's history ; and certainly the truth could not have suffered in its transmission, as Enoch is commended for his walk, and Noah for his testimony (Heb. 11 :5-7). Again, Shem, Noah's second son, the then depository of the truth (Gen. 9:26), was

contemporary with Abraham for nearly a century. Thus we have Shem in special relationship with Jehovah, spanning the second and eventful period from the flood till the gracious call of Abraham, to whom further revelations of the truth were made. A new deposit of the truth was committed to Abraham - "to Abraham and his seed were the promises made" (Gal. 3:16) ; and to each of the "Pilgrim Fathers" of Israel God communicated His mind. Thus we are carried up almost to the days of Moses, when the duration of human life became so curtailed (Psa. 90:10) that it would be impossible to hand down the truth with the certainty that its purity would be maintained, as it would have to flow through so many channels.

Now we come to the written Word, and here we would say that this form of communication exceeds by far any other mode of revelation whatever; "for Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name" (Psa. 138:2). The first mention of a "book" or of "writing" in the Bible is in Exodus 17:14. Moses began writing prior to the promulgation of the law. With certain intervals, the composition of the Old Testament extended through a period of about 1100 years, and was closed by the prophet Malachi. A few years after the death of Christ, the books comprising the New Testament were begun with the Gospel of Matthew; and ere the first century of the Christian era closed, and before John the beloved Apostle was taken to his Master, the whole of the New Testament was finished and in the hands and keeping of the Church! W. Scott

## **No Harm and No Christ**

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As young Christians come in contact with the world there are many things that would induce them to partake of this or that. People say, There is no harm in it; but there is no Christ in it either. J.W.P.

## A Testimony

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We in Ethiopia have one of the oldest versions of the Bible, but however old the version may be and in whatever language it might be written, the Word remains one and the same. It transcends all boundaries of empires and all conception of race. It is eternal, and one of the most complete proofs of this can be found in the body of the Bible itself. Gamaliel, one learned in the law, warns Israel of their attitude to the apostles and their teaching. "Refrain from these

men," he says, "and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." And so we see today the Bible with its wonderful message reaching the remotest parts of the earth.

No doubt you all remember reading in The Acts of the Apostles of how Philip baptized the Ethiopian official. He is the first Ethiopian on record to have followed Christ; and from that day onward the Word of God continues to grow in the hearts of Ethiopians. And I might say for myself that from early childhood I was taught to appreciate the Bible, and my love for it increases with the passage of time. All through my troubles I have found it a cause of infinite comfort. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" -who can resist an invitation so full of compassion?

Because of this personal experience in the goodness of the Bible, I was resolved that all my countrymen should also share its great blessing, and that by reading the Bible they should find truth for themselves. Therefore, in spite of great opposition, I caused a new translation to be made from our own ancient language into the language which the old and young understood and spoke.

Today man sees all his hopes and aspirations crumbling before him. He is perplexed and knows not whither he is drifting. But he must realize that the Bible is his refuge, and the rallying point for all humanity. In it man will find the solution of his present difficulties, and guidance for his entire action; and unless he accepts with clear conscience the Bible and its great message, he cannot hope for salvation. For my part, I glory in the Bible.

Emperor Haile Selassie

## Judgment According to Works

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Some would teach us that the only thing for which men will be condemned is the rejection of the gospel. This is a grave error. Men will be judged for their sins, for their wicked ways, their idle words, according to their works. (See carefully Matt. 12:36, 37; Eph. 5:5, 6; Col. 3:5, 6; Rev. 20:12, 13.) It is fatally false doctrine to teach that people will only be judged for rejecting the gospel. It is the denial of the sinner's responsibility, and furnishes a plea for the indulgence of his sinful desires. It is quite true that the rejection of the gospel leaves people on the ground of judgment, but the judgment will be, in every case, according to man's works.

Things New and Old

## 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" (Prov. 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 (Psa. 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 it all 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-/ 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 for ever" (Psa. 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 Mathew 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 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." Psa. 42:3, 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."

P.W.

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