

# CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 27

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*A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 27, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

104 Chapters

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## Christian Truth Volume 27

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## As Many As I Love, I Rebuke and Chasten

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It is still true, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." You may be quite sure you needed all you have passed through, for He loved you too well to let you suffer more than needful, or less than was for your good. When we reach home we shall look back and see how perfectly wisdom and love worked together in allowing all that happened to us on the way. But it is well for us not to leave the unraveling of the why and wherefore till "that day," for it is meant for our present profit; and I believe we may save ourselves from many a sore trial by more readiness to learn the lesson and yield to the discipline.

There are two things that help us to discern what our Father is doing. One thing is the knowledge of ourselves; for instance, if I am of a grasping, covetous disposition, I may for a long time be deceiving myself by thinking it is prudence and thrift, etc., and so never discover that He who loves me and knows me so well is seeking to bring me to judge this covetous disposition. But as soon as I have my eye open to the truth about myself, I see what my Father is about with me. The other thing is a knowledge of Christ, and that all God's ways with us are forwarding the one end, to conform us to Christ; and we may be sure that all in us contrary to Christ or unlike Him will not be allowed to pass; there will be patience and long-suffering, but no indifference on these points. So the more we learn of Christ, the wiser we shall be as to God's dealings with us.

Then there is another thing we might mention - the thorough surrender of our wills. We are more slow to do this than we think we are. We are given to all kinds of shifts and schemes to have our own way without seeming to go against God's will. We deceive ourselves in this but we cannot deceive Him. So He is ever teaching us that His will alone is the "good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

## The Atoning Sufferings of Christ

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The main point which seems to be between us is, as you say, the sufferings of Christ; and this is really the most important of all subjects, because it is the foundation of all our blessings.

Now I will drop the word "substitute," and the expression, "in our stead," for the present, because we shall never help each other by discussing these words. I believe they express certain phases of truth correctly enough; but the main thing is to understand the doctrine as taught in the Word of God. What was the character of the sufferings of Christ by which He made atonement, or made propitiation, for our sins? The word "atonement" is used in the Old Testament, and "propitiation" in the New Testament. But I am not concerned about words if we get God's thoughts about the death of Jesus. We want His thoughts, His mind, His truth; and we must get these from the words He uses. And when we have got these, it will be easier to find words He uses. And when we have got these, it will be easier to find words to express ourselves when speaking of these things. But the first thing is to understand God - to understand His Word to us. And then, if I can use words or illustrations to help another to understand God's Word, surely it is all right; for you may have a person using the very words of Scripture when he has altogether a wrong thought in his mind.

Now, if I have understood your letter, well, I think the great question is - Did Christ, when suffering on the cross in atonement for sin, suffer directly at the hand of God? Did He drink a cup of judicial wrath which God, and not man, poured out for Him? Or were all the sufferings which He endured inflicted on Him by man? or by man and Satan?

I suppose we are agreed on this point, that He did suffer from both man and Satan; that Satan, the prince of this world, came and pressed Him, but found nothing in Him; that, as its prince, he led the world against Christ, uniting Jews and Gentiles against Him, both rulers and people; and that thus Christ suffered from man under Satan's power.

There were His physical sufferings from the nails piercing His hands and feet, and His hanging on the cross. There was bodily weakness too, so that He could say, "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint: My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaveth to My jaws; and Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death." Psalm 22:14, 15.

Then there were sufferings of another class, such as reproach, and mockery, and opposition of men: "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him." "Bulls of Bashan" (the leaders of the people) encompassed Him, and roared upon Him, as lions on their prey; He became a stranger to His brethren, an alien to His mother's children; when eaten up with the zeal of Jehovah's house, the reproaches of those who reproached Jehovah fell upon Him; when He wept and chastened His soul with fasting, this was to His reproach; when He made sackcloth His garment, He became a proverb to them; those who sat in the gate (the rulers) spoke against Him,

and He was the song of the drunkards.

These scriptures express something of the sufferings He endured at the hand of man. Now the question is, Were those His atoning sufferings? Was it by these sufferings that He made propitiation for our sins? Or was there another class of sufferings outside of all these, which was the result of sin-bearing?

Take the class of sufferings just referred to. Are they not sufferings such as any martyr might be called upon to pass through? Have not thousands of God's servants endured just such sufferings - and endured them joyfully, too? What was it then that wrung that cry of anguish from the Savior's lips, when on the cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Was it not something more than what He had endured from man? Did any Christian martyr ever utter such a cry? Did Stephen, when they were battering his body with stones? On the contrary, these men felt the presence of God with them, and sustaining them in the hour of their trial. Did Jesus realize this support at the cross? Assuredly not.

Ever before, He had realized God's presence with Him, sustaining Him in His path of suffering as the Man of sorrows, while fulfilling His will. Tempted by the devil in the wilderness, and hungry, an angel was sent to minister to Him; at the Jordan, when taking His place with the repentant remnant of Israel, the heavens opened over Him, and a voice from the glory saluted Him, "Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; so also on the mount of transfiguration, when Peter would have put Him on a level with Moses and Elias, that same voice again proclaimed His true glory; and in Gethsemane, when He was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and was sweating as it were great drops of blood, an angel was sent to strengthen Him. Thus it was all along the path. But how was it during those hours of darkness on the cross? Was there any ministering or strengthening angel? Was there any voice from the excellent glory expressing untold delight in His blessed Person? Was there any ray of light from that glory to relieve the awful gloom? No, God had abandoned the Man Christ Jesus. This is an hour that stands alone. There is none like it in the annals of eternity. But why? God's Word answers: "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." He "was delivered for our offenses." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." "The LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." This then is the reason Christ was made sin for us - a sin offering. "Our sins," "our iniquities," were laid on Him, and He bore them on the tree. When we were under condemnation, He was "made a curse for us," to redeem us from the condemnation.

Now, who "made Him to be sin"? Who made Him to be "a curse for us"? Who laid our iniquities on Him? Who smote Him? Who bruised Him? Was it man, or was it God? Of course Scripture must answer. Let us then see if Scripture furnishes an answer to these questions.

It will be seen that it is all connected with the question of sin. I might ask then, in the first place, Who could deal with the question of sin? Of course, God alone could do this. Man neither could nor would. Blessed be God, He Himself has dealt with it in the Person of Christ when He made Him to be a sin offering on the cross.

It was Jehovah that laid our sins on Jesus. He bruised Him, He smote Him.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD [Jehovah] hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isa. 53:6.

"It pleased the LORD [Jehovah] to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin," etc. v. 10.

"Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the LORD [Jehovah] of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Zech. 13:7.

Compare also Matt. 26:31 and Mark 14:27. "Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."

You will see from this that Jesus interpreted the smiting of Zech. 13:7 as Jehovah's own smiting: "I will smite the shepherd." It is not man, nor Satan, but Jehovah Himself who smites. So in Isa. 53:10, it is Jehovah who bruises the Messiah. I know you say some professor translates it, "It pleased Jehovah to let Him be bruised." Dear brother, have you looked at the Hebrew of this yourself? You will find that the Hebrew, Septuagint, and Vulgate all give the verb in the active infinitive, "to bruise Him," not "to let Him be bruised." On what pretext could this professor change it thus? What, unless to get rid of something that stood in his way? And what are we to think of such a course? Suppose I should say to you that "to bruise Him" means "to let Him be bruised," and then ask you to show that it does not! What would you say to me? Would you not say to me, "Show that it does"? Or, perhaps you would say I had lost my senses, and very rightly, too. No, my brother; the passage is plain - as plain in Hebrew as in English - "It pleased the LORD [or, Jehovah was pleased] to bruise Him." The wounding, the bruising, the chastisement, the stripes, the smiting, the forsaking, and, I may add, the indignation and wrath (Psalm 102:10) were all from Jehovah - from God who was dealing with sin as having been laid on Christ at the cross.

You say, "Think of a father who pleased to bruise his own only son." But, dear brother, we must not set Scripture aside by our feelings and reasonings. It is in this way that an infidel or universalist reasons against the doctrine of eternal punishment.

But I do not think that this expression of yours illustrates truly God's bruising of Christ. It does not say, "The Father was pleased to bruise His Son." And Jesus did not say, "My Father, My Father, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

He said, "My God." And is it not remarkable that this is the only time mentioned in the gospels where He addresses Him as "God"? Always before it was "Father." This is not without instruction. When you say, "Father," there is the thought and feeling of relationship. When Jesus uttered the cry on the cross, it was not this. At the cross He took the place of a victim - a sacrifice for sin - to meet the claims of God. And in John 3:14 Jesus says, "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up"; while when it is a question of God's love to the world, it is said, "He gave His only begotten Son" (v. 16). In the three hours of darkness on the cross, Jesus was forsaken of God, and that on account of sins, not His own sins, but ours, which had been laid on Him in order that at once God's majesty and holiness in dealing with sin, and His great love to the world, might be displayed in consistency with His own character.

I trust I need hardly say that I believe God was infinitely delighted with His own Son when, as a man, He hung upon the cross, because it was there more than anywhere else that the sweet savor of His perfect obedience was displayed. But the cross was the awful expression of God's judgment against sin, and that was the reason of the untimely "darkness," and His forsaking of Christ. Sin

was so horrible in God's sight that, even when it was laid sacrificially on Christ, He had to withdraw the light of His face, and command the sword to awake. As in the flood in Noah's day, "All the fountains of the great deep" were broken open, "and the windows [floodgates] of heaven were opened"; so one may say, At the cross there were waves from beneath and waves from above, meeting and rolling in upon the holy soul of our blessed Savior. The floods of the ungodly were there, and all God's waves and billows, in judgment against sin, were there also.

But it was just here that the perfection of Jesus was displayed, and the moral value of His sacrifice. In His sacrifice - in His holy obedience unto death - the sweet savor of what He was, in His own personal perfection ascended as a cloud of incense to God. This we see in type in Lev. 16:11-14. Here, there was first the killing of the bullock; then the burning of the incense; and then the sprinkling of the blood. Now, the burning incense and the sprinkled blood both express what was presented to God in the death of Jesus; the incense expressing the personal glory and moral perfections displayed in His death, and the blood the value of His death for the putting away of sin. Both of these in the type are connected with death. As I have said, the first thing was the killing of the bullock. There must be death. Without it there could be no atonement. But the burning incense, and the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat, tell what was presented to God in that death. There must be that which answered to His glory, and which could meet the claims of His glorious majesty. In the type, the incense was burnt on the censer of the high priest with fire from the altar before the Lord. Out of this burning a cloud arose and covered the mercy seat. It was a cloud of glory rising up and meeting the cloud of glory between the cherubim - glory answering to glory. And then the blood was sprinkled on and before the mercy seat by the high priest under the cover of this cloud of glory which rose out of the fire.

Does not this burning incense then typify the sweet savor and personal glory of Jesus ascending up to God in connection with His death on the cross? The holy fire - the fire of God's judgment - that which tried Him to the utmost - fell upon Him there. The effect of the testing of that fire was the bringing out of the intrinsic glory and moral worth of the Person of Jesus - the bursting forth, as it were, of an incense cloud of glory, answering to the glory and majesty of Him who was there dealing with sin according to the necessity of His own nature and holiness.

Now compare Psalm 22. There we see Christ suffering on the cross. And, as we have seen, our iniquities were laid upon Him then, and He suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. There were smiting, wounding, bruising, chastisement, stripes, and waves and billows of wrath, because of sins - sins not His own, but ours --laid upon Him by Jehovah Himself. Who can tell what the feelings of that blessed One were at that moment, as stroke after stroke fell upon Him, and wave after wave of judgment rolled over His soul? It wrung from His lips the cry that opens the psalm: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But is there nothing besides this cry of sorrow? Look at the third verse. He, the pure, the holy, the undefiled, the spotless One, is abandoned of God; waves and billows encompass Him; stroke after stroke falls upon Him; wounded, and bruised, and smitten, He cries and is not heard until, as transfixed on the horns of the unicorn (see v. 21), He is heard and answered in resurrection. What was the utterance of His holy soul amid all this sorrow? Did He condemn God because of the smiting and bruising and forsaking? No. "But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel," were His words, "BUT THOU ART HOLY"! Such was the utterance under those terrible atoning sufferings when forsaken of God, and the iron entered His soul. This was the incense cloud of glory ascending up

to God out of His death, from the testing by fire under God's judgment. The testing of that fire brought out just what He was in Himself in all the moral perfection of His being; and God was glorified in Him.

How different with sinful man when given up to suffer the judgment of God, for his own sins, as we see in Rev. 16:8-11. They blaspheme God, and repent not of their deeds. God's judgment brings out what is in their hearts too; but how infinitely different from what was in the heart of Christ! These blaspheme when smitten for their own sins; Christ, when smitten for the sins of others, acknowledged the holiness of the hand that smote.

Could then God smite this blessed One forever? Could He keep on smiting when every stroke only brought out the absolute perfection of the smitten One? - when the burning caused a cloud of glory to ascend in His presence, answering to His own glory, and when His infinitely precious blood had met the holy claims of His insulted Majesty? Impossible! "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him." John 13:31, 32.

If you ask what death Jesus died "in our stead," I only answer, Death under the judgment of God. This was the death He suffered for me, as a consequence, I shall never suffer that death. For me to suffer that would be death eternal, because I could never expiate my guilt; and, as we have seen from Revelation 16, judgment never changes the heart of man. He goes on blaspheming God still. But Christ drank the cup on the cross; and when those hours of darkness were ended, the work was done, the cup was empty, the judgment exhausted, God glorified. In those hours of sorrow on the cross, Jesus accomplished what you and I and all the millions of the human race could never have done through all eternity. He drank the cup for me; and if you will now pardon the expression, I will say, He drank it "instead" of me - drank it that I might not drink it - and I never shall drink it, because He has done so in my stead.

The idea that this leads to the thought of His "praying in our stead," etc., is simply nonsense. What truth will not men pervert? But shall we give up truth because people pervert it, or turn it into nonsense? Christ was a substitute only on the cross, and in one phase of His sufferings. We must not confound this with something else. He was an "example" to us who believe, as well as a substitute for us (see 1 Pet. 2:21). In all that He suffered from man, and in all His holy obedience, and prayerful dependence on God, He was an "example" to us. But He was not an example in what He suffered in atonement for our sins. That character of sufferings we shall never enter into. That was judgment from God, and He bore it that we might not - bore it in our stead, or as our substitute, not as our example.

But, as I said in the beginning, it is not mere words, but truth that I am contending for. What I am contending for is not what I have learned from the word "substitute," but what I have learned from the Word of God about the sufferings of my blessed Redeemer. And you will see from this letter that what I hold is that, while He suffered from man and Satan, He also suffered in atonement directly from God; that He suffered stripes and bruising and smiting and judicial wrath; that He drank the cup that God - not man - filled up for Him; drank it that I might not drink it; bore the judgment of God against sin, that I might not bear it; took my place substitutionally to bear my sins, and the judgment due to them, that I might be released forever from those sins and that judgment, and so in this sense died as my "substitute."

Substitution expresses only one phase of Christ's death for us. There is much else connected with His death which is not expressed by that word. But I speak of this only by way of explanation. What we need to contend for is the blessed truth taught in God's Word, not mere uninspired words. If the truth as to Christ's sufferings under judicial wrath and judgment from God is clearly held according to Scripture, I have nothing to press as to mere words not found there. But if Christ's sufferings are reduced to His being bruised only under man's hand, I could only reject this with abhorrence as undermining the value of His sufferings, and doing away with their really atoning character; as it would also enfeeble our appreciation of what sin is, and of God's abhorrence of it as expressed in the cross, and of the greatness of His love in providing for our deliverance from the guilt and dominion of sin.

## The Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews

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There are not wanting those who reject the commonly received opinion that the Apostle Paul wrote this epistle. It may therefore be interesting to look at the historic proof of Paul being the writer.

There are several particulars relating to the personal history of the writer:

He was not one of our Lord's disciples, and probably did not know Christianity till after our Lord's ascension (Heb. 2:3). Paul we know was converted after the ascension of our Lord (Acts 9).

The epistle was written from Italy (13:24). Paul was in Italy for some time.

The writer mentions some hindrance which prevented his leaving Italy (13:19). This agrees with what we know of Paul, who was in prison there (2 Tim. 1:8).

The writer desired the prayers of his brethren for the removal of this hindrance (13:19). This is conformable to the custom of Paul in his other epistles (Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:19).

The writer knew of Timothy's release from prison. Paul mentions this (1 Tim. 6:12).

Timothy was not with the writer in Italy, but was shortly expected (13:23). This agrees with what we know of the situation of Paul when in prison (2 Tim. 4:9).

7) The writer looked forward to traveling with Timothy to visit the Hebrew Christians. Timothy was Paul's constant companion in travel.

Here there are several particulars respecting the writer of the epistle, all of which agree with what we know of the history of Paul, but do not suit with what is known of any other eminent New Testament saint. It is highly improbable therefore that any other New Testament writer but Paul wrote this epistle.

Further: to none of the assigned writers do all the circumstances here noted suit, as far as we are acquainted with their histories. We know not that Apollos or Barnabas were ever in Rome, or suffered imprisonment there for the truth's sake. Luke was in Rome, but we have no information of his having been imprisoned there. In the absence of certainty, there is evidence enough from the personal remarks of the writer to lead us to the conclusion that Paul wrote this epistle (2 Pet. 3:15 seems to me decisive that Paul wrote to the Jewish saints; and this of course is no other than "Hebrews".)

If the question be asked, Why did Paul not name himself, or state his apostleship here as in his other epistles, there are several reasons that might be given.

It would have been something out of order for Paul to put himself forward when writing to the Jews, for he was the Apostle to the Gentiles, the uncircumcision (Gal. 2:7, 8), and not to the circumcision. It is not strange, however, that the Lord should use Paul to write a final appeal to the converted Jews to draw them away from their earthly attachments, for He had previously used

Peter, the Apostle to the circumcision, to open the door into the kingdom to the Gentiles (Acts 10).

It was suitable that this appeal should reach the converted Hebrews with all the authority of

God Himself; hence, the epistle opens with "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Another has written, "How enfeebling would have been the Apostle's introduction of himself in such a connection!" Yes, it was God Himself who was speaking to them, and the servant needed to be hidden.

3) In the third chapter the Lord Jesus is put forward as "the Apostle," the true sent One of God; hence it would not have been fitting to set forth Paul's apostleship here.

## Babylon's Fall: the End of Christendom

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There was once a mighty city called Babylon, the glory of the Chaldean kingdom, and the praise of the whole earth (Jer. 51:41). But her sins rose up to heaven, and judgment from God went forth against her. The very night that her king and his lords and their ladies were feasting together, and degrading the holy vessels of the despoiled temple of God at Jerusalem to the level of their own carnal festivities, destruction overwhelmed them. The mysterious handwriting on the wall, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," pronounced the doom. Babylon fell, Belshazzar the king was slain, and Darius the Mede took the kingdom (Dan. 5).

In the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, Babylon is used figuratively by the Spirit of God to describe a vast system that is rapidly developing upon the earth at the present moment, against which the judgment of God has long gone forth, for He who foreknows all things described the system before its formation by man's self-will, and plainly warned men of the fearful consequences of their sin. It is prefigured in two aspects - as a woman, and as a city. The woman's name is, "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." We have not space here, neither would it meet the object before us, to enter into all the details of God's description of her, and of its teaching; but it must suffice us to bring before the reader a few points as to her chief moral characteristics, and to endeavor to gather a few practical lessons for precious souls.

Babylon represents a vast system built up by man upon the earth through the exercise of his own will, in rebellion against God, and disobedience to His Word, under the influence and deceitful misleading of Satan. It comprises a vast mixture of natural and religious elements, ostensibly combined for the glory of God, but actually for the glory of man himself. History repeats itself, man practically saying as at Babel, "Let us build us a city," etc.; "Let us make us a name," etc. But alas! how little does man remember the solemn words of the Lord, "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15.

Protestants apply this scripture to Romanists, and the latter doubtless have their version of its meaning, but suffice it for us to say here that it has a voice (oh, that men would listen to it!) for every one who reads these lines. All Christendom would do well to take heed to the solemn contents of the chapter where this evil system is described.

The prophet John, carried away in spirit into the wilderness, saw a woman seated upon a beast, adorned with imperial raiment and costly jewelry, holding out to her votaries a golden cup of intoxicating wickedness, herself drunken with the blood of the true people of God, shed through her persecuting spirit in enmity against God and the truth (Rev. 17:3, 4). The woman represents ecclesiastical evil, and the beast, worldly power. Professing to be the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God, she becomes the habitation of demons, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird (Rev. 18:2). Nations and kings have been caught in her toils, and have bowed down at her shrines; the merchants of the earth have amassed untold riches through the abundance of her delicacies. The religious elements of Christendom are one of the most

fruitful sources of the world's wealth.

The mere profession, proud of religious successes, and boasting of the progress of the times and the spread of Christianity (so-called), deludes itself and its fellows, saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," knowing not that it is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). Those who have eyes to see can at once trace how exact the description of the Spirit of God is when He says, "How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously," and "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" (Rev. 18:7).

Beloved reader, are you involved in these wholesale delusions of the devil? Are you one of the many carried away by the fearful tide of nominal religion, flaunting itself more or less in everything that pleases the religious eye, and that charms the religious senses of the natural man? Are you a votary of fine altars and shrines, candles and incense, flowers and millinery, stained glass and dim religious light, vestments and banners, processions, etc., in forgetfulness of the blessed Man upon the throne of God? Are you, while professing to worship God, following mere human customs and arrangements, without one thought as to whether all these things are suited to Him? Have you forgotten those solemn words of warning, "My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" Jer. 5:31.

Hear God's solemn warning concerning Babylon: "Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities," etc. "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." Rev. 18:5, 8. And if you should already be one of His people, His word too is plain to you: "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

In Rev. 18:21-24 we have the manner of her fall: "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee: and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." Yes, there is a moment coming when, with violence, Babylon shall be utterly overthrown. Her music, her arts and manufactures, her trade, her artificial light, all shall cease. Even the joy of natural relationship shall be known in her no more. God will avenge Himself upon her for her sorceries by which all nations were deceived, and for the blood of His martyred loved ones which lies at her door. He is strong that executeth His word. Who shall His arm withstand?

Babylon's Fall: the End of Christendom

Notice the lamentations of those who drank of her intoxicating cup. First, we have the kings of the earth. They bewail and lament as they see the smoke of her burning, saying, "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come."

Second, the merchants of the earth join in the same cry, "Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to naught."

Third, the shipmasters, sailors, traders, etc., cast dust on their heads, crying, weeping, and wailing, and say, "Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate."

In one hour her judgment comes; in one hour the rich are impoverished; in one hour man's religious boast and glory come to naught; in one hour utter vanity is written upon the whole thing. This is the end thereof. What will your end be?

Do you vainly reply, "Ah, but though the system itself is judged, men will escape, or how could they bewail her fall?" What does the Scripture show? That man himself is the acting instrument in her fearful downfall (the ecclesiastical corruption being destroyed by the civil power), to be judged himself next, directly at the hand of the Lord. (Rev. 17:15-17; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.)

Note too the description given by the Spirit of God of Babylon's merchandise: "Gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves [or bodies] and souls of men." Rev. 18:12, 13. We get in this list things most valuable in the eyes of men. Gold stands first. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Luke 18:24. Why? Because it is such a snare. Mark, gold first, and souls last. This is how God sees it. He knows the heart, and He knows the order of precedence in man's estimate. Ah, reader, you need not travel far to prove the truth of it. It is a long list. Jewelry, dress, furniture, perfumery, food, equipage, bodies and souls of men; Babylon's general store; luxuries and necessities, used by some, indulged in by others, but with no fear of God before their eyes (Rom. 3:18). How terrible is the fall of man! So degraded and perverted that he actually traffics religiously in the bodies and souls of men! Shall not God judge for these things? He will.

Remark too another striking point about this vast and wicked system. In describing her adornment in chapter 17:4, purple and scarlet color (imperial raiment) are mentioned, but there is a total absence of fine linen. Now we are told that the fine linen represents the righteousnesses of the saints; that is, the practical righteousness wrought in the saints, God's people, by the power of the Spirit of God. This is utterly lacking in Babylon. Those who wear true fine linen are objects of her hate. But when the Spirit of God describes her traffic, fine linen is brought in. She knows how to turn it to account, to get advantage and wealth to herself through the faithfulness of the children of God. How many at that day will be found guilty of this! And the merchants too, bewailing her fall, cry, "Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen." Looking at it morally, we see how they are deceived by Satan, and are colorblind. They see not as God sees. They esteem that as fine linen which is but worldly abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15).

Beloved reader, this is a dark and solemn picture, but it is no stretch of fancy, no overdrawn invention, but the sure and reliable Word of God. The colors are exact, the shadows not one whit darker than the reality. To speak broadly, it is God's view of Christendom. His thoughts are not as

ours. Thoughts, ideas, opinions, theology, religion, are all valueless unless they answer to "Thus saith the Lord." God has spoken. He has spoken in creation and He has also spoken in His Word. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." Isa. 66:2.

The next thing that will take place is the coming of Christ. Every believer will be caught up to meet Him before the judgment of Babylon.

And now, one word of warning to anyone who has not yet confessed his sin to God, and believed in the Lord Jesus as his own personal Savior: time is running out - soon will grace give way to judgment. Do settle the issue with God NOW.

## Be Ye Steadfast

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"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15:58.

I have one word on my heart to press on you before going away, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable." If our hearts are not close to Christ, we are apt to get weary in the way. All is a vain show around us, but that which is inside abides - is true - is the life of Christ - all else goes. When the heart gets hold of this fact it becomes (as to things around) like one taken into a house to work for the day, performs his duties well, but passes through - does not live in the circumstances. To Israel the cloud came down, they stayed; it lifted up, on they went; 'twas all the same to them. Why? Because, had they stayed when the cloud went on, they would not have had the Lord! One may be daily at the desk for fifty years, yet with Christ - the desk only the circumstance - the doing of God's will - making manifest the savor of Christ; that's the simple thing. Whether I go or you go, I stay or you stay, 'tis all one. May that one word be realized in each of us, "steadfast, unmovable," in whatever sphere, as matter of providence, we are found. So the divine life shall be manifested - Christ manifested. That abides; all else changes, but that life remains, abides forever; yes, forever.

There is not a single thing in which we have served Christ which shall be forgotten. Lazy, alas! we all are in service, but all shall come out that's real; and what's real is Christ in us and that only. The appearance now may be very little - not much even in a religious view - but what's real will abide. Our hearts clinging closely to Christ, we shall sustain one another as members of the body of Christ. The love of Christ should hold the whole together, Christ being everything, and we content to be nothing,... helping one another, praying one for the other. I ask not the prayers of saints - I reckon on them. The Lord keep us going on in simplicity, fulfilling as the hireling our day, till Christ shall come; and then every man shall have praise of God - "Praise of God"; be that our object, and may God knit all our hearts together thoroughly and eternally.

## Behold the Lamb of God

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### John 1

Who is this Lamb who takes away the sin of the world? Who is He, that Man of sorrows, coming into the world and saying that He is able to take up the question of sin and settle it? No mere man could do that. Who then is this One? If we turn to the beginning of the chapter we shall find a whole string of glories as the answer, connected with that Lamb - the Lord Jesus Christ.

One has often seen persons carrying a string of beads, having so many prayers to go through in connection with each bead; and one has thought, Ah! if the glories of the Lord Jesus were seen by His people as a string of pearls, so that they knew how to count over those glories, what far happier hearts and faces the people of God would have! One cannot turn from titles of highest glories to titles of humiliation without seeing a depth of moral glory coming out, God having to stoop very low because of going to touch this question of sin - He alone being competent to do it. "Behold the Lamb"! The words were like a living touch to the hearts of those who turned and followed Him. Their hearts were laid hold of by this Christ, this Lamb of God who was drawing them to Himself.

He is at work just in the same way now; people cannot tell how it is, but they are drawn and constrained to go seeking this Lord. They find Him melting their hard hearts and they are drawn on to follow Him - still a man, though now in glory instead of being down here. He has left the door of heaven open that the glory may be seen, and we can enter in through the rent veil. We can enter by a new and living way into the place where He is - can follow Him into heaven itself.

Unless the heart is on fire from having seen Jesus, how any little thing turns it aside from the glory of that Lord! How that little word "Nazareth" came between Nathanael and the Son of God! But when he sees Jesus, he finds that Philip has not said half enough, and falls down in worship at once. How one simple word from this Christ could unravel the deeper glory which Nathanael saw and owned!

## Brought to God

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Nothing is so helpful and establishing to the true child of God, as to see God's righteousness maintained and yet fully satisfied with regard to the terrible question of his sins. It is not enough for him to know that his sins have been forgiven, that the long catalog of his guilt has been canceled forever, or that his purged conscience retains no stain of sin to make it miserable and unhappy.

We know that the word of Christ effected these blessed results. But it did more - infinitely more. "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," Jesus Christ presented Himself to God, "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Yes, in that awful moment when Christ suffered the full penalty of the death and judgment due to me, God's justice and holiness were fully vindicated - all His righteous and holy demands fully acknowledged, and duly satisfied.

"Without shedding of blood is no remission." Christ's precious blood must flow as the atonement for our guilt. And, blessed be His name, He did not shrink from the task He had undertaken. Over His holy soul passed all the waves and billows of God's wrath. No marvel that earth and sky were shrouded in darkness as the awful question of sin was once and forever settled in the sight of a just and holy God. From the lips of the dying Savior fell those words of blessedness and peace - "It is finished." Peace, pardon, forgiveness of sins, could be offered now, "without money and without price," to all those who should believe on His precious name.

But wonderful and blessed as all this was, it was not enough to satisfy the heart of God. He would have sinners brought to Himself. Now that He had been fully satisfied with regard to sin, His heart must come out in all the fullness of divine love. The beloved and sorrowing disciples, in their ignorance and unbelief, thought that all was over. Timid but devout hands placed the precious body of the Lord Jesus Christ in its sacred resting place. But they had not grasped the great and wondrous fact that all God's holy and just requirements with regard to man's sin had been divinely satisfied. So God Himself must manifest His divine appreciation of the sacrifice which He had accepted. Hence we read that "He [God] raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named." No honor too great to heap upon His well beloved Son - He who had carried out the Father's will, and wrought out our "eternal redemption." And hence, added to the blessed message of peace, pardon, and forgiveness, through the death and resurrection of a crucified Savior, we can listen in wonder and adoration to the voice of a Father's love. From the heavens, God Himself speaks to us today - even to each one who has simply "believed" the "record" concerning His Son. Yes. To us, once so far off "by wicked works," yet now brought nigh by the precious blood of Christ, He says that we are "accepted in the beloved." Wonderful thought! As the result of all that Christ wrought for me, I stand "accepted" in Him. And God would have me near Himself in all the happy consciousness of His divine favor. He would have me know and enjoy this as I tread the daily path which He has appointed. No blessing too great for the Church for which Christ died - nothing too great for those for whom His beloved Son suffered. Even as

God the Father's smile rests forever on the Son of His love, so would He have it resting upon "His own," those who now put their trust in Him.

Yes, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." He would have us know the Father, and rejoice in His love and favor. Dearly beloved, have we in any feeble measure grasped the boundless blessings that lie hidden for each of us in those wonderful words, "accepted in the beloved"? Truly they have spoken peace, pardon, and forgiveness to our conscience-stricken hearts. But above all this, do they not speak of the blessed certainty that God delights to have His children in His presence, daily and hourly rejoicing in the fullness of His love? There He would have them to remain, in the constant and abiding sense of having been brought to God.

"It passeth praises! that dear love of Thine, My Jesus! Savior! yet this heart of mine Would sing a love so rich, so full, so free, Which brought an undone sinner, such as me,

Right home to God." M.V.B.

## Burning With Pure Oil

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In a devoted Christian family who were walking in the fear of God, the daily reading was one morning in Exodus 27. The 20th verse was dwelt upon. The parents talked together about the oil that was used in the vessels of the tabernacle, and looked up passages in the New Testament that explained its meaning and how it could be applied. When the reading was over and the older children had left the room, the youngest child, a boy of five years, was detained, as was the usual custom, to be taught some simple verses by his mother, and to pray with her. The parents had not supposed that the child would understand what they had been talking about that morning, or that he would feel the slightest interest in a subject which they thought far beyond his age. However, when he had learned his verse, he kneeled down to pray, and in the midst of his prayer he paused; then he exclaimed earnestly, "O my God, make me to burn this day with pure oil."

The morning lesson had not been lost upon him. And his earnest petition to God was not lost; for throughout the day of his life he was a devoted Christian. Thus was the earnest cry of that little child heard and answered. God's Word had found its entrance into his soul, and it did its blessed work.

What an incentive this case should be to young Christian parents to maintain the family altar in this day of lukewarmness, when too many feel that they cannot spare the time for this. God's rich blessing is upon it; and sorrow will be to those who neglect it.

And are there few, or many, young Christians who are seeking daily to "burn" with "pure oil"? Such as are, will be lights in the darkness, and, will be "polished shafts" in the quiver of the Lord.

## Christ, a Present, Living Person

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### Christ, A Present, Living Person

I can have intercourse with Christ at the present time; He lets the light of Himself, as a living person, into my heart. Are there not many who have never realized in their hearts the thought of Christ as a present living person? It makes a wonderful difference when we see Him as a living person with His eye upon us. I know there is a day appointed in which He will come, and then I shall be with Him forever; but I need and I have a living intercourse with Him now. He knows me and I know Him now.

There is no way of showing that I love Christ save by keeping His Word, having His Word indwelling, and showing subjection to His Word in everything, ever saying, The Lord said so and so. How good it is of Him to have told me how to show my love! The Lord wants us to treasure up His Word. The great end of my being is that I am to be a trophy of the power of the blood of Jesus Christ. But there is another thing - if I am in Christ and He in me, there is to be the treasuring up of His Word, the keeping of His commandments. He says in substance, "My Father and I can separate a heart that is treasuring up My words, and We can come and make Our abode there, and give the sense of Our love and presence there." But all will not have it.

## Christ or the World

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The day of apostasy is hastening on with rapid strides, and also the day in which the Lord shall come to snatch His own away. The present moment is of so solemn a character that I feel constrained to address you this word of exhortation. Godly men everywhere, who watch the signs of the times, see the moment approaching which shall terminate the present actings of grace. The time has evidently arrived when one must speak plainly and decisively, and ask you where you are and what you are about. You have by grace, which has shone brighter and brighter as it has approached its termination, been gathered out of the seething mass of idolatry and wickedness which now threatens Christendom and the world with an overthrow more awful than that of Sodom and Gomorrah of old; and the question is whether you are adequately impressed with the responsibility, as well as the blessedness, of the ground you are on, and walking like men and women whose eyes have been opened.

Believe me, there has never been in the world's history such a time as the present, and Satan is occupied with none as he is with you; and his occupation with you is the more to be feared because of the subtlety of his operations. His object is to withdraw your attention from Christ, while you suppose you are on safe ground and have nothing to fear. He would destroy you with the very truth itself. For mark the subtlety: you ARE on safe ground but ONLY while Christ is your all in all. Here is where Satan is drawing some away. Interpose anything between your soul and Christ, and your Philadelphia becomes Laodicea; your safe ground is as unsafe as the rest of Christendom; your strength is going from you, and you become weak, like any ordinary mortal. Some of you are young, recently converted, or brought to the right ways of the Lord, and you do not know the depths of Satan. But you are hereby solemnly warned of your peril; and if mischief overtake you, you cannot plead ignorance. Again I say, Satan has his eye especially upon YOU, for the purpose of interposing the world in some form between your soul and Christ. He cares not how little, or in what form. If you knew but how little will answer his purpose, you would be alarmed. It is not by that which is gross or shameful; such is the DEVELOPMENT, not the BEGINNING of evil. It is not by anything glaring that he seeks to ruin you, but in small and seemingly harmless trifles - trifles that would not shock or offend anyone as things go, and yet these constitute the deadly and insidious poison destined to ruin your testimony and withdraw you from Christ. Do you ask what are these alarming symptoms, and where are they seen? The question does but show what is the character of the opiate at work.

Brethren, you are being infected with the spirit of the world. Your dress, your manner, your talk, your lack of spirituality, betray it. There is a dead weight, a restraint, a want of power, that reveals itself in the meeting, as plainly as if your heart were visibly displayed and its thoughts publicly read. A form of godliness without power is beginning to be seen among you, as plainly as in Christendom generally. As surely as you tamper with the world, so surely will you drift away to its level. This is the nature of things. It must be so. If you tamper with the world, the privileged place you occupy, instead of shielding you, will only expose you to greater condemnation. It must be Christ or the world. It cannot be - ought not to be - Christ and the world. God's grace in drawing

you out of the world in your ignorance is one thing, but God will never permit you to prostitute His grace, and play fast and loose, when you have been separated from the world. Remember, you take the place and claim the privilege of one whose eyes have been opened; and if, on the one hand, this is unspeakably blessed (and it is), on the other hand, it is the most dreadful position in which a human being can be found. It is to be at the wedding feast without the wedding garment. It is to say, "Lord, Lord," while you do not the things that He bids. It is to say, "I go, sir," as he said who went not.

Beloved, I am persuaded better things of you, though I thus speak; and I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will bless Him for these faithful words. Nothing can be more glorious than the position you are called to occupy in these closing days. Saints have stood in the breach, have watched through weary days and nights over eighteen hundred years, and you only wait for the trumpet of victory to go in and take possession of the glorious inheritance. Other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors; and yet, forsooth, you are lowering your dignity to the level of the poor potsherd of the earth, who only wait for the rod of the Victor (and yours too) to be dashed into pieces.

Oh, awake then from your lethargy; slumber no longer; put away your idols and false gods; wash your garments and get you to Bethel, where you will find God to be better than ever you knew Him, even in your best days. Lay aside your last bit of worldly dress; guard your speech, that it be of Christ and His affairs, and not, as you know it now often is, of anything but Him. Let your prayers mingle with those of other saints at the prayer meetings; they never were more needed. Neglect no opportunity of gathering up instruction from that Word which alone can keep us from the paths of the destroyer, and let your life be the evidence of the treasures you gather up at the lecture, or the reading meeting, or in secret with the Lord. If you want occupation with a glorious reward from a beloved Master, ask that Master to set you to work for Him; you will never regret it, either in this world or in that which is to come.

Beloved, bear with me; I am jealous over you with godly jealousy. You belong to Christ, and Christ to you. Break not this holy union. Let not the betrothed one be unfaithful to her Bridegroom! Why should you be robbed and spoiled? And for what? Empty husks and bitter fruits, while you waste this little span of blessing! All the distinctions acquired here in the energy of the Spirit will but serve to enhance your beauty and render you more lovely in the eyes of Him who has espoused you to Himself. Can you refuse Him His delights in you? Can you refuse Him the fruit of the travail of His soul, who once hung, a dying man, between two thieves, on Calvary, a spectacle to men and angels, and for you - you who have forgotten (for you cannot have despised) this devotedness for you? He could have taken the world without the cross, and left you out, but He would not; and now will you, having been enriched by those agonies and that blood, take the world into your tolerance and leave Him out? Impossible! Your pure mind did but need to be stirred up by way of remembrance.

Let us therefore take courage from this moment. We have lately been offering up prayers, confessing the lack of piety and devotedness. May we not take this word as the answer of our ever gracious, faithful Lord, to arouse us - to reawaken our drooping energies? And then the more quickly He comes, the better. We shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming. (Heb. 10:37, 23-25.)

## A Citizen or a Subject

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Some years ago a peer of England who had a chateau and an estate in France conceived the idea that as he lived a great deal of his time in that country he might as well be a citizen of it; but when he found that he could not be so without ceasing to be a citizen of England, he abandoned the thought, and contented himself with being a citizen of England, and a subject of France. This illustration vividly shows how believers stand with regard to heaven and earth; we are citizens of heaven, and only subjects in this place of our strangership and pilgrimage. "Receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved," we are calm amid all the strife of earthly politics, and the shaking of this world's kingdoms. Wherefore, the believer who mixes himself up with the politics of the day belies his heavenly calling, denies his living association with the Father's dear Son in the glory of heaven, and is untrue to the principles of "His heavenly kingdom" and the heavenly politics of the future when the heavens shall rule, and the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is come (Rev. 11:15).

## Colossians 1:24

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In the consideration of this remarkable scripture, it should be noted that the word "afflictions" ("afflictions of Christ") is never found elsewhere in connection with our blessed Lord. But it is constantly used of the saints, and indicates the trials, persecutions, tribulations, etc., that come upon them from without in consequence of their confession of Christ, and of fidelity to Him in the midst of an evil world. The point is important, as conclusively showing that these afflictions of Christ are altogether apart from His sufferings on the cross, when making atonement. They are rather the sufferings He endured in His whole pathway of doing the will of God, but viewed here as encountered through His love to the Church. He "loved the church, and gave Himself for it," and this entailed upon Him these afflictions which came upon Him through the instrumentality of man in the hands of Satan.

The Apostle Paul through grace was animated by the same love, however inferior the degree; and he could thus write, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." 2 Tim. 2:10. He labored and suffered for the same object as his blessed Master. This gives at once the key to our scripture. Here he says, I "rejoice in my sufferings for you," that is, for you Gentiles - sufferings which came upon him peculiarly in connection with his ministry of the truth of the one body, exciting as it did the deadly enmity of the Jews. Inasmuch, therefore, as the Word of God was not completed until the truth of the Church was promulgated, Paul as its minister suffered in an especial manner for Christ's "body's sake, which is the church," and could thus say, since he participated in them, that he filled up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ. They were Christ's own afflictions; and Paul filled up, so to speak, their measure. In principle, if a servant now suffers in the same way, from the same motive, and for the same object, he would be sharing in, if not filling up, that which is behind of these afflictions of Christ.

## Counsel of the Ungodly

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"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." Psalm 1:1.

Do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, young man. Let none of us walk in their counsel. That counsel is to pile up riches down here. God saved you; what for? Eternal glory. Did He leave you here to make money and see how much you could gain, or did He leave you here in order to have what the world calls a good time? He left you here as a witness for Christ, to be a testimony to Him.

## Decision With Lowliness

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There is no greater danger than forgetting the spirit that becomes those to whom God has shown His mercy in giving true understanding of what suits Him in the actual and broken state of Christendom. Is it not one of the things we need most to look to that the tone in which we use the truth should be becoming? The more we learn of God, the more we should cultivate lowliness of mind. This does not imply that you should have indecision in your convictions, but that along with this you have a just sense of your own weakness, and that you are broken in spirit, remembering how the glory of the Lord has suffered by the failure of His people.

## Enoch

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What was true of Enoch before he was translated? "He had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb. 11:5). What does that mean? He had the consciousness in his own soul that he was doing that which was pleasing to God. Do we not all desire that? Let us ask ourselves, Is God pleased with my daily walk and conversation? This testimony that Enoch had is worth very much.

## Enoch Walked With God

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At the beginning of another year it would be well for us to glance at the divine record of a saint of God of a bygone age - Enoch. That antediluvian patriarch lived in and walked through a very wicked world. He lived in that period in which God was leaving sinful man to Himself, for as yet God had not set up governments - law and order - to hold in check the outbursts of man's fallen nature. Without restraint, man became lawless, and filled the earth with corruption and violence. But "what saith the Scripture" about Enoch? "Enoch walked with God... three hundred years." Gen. 5:22. A lovely testimony to a "man subject to like passions" with ourselves!

And what does walking with God entail? For two to walk together they must agree (Amos 3:3). They must have kindred thoughts; they must be able to converse freely and intimately.

One cannot walk with God and allow in his own life that which God hates, for God cannot walk with evil. Yet evil was everywhere then; therefore, Enoch must have been a separate man (he may have been known by his neighbors as an eccentric, or even as a fool, but what of that? - he walked with God). Happy man!

Nor would such a one's life be only negative; that is, be separate from sinners. A man who walks with God will choose those things in which God delights - they will be his delight also (note how God condemns Israel for not choosing the things, in which He delighted - Isa. 65:12). Enoch may have been scorned by all as a man taken up by something visionary, something unreal; but of what worth were their thoughts? He walked with God.

And how long did he walk with God? How long was he misunderstood and maligned? 300 years! That was a long time to bear reproach - to endure. Some saints have borne bright testimonies in a burst of persecution, and have gone to the stake for Christ's sake, or have suffered in any of a thousand ways; but the constant day after day separation from the world and its ways, its schemes and its hopes, its pleasures (and all that at the cost of being misunderstood), is what puts faith and faithfulness to the test. It is the taking up of the "cross daily" that tries the spirit (Luke 9:23). Only the consciousness of pleasing God, and the company of His presence, will enable one to endure. Human determination alone will not suffice.

How did Enoch make it all those 300 years? JUST ONE DAY AT A TIME. He did not need courage or strength for a month, or a week, or even two days at once - no, not at all. But just going on quietly in communion with God, in separation from the world, one day at a time, 300 years finally ran their entire course; and that man of faith was rewarded by being taken to heaven. Even before then he had the joy in his own soul of knowing that he pleased God - "He had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb. 11:5).

And as we look ahead at 1974 and see the wickedness increasing on every hand, do WE want to "walk with God" in reality? - it will cost us something, but is not His commendation ample recompense for any suffering or loss?

"A little while" - 'twill soon be past;  
Why should we shun the promised cross?  
Oh, let us in His footsteps haste,  
Counting for Him all else but loss!  
For how will recompense His smile,  
The suff'rings of this "little while."

We do not look forward 300 years; our Lord may very likely come in 1974. All we have is TODAY to walk with God. And if we will always do that "only today," soon the journey will all be run, and we shall hear His well-known voice saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant:... enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

O for grace to walk with God TODAY!

"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." 1 Thess. 4:1.

## Faith

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Faith may lead into difficulty, but I have the consolation of saying, God is there, and victory is certain. Otherwise, in my apprehension, there is something stronger than God. This demands a perfect, practical submission of the will. God may allow evil to have its course and test us in order that we may understand that the aim of faith is not here at all, and see that in the most difficult circumstances God can intervene, as in the sacrifice of Abraham and the raising of Lazarus. To tarry in circumstances is unbelief; Satan is behind the circumstances to attack us, but behind all that, God is there to break our wills.

## The Foolish Rich Man

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"And He spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and 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. 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? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Luke 12:16-21.

What precedes this parable, and the last sentence of it, explain its meaning. One had come to the Lord Jesus, requesting that He would speak to his brother, that he should divide the inheritance with him. Our Lord would have nothing to do with the matter, but cautioned His hearers against covetousness, "for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." And He then spoke to them the parable of this foolish rich man, whose thoughts did not reach beyond present enjoyments. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But that night his soul was required of him, and he neither enjoyed the things he had laid up, nor had he anything beyond this present life.

The Lord adds this salutary lesson: "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." This rich man had self as his object; he said, "my" goods, "my" fruits, and had no thought of being God's steward, and was influenced by just what a natural man would call wisdom and prudence. He had acquired a nice, snug independency, and was now going to enjoy himself. Ah, but God called him a "fool," and said to him, "This night," in answer to his "many years."

Thus we see there are two objects before the souls of men - self, or God. Those in the kingdom profess to have God before them; then they must not have self as their object. Our Lord follows the parable with the exhortation to consider the ravens, to consider the lilies; God feeds the one and cares for the other. He knows that we have need of such things. We are rather to seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to us. And then He goes on to say, "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Luke 12:33, 34.

How necessary a lesson for us all! While professing to have no treasure here, our treacherous hearts may lead us to be too much engaged with our earthly blessings, our comfort, and our ease, rather than with being "rich toward God."

## Readiness for the Lord's Return

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John 13:1-14; 14:1-6

When we have before us, beloved brethren, the coming of the Lord, I cannot help but feel how necessary it is not only that our hearts should be stirred up to the fact that He is coming, but there is another thing that would weigh upon the heart of every servant of the Lord, certainly on the spirit of all who have known a little bit of what it is to traverse this scene; that is, a sense of what it is to be ready. I am not speaking at all now of what it is to be saved; we are ready for the coming of the Lord in that sense, but there is a preparedness here. I know that in virtue of that cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, the dying thief could go straight to paradise. There is one fitness, and, thank God, every believer now in His presence has it; there is only one way to go to heaven, and that is by Christ, as the dying thief upon the cross dropped, there and then, the thief, and went to heaven in nothing but Christ. That is just how we all go there. But there is another thing, and that is, that while we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, there should be conduct befitting. Looked at as in Christ, we have the wedding garment.

There is no one who knows what it is to have fled to Christ for salvation, and who knows Christ as his righteousness, but has the wedding garment. But let me ask you as to the real preparation of heart and spirit. As soon as Rebecca knew Isaac was coming, that they were about to meet, she took a veil and covered herself. It is the sense of that I want to put upon your heart. There is a demeanor in us, a propriety of walk and ways, that befits those that say, "Lord Jesus, come." It is easy to sing a hymn, and get a bit excited over it, and say, "What joy!" Beloved friends, do you think of what it will be to enter His presence? I could not really think of entering into the presence of the true Isaac without having the sense that there was a demeanor, a suitability to Him, a preparedness for it. I know we are made meet. All I ask is, Are our souls in the present sense as we speak of the coming of the Lord? Are our souls in the sense of the suitability for the heavenly Bridegroom? I know you have the wedding garment; but, remember, it does not say He made the marriage for the guests; the marriage was made for His Son, therefore I have the sense of whom I am to be presented to. Whom? Yes, the heavenly One, the heavenly Bridegroom. In the resurrection we shall be made fit by putting on the image of the heavenly One. It is the deepest joy of our hearts that we shall be like Him - not a single stain of sin there.

As you tread that crystal floor, you leave no stain. Christ is your fitness, and you will not leave a stain as you tread the crystal floor of heaven. But when the Apostle speaks of being presented, he says, "Unblameable and unproveable in His sight." He speaks of being blameless. There is a suitability for Him. There is a sense wrought in our souls that we want to greet Him; and when we greet Him, not only that I know I have the wedding garment, but in reality I have been dropping everything that is unsuitable to Him. I want to take it home to my own soul. If my conscience did not answer to it, it would not do for me to speak to you about it. How far is it on our hearts and consciences? I want to drop everything that is unsuitable to Him. It is not only that I am made meet, it is not only you have to go into heaven, but you have to come out of heaven. I do not think

people think much about that. When I get into heaven I shall be there with the Lord; you see I shall have done with everything of flesh, sin, and the world, but you have to come out of heaven.

Dear friends, when the Lord comes out of heaven to come to this earth, you have to come with Him; and that will be the time when all that has taken place down here will come out. This prospect should exercise all our consciences. The Lord has to display us according to all we have been here. We come back to this earth with the Lord. When He comes back we come back with Him, and we are displayed. I grant you it is in the heavenlies the display takes place; but it is to the earth Christ wants to say of each one, This is My righteous one, this is the one that gave up for Me, that walked here blameless and harmless as a son of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

I have referred to these two scriptures because you get the Lord's service here in a double way; the one service is, that He goes to prepare a place for us. I do not doubt the place is now prepared; but He was going away and would come again to receive them unto Himself. Their great thought was that the Lord Jesus would reign upon the earth, and that they would reign with Him. They said to Him after His resurrection, "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). So little had they taken in John 14. The Lord was going away - giving up all that He was not going to take into the kingdom - therefore He instructs their hearts about this new service of His love. "In My Father's house are many mansions." Heaven belonged to Him. He could say, "My Father's house." He could say, "I go to the Father." That was His own place; He could go there. These dear Jewish disciples knew there was to be the coming kingdom, the coming glory; they knew they were to have their part in that; but He said (in effect), "You will not wait for that. I am going away, and I shall come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." You will not have to wait two thousand years. There He is the blessed Servant of the Father's glory; it is prepared now for the saints where He is.

These believers did not really understand it. How much do we understand what that place is? Have you the sense of what it is to be presented to Him there? to enter into the presence of the heavenly One, the Church to be the companion of the heavenly One? Oh! may the Lord lay it upon our hearts! It is our portion. We could not insist too much on that. I press again, it is the portion of the youngest believer here.

Nothing weighs, I think more on my spirit, where I see it, than the way young people are coming in now. I don't see that they give up the world. I see they get the blessed knowledge of salvation, but I do not see they really drop the world. It seems to me that a beautiful gospel is preached - so clear, so plain - and I thank God for it. They know the work is finished, but they don't go through much exercise. It was different when I was young. What used to be pressed upon us was, that it was a narrow way; and I do want you, beloved young believer, to remember it is a narrow way. I don't see the dropping of the ways of the world, the fashions of the world, the games of the world. I don't see the acceptance of the narrow path. There is no room in it for the world. There is only room for you and Christ to walk together.

I have given a word for the conscience. I want to give a word for the heart. Chapter 13 brings before us the other service of the blessed Lord, that we should have a part with Him.

Dear friends, I believe that service goes on whether you know it or not; you may not even be conscious of it; it is done in such a beautiful way. If I were to go and say to a believer, "Now, you know such and such a thing is not suitable to a heavenly path," I might do it in a rough way. The Lord does it so tenderly. I don't say there is not pain. He won't let us carry a lot of earthly things along a heavenly path. There is all the tender forbearance and grace of His heart in which He says to us, Now, drop that - that won't do. Now, that is the service of His blessed grace, that is the meaning of washing our feet. There is a service when there is actual, positive defilement, as when a man touched a bone or a dead body. Then this service of the blessed Lord comes in, but it goes further than the type. It is the way the blessed Lord is dealing with us. The Father has put our feet into Christ's hands to wash them according to His counsels. He says, as it were, "I have put these sheep into your hands to bring them home." He is not only the Servant of our need, but of the Father's glory. He brings me to the Father's house. He not only gives me the best robe, but He detaches me from what is unsuitable.

Now beloved fellow believers, young and old, you are sure to get this ministry, for He loves you; the Lord loves you, and therefore you are sure to get this service. He won't let you carry a lot of earthly things in the heavenly path. He wants you to travel with Him, to go that way His blessed feet have trodden. Some get this thought, and say, "If I were to have a fall, a great tumble, I should need the Lord to come in." Beloved friends, you want it every day of your lives, and you get it too. I don't say how you get it, but you do get it; every day you get it, and you are sure to have it, because the Lord loves you. Let me say, It becomes a very solemn thing, the intercession of the Lord - very solemn to think the Lord is always occupied about me there. I will give you an illustration that will make it plain.

A relative of my own, who was converted, wanted to go on with the world. He chose the world. Somehow he was always in trouble, never in peace. One day he said, "How can I have any peace when I know so-and-so is praying for me?" He would have the world, but he could not enjoy it. Christ is praying for you. That is a solemn thing. It is not a poor relative who is praying for you; it is CHRIST. You will get all His blessed dealings; it is a serious and solemn thing - Christ is praying for me. It is a most blessed thing to think I am an object of His interest; it will sweeten the cup of sorrow. A person may say, These are the dealings of the Lord; or, as Job said, "The hand of God hath touched me." But Job did not know what the hand was, like you and I do. If I get sorrow or affliction, I am sensible of the touch of His hand. Don't give up the thought of His love one single moment. He wants you in glory, but He wants you there suitable to Himself. He must remove everything unsuitable. All the trouble He takes if I may use a human expression. all the trouble He has taken with some of those in this room shows that He is leading us along. Here we are tasting His love afresh, I trust, this evening. Has He ever forgotten us? No, thank God, He never will! Never forget, young or old, the young ones especially, the love of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 5. "After that He poureth water into a basin." The water means that He brings the Word to bear upon us in one way or another. He might have to bring to bear upon us the word of the cross. It may be a tender word of grace or sympathy. He brings the Word to bear upon us. What the basin may be I do not know; perhaps affliction. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word." Affliction, beloved friends, does not do you any good apart from the tender ministry of Christ in His Word. Affliction is to bring your ear to the Word. Christ always wants to drop a word into your ear. He knows how to help the weary with a word. When you get up in the

morning, have you not the sweet sense, Christ can drop a word into my ear that will help me all day? You say, "I am so poor, so feeble! How shall I get along today?" It comes, perhaps, in the form of manna; still it is a word He brings to bear. If we are not listening, we lose it. If you do not bend your ear to hear, He may bring a word to bear in another way. Many read the Word, and it does nothing but make them uncomfortable. The more uncomfortable it makes you feel, if really the will is wrong, the better. But the great thing in affliction is to bring the Word, that He may blessedly whisper it in my ear. When you kneel down, for instance, you say, "I want to have Thy will done in me." It is a good, acceptable, and perfect will. I may not understand the workings; I may have to pause and say -

"His purposes will ripen fast,

Unfolding every hour;

The bud may have a bitter taste,

But sweet will be the flower.

"Deep in unfathomable mines

Of never-failing skill,

He treasures up His bright designs,

And works His sovereign will."

Now a word that may perhaps help you on the Psalms. In the end of the Psalms there is a burst of praise, and all the Psalms lead up to it; but the great end of all the exercises of the Psalms was to bring the people up to praise God; and it has taken the Lord now nearly four thousand years of discipline with Israel, before they will be able to utter those hallelujahs. The blessed Lord gives the keynote (Psalm 146), "Praise ye the LORD," and all bursts forth into praise. It has taken four thousand years to bring them to that. Now you praise Jehovah, He says. You are the people I have formed for Myself; you shall show forth My praise (Isa. 43:21). He could not give the keynote until He had been through it Himself. "I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth." Psalm 34:1. He knew what it was to go through pressure. How does it all come out? In Psalm 145 He praises: "I will bless Thy name forever and ever." Then He leads the praises of His people. "Praise ye the LORD Jehovah]" (Psalm 146) and everything bursts forth.

There is another note in heaven above still, the Lord leading it. He who has washed our feet, He who has wrought it all with the afflictions, the sorrows, the chastenings of the way. Oh, what will it be when He lays down that service, and has us in heaven, and says, Now PRAISE, and we all burst forth into praise! Oh, won't that be wonderful, as we surround the blessed Lord, as we not only know how He laid down His life that all I am might be put aside in the cross, that all He is, as divine righteousness, might be mine, but how He wrought in us to put away all that was unsuitable to Himself, so that we may have part with Him in the many mansions of the Father's house! I want your heart to be thoroughly in the sense of how the Lord loves you.

The 13th chapter is His service down here, the 14th is when His service down here is ended. Now comes another service of the blessed Lord, How are you going to get to heaven? Peter said, in

Luke 22:33, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death"; he counted on his own competence. Now, do you think you are competent to tread the path up there? You say, Perhaps my feet are treading the heavenly road. You say, I hope I shall get on and get there. You know what Peter was. No, that will not do; the Lord puts Peter all aside. Peter, you will deny Me. Now I will tell you what I will do. "I will come again," and fetch you; that is how you will go to heaven. That will be the blessed service of the Lord on the morning of the resurrection. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven," etc. He comes to fetch us, and that is how we get to heaven.

Just one more word for your conscience. Now, I have shown you how we get to heaven; now one word more, about coming out of heaven. It is not any new thought to most of you. We find in the book of Revelation, that just before we come out of heaven, we are presented. I do not think we are presented when we go in; the moment comes of presentation, and there the acclamations ring out in heaven - "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. Now she is presented to the Bridegroom, but the "fine linen" is "the righteousness [es] of saints," not the righteousness of God. You are to be presented to Christ in the righteousness of the saints. Someone may say, I am afraid I have very little. That is a great step to find out how little I have got. It says of the earthly bride, "Her clothing is of wrought gold"; but the moment it speaks of presentation, "She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework." "Wrought gold" is divine righteousness; but the moment it is presentation, it is the raiment of needlework, as has been said, wrought stitch by stitch, and, therefore, it is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Do you say, I am afraid I have very few stitches? It does not take long to do it; that may be a comfort to some. Now I have referred to the service of the blessed Lord, all the patience He exercises with us, to make us drop the things that are unsuitable, before we put on the veil and wear the demeanor that is suitable to Him. I say it may take forty years, like it did with Israel, to get you to drop the earth. I don't think it takes one minute to flood your heart with Christ when you have dropped it. It is Christ in you, flooding the heart with all His perfections, that will make the demeanor all right.

Now, suppose I get a person with an irritable temper; he has struggled with it, but instead of being meek and lowly, there it is always. How will the Lord deal with it? He is so patient with us in doing it. His service is, Now I must work with you in order to make you drop that; and when He has brought you to the judgment of it, and you drop it, Christ can turn round and say, "That is My meek one. It took Me forty years to make him that, and now I am going to display him in glory as My meek one. Blessed Lord, to work thus with us. Beloved young believer, do you court the scrutiny of Christ? Don't you get away from the ministry of His Word; do you seek the ministry of His Word? Very often those who cannot get it would like to have it, and those who have it at their very door, don't trouble much about it. And in private, read His Word. You say, Well, I read it, but I don't quite understand it. Never you mind, it's like putting coals into a grate. Never mind, store it up; the Spirit of God will give a light and power to that Word you never saw before. The more you are in His company, and feel His hand dealing with you, bringing the Word to bear upon you even if it is to make you feel uncomfortable, the more you will get these heavenly springs in the desert - for every day. And when you know His company and the service of His love, and how He is coming for you, the more you will look forward to be presented to Him.

## Fragment

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In a devoted Christian family who were walking in the fear of God, the daily reading was one morning in Exodus 27. The 20th verse was dwelt upon. The parents talked together about the oil that was used in the vessels of the tabernacle, and looked up passages in the New Testament that explained its meaning and how it could be applied. When the reading was over and the older children had left the room, the youngest child, a boy of five years, was detained, as was the usual custom, to be taught some simple verses by his mother, and to pray with her. The parents had not supposed that the child would understand what they had been talking about that morning, or that he would feel the slightest interest in a subject which they thought far beyond his age. However, when he had learned his verse, he kneeled down to pray, and in the midst of his prayer he paused; then he exclaimed earnestly, "O my God, make me to burn this day with pure oil."

The morning lesson had not been lost upon him. And his earnest petition to God was not lost; for throughout the day of his life he was a devoted Christian. Thus was the earnest cry of that little child heard and answered. God's Word had found its entrance into his soul, and it did its blessed work.

What an incentive this case should be to young Christian parents to maintain the family altar in this day of lukewarmness, when too many feel that they cannot spare the time for this. God's rich blessing is upon it; and sorrow will be to those who neglect it.

And are there few, or many, young Christians who are seeking daily to "burn" with "pure oil"? Such as are, will be lights in the darkness, and, will be "polished shafts" in the quiver of the Lord.

## Friends of God: a Special Privilege

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The Lord Jesus speaks of this privilege as belonging, through divine riches of grace, to His saints when He says, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." John 15:15.

This friendship, this communication of secrets gives a wondrous sense of gracious and confiding intimacy. When we pray, we feel that we need something; when we serve or when we worship, we judge that we owe something, at least that He is worthy; but when we are receiving communications (not commands as from a master, but communications as from a friend) we listen without any necessary reflection upon our own condition, freed of all sense of either need or obligation. Our proper attitude then is neither standing like Martha so as to serve, nor kneeling like Mary to worship, but like Lazarus - sitting (John 12:2).

The inspirations of a prophet are not equal to the divine communications which a friend receives. They do not intimate the same nearness or dignity. A prophet receives an inspiration as a vessel or oracle, and he may understand it or not (1 Pet. 1:10, 11). A friend learns secrets on the ground of personal confidence.

All the elect are, I grant, according to the grace and calling of God, endowed with this privilege; but among them I believe Abraham, Moses, David, and John had it very conspicuously. They illustrate it.

Abraham was told what the Lord was about to do to Sodom. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" says the Lord, and then tells him of the business which was then taking Him down to Sodom (Gen. 18).

What a moment that was! The Lord had come to Abraham's tent at Mamre and there sat at his table and his feast. The Judge of Sodom was communicating with the conqueror of Sodom - the divine Judge of that vile, reprobate place, conversing with him who had already, through faith and the victory of faith, refused all its offers.

Again I say, What a moment! And in the confidence which all this inspired, Abraham drew near and stood before the Lord while the attendant angels withdrew and went on their way.

And so Moses in his day, for we read, "And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." Exod. 33:11.

Wonderful! The Lord dealt with Moses as a man will deal with his friend. He talked with him. We are not told what He said, because it is the business of the passage rather to exhibit the grace of this intimacy, or divine friendship, than to convey information to us. But we do learn the use Moses makes of this gracious friendship - the very same use which Abraham of old had made of it. He speaks to the Lord about others. He pleads for Israel, as the patriarch had pleaded for Sodom. The Lord had approached Moses as His friend; He was not receiving him as His suitor or debtor. It

was fitting, therefore, that Moses should occupy the place and the moment in a manner which showed freedom from himself.

And so David, as we see in 1 Chronicles 17. David was a penitent, wearing sackcloth in the day of the plague, and going up to Mount Olivet with dust on his head in the day of Absalom. He was a worshiper too, singing and dancing as he bore the ark of the Lord to Zion. But David was a friend as Abraham and Moses had been. He received communication from the Lord through Nathan; and then, as one whom the Lord in the ways of His grace had thus endowed and privileged, he went in, as we read, "and sat before the LORD." Beautiful and wonderful, but withal right. To have stood or knelt then would not have been obedient or holy, for holiness is consistency with God; and if He "mourn" we are to "lament"; if He "pipe" we are to "dance"; if He reprove and convict us, we may be in sackcloth before Him; but if He deal with us face to face as a man speaks to a friend, we may and should sit before Him.

But again, John was the nearest to Jesus at the last supper. He lay on His bosom. And thus it was he who reached the secrets of that bosom. Peter in the distance used John's nearness, and the Lord admitted its title and gave him the privilege of it. John pressed the bosom afresh, in the confidence of an Abraham or a Moses, that the secret which was there would make itself his (John 13:25).

Surely all this tells us of the peculiar grace of this wondrous thing - this state and relationship of "friends" into which the Lord has called His saints - and we see the glorified saints in the full use and joy of this privilege. On the holy hill (to which I have already, in a passing way, alluded) Moses and Elias "talked" with Jesus. Sharing the glory, they knew the privileges of it, while Peter beholding it, felt the power of it, saying, "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Matt. 17:3, 4).

It is not to present something strange or striking that I notice all this, but rather to aid the soul in assuring itself of that love wherewith the elect are loved - a love which gives us a place where forgetting both our need and our obligation, neither kneeling to supplicate, nor standing to serve, we may sit to listen, and receive communications as a man is talked with by his friend. And when we see this to be the ways of His grace, we may still be conscious of slowness of heart in ourselves; but we cannot but know that we are in possession of a love on God's part that passeth knowledge.

And here let me add that this grace of friendship is eminently ours. It is seen in the apostleship of Paul. Paul was let into the secret which had been "hid in God" before the world was - the good pleasure which God purposed in Himself (Eph. 1-3). This was a divine communication, as to a friend. For Paul knew the secret, and knew it for himself. In our Apostle, and so in ourselves, this privilege takes us into strange and excellent intimacy. And accordingly we "sit" as David did, or as Lazarus of Bethany did, but it is in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6).

This excelleth. Friendship, as we have seen, is no new form of grace. It has been among the privileges of the elect from the beginning. But with us it has peculiar elevation, as everything else has that belongs to the Church.

## A Gem From the Seventeenth Century

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The reason why God is trusted so little, is because He is so little known. We say of some men, "They are better known than trusted," and if we knew some men more, we should trust them less; but the truth is, God is always trusted as much as He is known, and if we knew Him more, we would trust Him more. Every discovery of God shows somewhat which renders Him more worthy of trust. Caryl, 1602-1672

Trust in Him, ye saints, forever,  
He is faithful, changing never;  
Neither force nor guile can sever  
Those He loves from Him.

## Glory and the Excellent Glory

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In 2 Peter 2 we see what an altogether satanic scene the Lord is leading us through. Satan is going about as a roaring lion here below; and if we look upward, not where God is, but in the heavenly places, there are wicked spirits in heavenly places - the subtlety of Satan.

Peter brings before us the kingdom; he does not speak of the mystery, as Paul does. Peter speaks of the promises; the Church was not mentioned in the prophets or any Old Testament writing. In chapter 1, what a comprehensive view the Spirit of God takes: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord"! God and Christ are presented to me as an object outside myself. The God of glory appeared to Abraham, setting before him an attractive object.

Peter had been told by the Lord that he was to suffer martyrdom; he does not speak about it in a sentimental way, as some of us would, talking of our sufferings and saying, "I am going to be a martyr," but he calls it his decease - his "exodus." It was a terrible death at the hands of men, but he was above all that.

"We have not followed cunningly devised fables," he says, as Paul said, "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God." He gave it pure, as he received it. Peter was also an eyewitness. On the mount of transfiguration our Lord's face shone as the sun, and His garments were white as the light; that was the heavenly glory of the kingdom - relative glory - but it paled before the voice, "This is My beloved Son."

That was personal, intrinsic. When His face and His garment shone, that was "majesty" and glory too; but He received from God the Father honor and glory when the voice was brought to Him. If we study Scripture we shall soon see that Christ is the Father's all; and to us He is all in that new sphere to which we are brought. In the eternal state, God will be all in all.

We are familiar with the scene in Matthew 3 when Christ, at His baptism, was with the poor people confessing their sins. On the mount we have shining garments, but there we have fragrant garments. "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad." Psalm 45:8. The fragrance of His garments penetrated the veil of heaven, and brought down the Holy Ghost upon Him as a seal and a declaration of the Father's love. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:17.

## God's Resources for His Peoples Need: Israel's God Is Ours

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Deuteronomy 8 gives us an outline of the resources by means of which God supplied the need of His people while passing through the wilderness; they were resources unknown to the flesh, and such as the flesh could not picture of itself. God often puts His children in positions where every human resource fails; His object is twofold - first, that they may know themselves; second, that they may learn God's ways toward them.

God never varies in His government; that is to say, He never acts on a different principle in one case from that which guides Him in another. For example, He hates sin, and always acts consistently. Thus, a spiritual Christian may often know beforehand what line of conduct God will take in a certain case. It is important to remember this truth - that God changes not. His ways may change; thus, He had put His people under the law; now, He has put the Church under grace, and hereafter He will place her in glory. Yet there are principles which never change, and therefore the prophets could say that it was not for themselves but for us that they ministered those things (1 Pet. 1:12).

Circumstances may vary; Israel may have been driven out of their land, etc., but after all, God does not change; and if the means vary, the end (that is His own glory) is ever the same. As to salvation, for instance, God has always saved upon one principle. Abram and every saint to the most distant ages is only saved, as we, by blood.

God takes knowledge of everything, and judges us according to the light we have received. He says to His people, "Ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face" (Deut. 8:19, 20). This is God's principle of government; when sin has come to its height, then He punishes it. It was thus He had dealt with the Amorites and other nations; and it was thus He would deal with His own people. Thus we see that God acts evenly in His government here below; He cares for His own glory, and acts so as to show it forth. Not one action is unimportant, for the most insignificant may deprive us of blessing, on account of the government of God which is at all times in action. It is true that often one who walks unfaithfully receives many blessings, because God loves to show forth His mercy; nevertheless, everything bears its fruit, either inwardly in the soul, or outwardly in chastisements.

That which strikes me as most precious in this chapter is God's desire that Israel should not forget their wilderness position, which was a state of entire dependence; for Israel had no resources in itself, and received the supply of every need by means of a miracle. We are saved, and led into the wilderness; and there we are surrounded with blessings as, for instance, the enjoyment of brotherly communion instead of being in a position of isolation. But, as with Israel, God's blessings might lead to twofold evil, in separating them from Him, and making them forget their dependence upon Him (v. 17); so we have to take care lest the blessing we enjoy should produce the same affects on us. This world must needs be to the Christian a land of drought - a thirsty land, where no water is.... Surely God has given us enough spiritual blessings to satisfy our hearts! We may rejoice in that Word of God which opens out to the spiritual man the thoughts and counsels of God

toward us. If only we draw from this treasure, our souls will have enjoyment enough, and will be able to do without that which the world offers. Let Christ become our all, and let us strip ourselves of all that is not Christ, that He may reign alone in our hearts. This is real progress, and here is true enjoyment for the Christian.

Verses 11-15. Israel was not to stop short in the enjoyment of the gifts of God, nor to take occasion from them to forget God Himself. The Christian too must watch lest, in the enjoyment of the blessing, he should forget Him who has given it, and lose sight of his own dependence upon God. The heart may depart from God long before God's blessings are withdrawn; and we may still enjoy them when far from Him. Let us ask ourselves, Have I the enjoyment of such and such blessings? But is my heart really in communion with Jesus? Is it in Him I find my joy? Do I realize my own weakness? etc. How often would the upright soul answer, No! Let my outward circumstances be as favorable as they may, if my heart is not in communion with God I shall be unable to meet temptation. This is an important truth, for the consequences are immense.

We see in the history of Israel the proof that the heart may backslide from God long before He withdraws His blessings. How long it was after Israel had forgotten the Lord ere God came in judgment to show what was their state! How often do we enjoy brotherly communion and the Word of God long after we have forgotten our own weakness and dependence! It is by walking in communion with God that we can be preserved. This is what Moses expressed to the people in this chapter, verses 11-19; it is "Take heed."

How often have we been made to feel that the object of our daily journeying is to humble us! How much that is painful have we learned of ourselves! And how often have we discovered our unbelief when brought into trial! God has led us through the wilderness to humble us, prove us, and to know what is in our hearts, whether we would keep His commandments or no.

See verse 3. Manna was a thing unknown to Israel when they went into the wilderness; neither had their fathers known it, and they themselves could do nothing toward producing it. They were dependent. Had God omitted to send it, even for one or two mornings, they must have perished. The water from the rock was equally miraculous. There was no water in the desert, and God gave it by a miracle. There was no path marked out in the wilderness, and they might have wandered from the way; but God performed another miracle, for a cloudy pillar was their leader. But it was not only in great things that God took care of them, or that He does so of us in the wilderness; we have to admire His precious care in the smallest things, and in our tiniest wants. There is a particular as well as a general providence (v. 4). "Thy raiment waxed not old." It may be that the Israelites had taken little notice of the fact, and so it is with us. How many details of God's care for us pass unobserved by us!

We find in Isaiah 40, immediately after the description of the greatness of God and the wonderful effects of His power, the expression of His care in small things. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" v. 27. God does not forget us, and that we might know how dear we are to Him, the Lord Jesus said, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:7). The Lord would have us remember these two things in the wilderness: first, that it is He who has redeemed us from the world, as He did His people out of Egypt; second, that it is He who sustains moment by moment in the wilderness. It is when we realize this direct dependence upon God, that we are strong to resist the

devil; but when we lose sight of it, we feel less the necessity of communion with God; we neglect it, and soon attribute our blessings to ourselves. "And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." v. 17.

Verse 11. "Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping His commandments." When in the presence of God, the conscience keeps His commandments, for in His presence they are neither hard nor forgotten. How can we forget the desires of one who is dear to us, when with that person? Let us remember that apart from communion with God, even His blessings become a snare to pride. We are in the desert but we are there under the tender care of a tender Father.

## Grace and Government: the Life of Abraham

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There are two distinct principles on which God deals with man as such, and on which also He deals with His people. These two principles are grace and government. The former is the blessed characteristic of God; He is the "God of all grace." The gospel is the great setting forth of this principle, as the Church in glory will be the eternal witness of it. God takes up a person and blesses him absolutely, without any reference to how he has behaved or what he deserves. That this might be done consistently with the claims of righteousness against the sinner, the cross was necessary. "So might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21).

Government on the other hand, is the reverse of this. It takes cognizance of the behavior of the person under it, and regulates its conduct toward him by his merits. We get the principle of government in those words in 1 Pet. 2:14: "Unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." This word applies to human government, but the principle is the same whatever the sphere in which the government is exercised.

Now these two principles of grace and government find an exhibition in the family of God, and it is most important for us to remember that God acts toward us as His people on both these principles.

If I forget His grace when I have failed, I might get into despair. If I forget His government, I might grow careless, not remembering that "if ye live according to the flesh, ye are about to die" (Rom. 8:13. J.N.D. Trans.), and our reaping depends upon our sowing.

I wish to refer to an example of God's acting on these two principles, in the history of Abram.

In the first place, of course, the call that made Abram a saint was sovereign grace. He was born among idolators and was the object of God's electing favor just as distinctly as the chief of sinners. And the same is true of every saint of God. Salvation is all of grace. "Then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Rom. 9:16. But now that God has brought him to Himself, he came into the place where government as well as grace would be exercised toward him; and it is the same thing with ourselves when brought to God.

Abram has not been long in the place of favor before, under the severe pressure of circumstances, he gives up acting on the principle of faith on which alone we can please God, and adopts the world's principle of sight. He had gone to Canaan in faith, in obedience to the divine word. There he meets with a famine, and without consulting God he does what prudence would suggest, and what every man of the world would well understand - he leaves the land of famine for Egypt, the land of supply.

Now Egypt and Canaan respectively represent the two principles of sight and faith. God as Creator made them to picture these two principles for us. Egypt is a country that draws its resources from itself. It has a river that supplies it, as it were, independently of heaven, Canaan, on the other

hand, was watered from above. It would have perished unless remembered in heaven, as Israel would have done in the wilderness had Jehovah forgotten to supply them. The physical characteristics of the countries are contrasted in Deuteronomy 11. Thus when Abram went down from Canaan to Egypt, his action was symbolic of what his heart was really doing. He was going from faith to sight, from being a man of faith to become a man of the world.

Now we must notice that Abram got what he sought. And as a rule it is so with people. If they seek money, they get it. Or an improved worldly position, they get it. Or praise of men, they get it. "Verily..., They have their reward," as the Lord said. For when Abram comes back from Egypt, we find both himself and his companion Lot in flourishing circumstances (Gen. 13:5).

Another thing to be remarked is that Abram made an untruthful compact with his wife Sarai, which is suggested by the principle of human prudence. "Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister" (Gen. 12:13).

This does not save him from trouble, but God delivers him. "He reproveth kings for their sakes." This is pure grace. But the grace of God is more conspicuously shown in chapter 13. For God brings him, not merely out of Egypt, but to Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning. And there at the place of the altar that he had made at first, he calls on the name of Jehovah. This is grace like that of which we read in Hosea: "She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt" (chap. 2: 15). Grace reinstates the soul in its original brightness.

But now we must notice God's governmental ways, as I believe them to be, with Abram in connection with this turning aside. Although his own soul is restored to God, and the principle of sight, or the world, is judged in his heart, as we see beautifully displayed at the end of this chapter, where he gives up all the land to Lot; yet the mark of Egypt appears in his family when it no longer was seen in himself. Abram was a man of faith. He had come up out of Egypt without any love for Egypt, but not so his nephew Lot whom he had taken into Egypt with him. This we see in the end of Genesis 13.

There was one strip of the land of Canaan that was like Egypt (Gen. 13; 10), a lovely country that was like the garden of the Lord, well watered everywhere, not by the rain of heaven but by a river "like the land of Egypt." Lot had a taste for a land like Egypt, a land that Abram had taken him to see. It was a place where a man might live without dependence upon heaven. What an attractive place for our hearts naturally! Abram could give it up, but not so Lot. Still one thinks it must have been a bitter day for Abram when he saw Lot taking the path of sight which he, alas! had once shown him. The principle that on one occasion marked the uncle, permanently marked the nephew.

They parted, Lot adopting worldly or Egyptian principles, and Abram walking still before God - the one sowing trouble for himself because of God's government, the other treading the path, though trying to the flesh, yet of which it is written, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Pro. 3:17. May the Lord help us to walk in them.

Now was this, we may ask, the end of Egyptian principles in Abram's family? Alas, no. The next person in whom they appear is Sarai; and here Abram himself falls under them. There was in Abram's family a handmaid of Sarai, an Egyptian. That word Egyptian carries the mind back to that

journey of Abram into Egypt. And we see that the principle that governs Sarai's mind now is the same that governed Abram's mind then. She gives her maid to be her husband's wife. It was an act that seemed the only way out of a difficulty. There was no thought of God in it. The result was long trouble again under God's government. It was fifteen years before the result of this act was put out of Abram's house, in the casting out of the bondwomen and her son. And then it was with a broken heart to Abram. And it was not until this point that the last trace of that turning aside into Egypt disappears from his house.

Now all this is not the tale of God's grace, but it is an illustration of His government. If Abram relieves himself by giving up divine principles, we find two results. In the first place, the blessed power of God restores the soul; and in the second, the government of God gives him to taste the bitterness of those principles on which he has acted, when they appear in other members of his family.

It is one thing to go into the world, and quite another to get the worldliness out of the household when once we have got it in. Still the discipline of God is not in anger, but it is that of a Father, in order to our being partakers of His holiness. "Shall we not... be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (Heb. 12:9). It needs much grace to sustain the spirit in passing through the governmental consequences of our actions. Yet it is here that grace is occasionally displayed in the brightest way, as we see in David's history in 2 Samuel 15 and 17, which is an illustration of what we have in Peter: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

## Great Stones and Costly: Part 1

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"And he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God." 1 Chron. 22:2.

I need not say that the building of Solomon's temple is one of the most interesting studies of antiquity; and when that building on mount Moriah is seen as the type of God's present heavenly building, it becomes infinitely more interesting.

In this building then the first thing that presents itself is this: David, the father, provides beforehand the materials of this temple - even the stones, the iron, and brass in abundance, without weight. He says, "I have prepared for the house of the LORD a hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver" (estimated value of this wealth is more than \$25,000,000,000). This was David's provision for this costly building, in addition to an incalculable quantity of brass, iron, wood, and stone. Besides, the riches of Solomon, the son, were quite equal to those of his father, David. 1 Kings 10 gives some idea of Solomon's riches.

More than 150,000 men were employed in the rearing of this wondrous building (1 Kings 5:15). "And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house." 1 Kings 5:17.

Now, what do great stones mean? A builder in this country would consider a stone three feet every way a great stone. But we find these great foundation stones, sawn and hewn, were indeed "costly stones, even great stones, stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits." 1 Kings 7:10. A cubit, at the lowest, is one foot six inches; it is the measure from the elbow of a man to the end of his fingers. Thus, these great stones were at least twelve feet every way, and fifteen feet every way. If you just figure it up, you will find they weighed about two hundred and fifty tons each. There was one stone in the temple, after its restoration, thirty feet by thirteen by seven and a half feet. There are similar great stones in the ruins at Balbec, which may have been built by Solomon, called the "House of the Forest of Lebanon." Solomon built three houses, which answer, I doubt not, to the threefold glory of Christ; and as the same sized stones formed the foundation of each (1 Kings 7:1-11), so is Christ the foundation stone, alike, of the Church of God in heavenly places, the future kingdom of Israel, and of millennial blessing to the whole world. The cross we shall find to be the foundation of all.

To return to that which occupies us at present, the temple. Vast quantities of cedar trees were brought from Lebanon. But for many centuries there has been a difficulty as to where and how these great, costly stones were obtained. A dear friend, who lives near Jerusalem, told me a few years ago, that there are immense caves under Jerusalem. And the quantity of broken stones, but especially some great stones, half cut, but never finished, makes it clear that these great stones were got out of pits, prepared in this manner: the top was leveled and marked out, then the sides were cut by drifts, then the under side cut. But just think of the greatness of the labor required in raising these great stones of the pit out to daylight, and moving them, and putting them in their places. Isaiah may have referred to these caverns when he speaks of the stones of the pit (Isa.

14:19).

The temple was built on a rock, by the side of a frightful precipice. We are told by historians that six hundred feet of foundation work had to be built to the level, on one side, where Solomon's porch stood. The foundation stones were dovetailed, or mortised, in a most wonderful manner into the very rock. The joint was so finely wrought that it could scarcely be found. Thus they were rooted, and grounded, and built into the very rock.

And the house, when it was building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither; so that "there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building" (1 Kings 6:7). Thus the silent growth of this earthly temple set forth the predestined heavenly building of God. As David, the father, gave the materials to Solomon, the son, even so Jesus says, "My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." John 10:29. And again, "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." John 17:2. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Chap. 6:37. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Chap. 6:39.

Yes, he would be a foolish builder who began to build and did not know whether he had materials to finish. And it is blessed to remember that God, the great master Builder, foreknew every stone chosen, and precious, that is built and shall be built in the heavenly temple.

Is it not most plain that those great stones, two hundred and fifty tons weight, never got out of the pit by any effort or work of their own? As we say, they would never have seen daylight if they had not been drawn out. You might just as well have put a ladder of ten steps, and told these stones to climb up it and get out of darkness, as to set the ten commandments before a dead sinner, and tell him to try and climb them, and so get out of the pit of sin. Jesus said to those who had long been trying this plan, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:44.

In the judgment of a builder, there would be no way of getting those great stones out of the pit, but by going into the pit, hewing and drawing them out. And all that were drawn out were out, and no others. Now, does not the cross of our Lord Jesus reveal God's judgment of this matter as to sinners? If David counted the cost of this earthly temple in gold and silver, God also counted the cost. The price was the blood of the Lamb. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.

If those were great stones and costly, surely believers are great stones and costly. He spared not His only begotten Son, but gave Him up for us all. I am not much of a mason, but I should say a fifteen-foot cube of stone would cost no trifle. And, fellow believer, fellow-stone in the living temple, think what you have cost.

Thus God saw no way of raising sinners from the dead but by sending His Son to die for them. "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor. 5:14). And having died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was numbered with the dead. There was the end of all judgment due to our sins. The full ransom price was paid. Despised, indeed, He was of men; yes,

never was a stone so rejected by masons, as was this stone by Judah's builders. But oh! what were God's thoughts of His blessed Son as He lay in the grave? God saw Him the foundation stone. As our substitute, all our sins had been laid on Him. So Christ bore the sins of many. And now, infinite atonement being made by His precious blood, this stone, rejected by man, was raised from the dead by God. Therefore, "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:11, 12. Language cannot find words to express "the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." Eph. 1:19, 20. The raising of those great stones was, indeed, a grand figure of this; but what would have been the power required if every stone of the temple had to have been raised up together with the first foundation stone.

This heavenly temple, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Yet, every stone in this living temple was once dead in trespasses and sins - ah! dead as stones. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Eph. 2:4-6. Now, whether we think of what we were as lost, dead, buried sinners, or what was the tremendous undertaking for one to stand our substitute, and bear the full, unmixed wrath of God due to our sins - or of what we shall forever be as living stones in the heavenly temple - surely the raising up of Christ, the foundation stone, from the dead, and in Him the redeemed Church, and on Him its eternal destiny - the destiny of every saved sinner through eternal ages - I say, surely the raising of Christ, the foundation stone, was the greatest event, the greatest work, that ever God wrought. Oh, vastly strange that this, God's greatest work, should be so little thought of in our day!

## Great Stones and Costly: Part 2

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Now, the temple was built on the rock of Moriah - the place where divine judgment was stayed by the altar of burnt offerings and peace offerings; for there the Lord answered by fire upon the altar of burnt offering (1 Chron. 21:26); even so the voluntary offering of Jesus, and the shedding of His precious blood, is the foundation of every sinner saved by grace from the deserved wrath of God. One thing is certain, that where the foundation stone was laid, there the temple was built. Standing on that bold rock of Moriah, "the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries." Now, when God raised Jesus, the foundation stone, from the dead, where did He place Him? "Far above all principality, and power," etc. (Eph. 1:21.) "And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence." Col. 1:18. God did not raise Him from the dead to improve the old creation, but to be the beginning of the new creation - not to build an earthly house, or earthly society, but a heavenly temple. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"; "Hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." That word in Christ Jesus is very precious. It is very blessed to see this in the type; all those great stones were covered with cedar wood. "And the cedar of the house within was carved with knops and open flowers: all was cedar; there was no stone seen." 1 Kings 6:18. Thus in the heavenly building there is not a sinner seen. Every saved one, though once a great sinner, now fairly wainscoted in Christ - hid in Christ. And not only was the stone covered with cedar wood, but this overlaid with pure gold. "So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold.... And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the house" (vv. 21,22). It is written, fellow believer, "Ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power." Col. 2:10. It was not the stones themselves that were seen, but the gold upon them; so it is not ourselves, but Christ upon us. Yes, the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ, in whom we are complete. And all within, how perfect! Beautiful carvings of knops and of open flowers, all covered with pure gold.

You observe all was done to these stones. Not one atom did they do. They were hewn, they were drawn out, they were built in the temple, they were covered with cedar. The pure gold was put upon them. It is so with the poor sinner. Salvation from beginning to end is all of God. Look at the poor prodigal - not an atom of merit. The father met him as he was, fell upon his neck, and kissed him. He had not to buy a new robe. No, the robe was ready, the shoes were ready, the ring was ready. Like the gold that covered the stones, so with this new best robe; he had not even to put it on. No, the father said, "Put it on him." Just so with Joshua, when the filthy garments were taken away. God said, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.... So they set a fair miter upon his head" (Zech. 3:4, 5). Yes, the new creation work is all of God. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God" (2 Cor. 5:17, 18). The fact is, all this seems too good to be true, and the poor heart is so slow to believe God. Yet, true it is; and

if the temple was for glory throughout all ages, this heavenly building of God is for God's glory throughout all ages, predestinated "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Eph. 1:6. "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus" (chap. 2:7); yea, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom. of God." Chap. 3:10. C.S.

If the change was great, as every stone was drawn out of the pit of darkness and placed in that temple of splendor and dazzling light, what is the change when a sinner is taken from the dungeon of darkness and "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord." Eph. 2:20, 21.

Oh, what thousands of poor sinners have been built into this heavenly temple of late! Silently and swiftly is God taking out the appointed stones.

To every believer God does not say, "Ye shall be built," but, "Ye... are built." Oh, that every believing reader may enter into the full joy of being complete in Christ! for God has made such a blessed finish of it, within and without.

It may be asked, If salvation is so entirely of God, what has the person so saved to do? Well, certainly he can do no more for his salvation than the great stones and costly could do for their hewing and drawing out of the pit. But let us turn to a passage in 1 Pet. 2:4-10: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." It is God who has laid this chief corner stone, elect, precious, "And he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." Oh, surely the more I see what God has made Him to be to me, the more precious He will be; as it is written, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner." Yes, here is the grand test to every heart - what is Christ to you? Can my reader say, He is everything to me; before Him I had nothing, and after Him I can have nothing? I do not ask what profession you make. Every religious builder who is trying to improve humanity in one way or another, makes light of Christ. This whole world is one vast pit of darkness, sin, and death. God has no more thought in the gospel of improving this dark pit, than Solomon had when taking the great stones out of the cavern of perpetual darkness. He took out the stones. God is now taking out of the world sinners for Himself. Now man disallows this; he sees no need of a new creation. He says, Why not build up and improve the old? And thus the new creation temple, built on the risen Christ from the 'dead, is almost forgotten among the builders; and instead of waiting for the coming of the Lord, and the manifestation of this heavenly building, men are vainly dreaming that Christianity will gradually improve this dark cavern of sin. The masons of Solomon would not have made a greater mistake if, instead of going on hewing and drawing, they had commenced building in the dark cavern.

No, believer, I ask you to look at yonder risen Christ, raised from among the dead. There see God's chosen foundation stone. Is He precious to you? Are you built on Him? The faith that rests in Him shall never be confounded. To you the Spirit of God says, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him

who bath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." v. 9. This is what the saved sinner should do.

## Great Stones and Costly: Part 3

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Nothing can be more pleasing to God than thus to show forth His praise, who has taken us, like the stone of the pit, out of darkness; and as they bore the shining plates of gold that reflected and displayed the riches and magnificence of their great builder, even so may Christ be seen on each of us, reflecting and showing forth the exceeding riches of divine grace. Oh, what grace shone in all the ways of Jesus! Even when crucified on the accursed tree, still grace shone forth: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And that was a bright reflection of Christ, when they stoned Stephen to death. He said, as it were, "Do not say anything about it; lay not this sin to their charge." Oh, for more of the bright shining of Christ in all and on all our ways! God would have us enter into the full joy of being able to give Him thanks, "who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Col. 1:12-14.

Is this my reader's joy? Can you thus give God all the glory? Are you in the pit or in the temple? - covered with sin or covered with Christ? Ah, it was of no use, though cut and hewn and sawn on one side or every side, if still left in the pit; no place in the temple; no plates of gold; no knobs and open flowers. Those half-cut stones in the caverns of Jerusalem are solemn warnings. You may have long felt the axe and saw of conviction, but are you out of the cavern? This must be the work of God. Paul planted, and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither is he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." God is the builder. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:5-11.) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" v. 16.

Now God's way of getting stones is in this manner: the Spirit of God takes the axe of conviction and strikes deep; the Word of God is the power unto salvation to every one that believes. I met a poor old sinner the other day, who thought that no poor stone ever had the chiseling he had had in the pit of sin. The Spirit of God enabled me to set the death and resurrection of Christ before him; and while quoting these words, out he came, drawn out and delivered by the power of God. "Be it known unto you therefore, ... that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things." Oh, I love to see great stones drawn out of the pit! The old man said, "How blessed it will be to go home knowing I am saved!" "Yes indeed," I said, "and hearken to these words of Jesus: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.' " John 5:24. Yes, just as Lazarus heard the word of Jesus when down in the sepulcher of death, so was this old man "born again, . . . by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23). The hour is come "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25).

If my reader has never yet heard that voice, may this be the hour. God grant that from this moment you may yield yourself up to God, as a stone in the hands of the mason, and clay in the hands of the potter.

We must not, however, carry the figure too far; for, while a sinner is, as to that which is good, as dead as stone, yet for that which is evil he is terribly alive. Yes - a live rebel against God - a voluntary, willful, rejecter of Christ, the only foundation stone. "Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Matt. 21:42,44.

In the day of judgment you will not be condemned because you had been in the pit of darkness, but because you refused to be taken out. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world [the dark pit], and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The remembrance of the love of God in sending His Son to this dark pit of sin, will be like the worm that dies not. O what unutterable remorse!

Was it not in love to the bitten Israelites that God bade Moses lift up the serpent in the wilderness? Even so has the Son of man been lifted up. For sinners Jesus died - lost, ungodly sinners. Yes; it was these God so loved. If He had only bidden you get out of the pit yourself, you might have said, How can I, since I am as helpless as stone? But He sent His Son, and you have rejected Him; you have refused to be saved. Oh, it would have been blessed had your heart been broken with the sense of His love! But if not, it must be crushed before Him in the judgment, with the sense of His everlasting wrath. A very little while, and the end of the present scene shall come. The stone cut out of the mountain shall smite the nations, and they shall become "like the chaff of the summer threshing floor." (Dan. 2:34-45.) This terrible day is closed by those solemn words, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. 25:32-46.)

There is one point of contrast, however, between the earthly temple and the heavenly building, we must notice. To have seen those huge blocks of stone so built in the rock, one would have thought they would have stood forever. But the time came when the Chaldeans prevailed against them, and again, when restored in later times, as our blessed Lord foretold, the Romans prevailed until not one stone was left upon another. Where are those two pillars - Jachin, which means "he shall establish," and Boaz, "in it is strength" - though they were such brass pillars as the like were never cast? They stood at least twenty-seven feet high and six feet in diameter; yet they are removed and gone, and not a trace of this wondrous building remains.

But Jesus, speaking of Himself, the only foundation, says, "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Jesus did not say to Peter, Thou art this rock, but, Thou art a stone. Yes; Peter, a stone, needed to be built on the rock as much as any man. He found this need as much in the high priest's hall as on the swelling billows. Christ is the foundation rock; and that rock is not at Rome, but in heaven. And where the foundation is, there must the building be. Ask a mason if this is not so. Yes; God is not building His Church at Rome, but in heavenly places in Christ. Against the Church, so high, so blessed, so secure, the gates of hell shall not prevail. How can they? Eve was not made or built of the flesh of Adam; but she was built of his very bone, and that bone so near his heart. And the Church, the spotless bride of Christ, all glorious within and without, is also built in Christ, so that "We are members of His body, of His

flesh, and of His bones." Eph. 5:30.

Some talk about Christ letting the saint slip through His fingers. No, the devil would have to pull Christ's fingers off before one of His little ones could perish. No, when time shall be no more, this holy building of God shall be seen "Descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Ah, then it will not be like the plates of gold covering the stones. We shall be changed. We shall be like Him, fashioned like unto His glorious body, like unto a stone most precious - no speck of sin, no dull shade of grief, no cloud of sorrows - clear as crystal. This, my fellow stone, is our eternity. Highest archangels will be ravished with wonder. "The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." Our feet, that now tread the dirty streets of this sin-defiled earth, shall soon tread the golden street of the city of God. What heart can conceive what it will be to be there? No temple there to shut in and hide the glory. No; God and the Lamb are there. They are the temple of it. "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." And all yours, my fellow believer. Yes, though too bright for mortal eyes. Yet wait a little longer. A few more struggles, a few more victories over self, sin, and Satan, through Him that strengthens. Yes, though Jachin and Boaz be removed and gone. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name." Thus speaks Jesus, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. Hark! He also speaks to God. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me." Blessed Jesus, Thy will shall be done; we shall soon be with Thee. We ask no more. Thou couldst not ask more than for us to be with Thee.

There is but one point more, and I close. (Read 1 Chron. 22:17-19.) Now if David commanded the princes of Israel to help Solomon, saying, "Is not the LORD your God with you? and hath He not given you rest on every side?" how much more has God given us rest and perfect peace through the blood of the Lamb. And now He says, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." If my reader has not this "rest on every side," then do not think to get it by preaching or doing; let me point you to Him who gives it, even to Jesus. But if you have peace with God, then "Set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God; arise therefore, and build."

There is a work for every mason, and for every man who has found rest to his own soul. Some may be felling proud cedars, others striking with the stern axe of conviction down in the deep mine, others drawing with strong cords of love divine, and others fitting together the building.

Do not say, I can do nothing. "Is not the LORD your God with you?" "Arise therefore, and build."

God give us more willingness of heart, more singleness of eye, more simplicity of faith; and as the building grows in silent power - yes, when the top stone shall be brought with shouting - to Him be all the praise! C.S.

(Concluded) (Continued from last month)

## Greetings Refused

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There are two places in Scripture where greetings were refused. The first was when David sent a beautiful message to Nabal - "Thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast." 1 Sam. 25:6. But Nabal refused it, and came under the judgment of God.

In the second case, David sent to comfort Hanum when his father died. But poor Hanum had evil counselors who said, Don't listen to it; he doesn't mean what he says. How many dear souls are hindered now in a similar way by bad counselors.

## Happiness Is

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If only we were happy in Him, we would work much better for Him. It is joy in Christ that gives victory over the world. Why are we often in subjection to the world? Just because we have not found in Christ all the joy we ought to find. If I rightly use the grace of God, it will purify me. As Titus says, "The grace of God... hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." God links my redemption with my purification.

## The Hidden Treasure

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"The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Matt. 13:44.

We doubt not the parable points to Christ as the One who finds a treasure in His people, and for joy sells all that He has, that He may obtain possession of it; as, indeed, we read, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2). "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. 8:9. Yes, as the parable says, He sold all that He had; and, as the passage from the epistle to the Hebrews proves, He kept in view the joy that was set before Him, which joy our parable also speaks of.

We must, indeed, look at who Christ was, and the position He had as Creator (all things were made by Him, and for Him), and as God from eternity; and then look at our Lord in His humiliation, His agony in the garden, and His shameful death - being made sin for us, and enduring the hiding of God's face - before we can even get a glimpse of what it cost Him to purchase the field in which lay hidden the treasure of His heart.

But there is another point in the parable. It says not only that the man purchased the treasure, but also that he bought the field in which the treasure was hid. Now, in the same chapter, our Lord, in explaining the parable of the sower, says, "The field is the world." Then our Lord bought the world - all mankind. And here lies an important truth. It is like a rich man going to a plantation of slaves, and after paying down a price for the whole of the slaves, he sends forth a proclamation, that whosoever will may be free. But, alas! the slaves like their plots of ground, and their earthly ties, and prefer to remain in slavery.

So our Lord bought, in His death, all mankind, and has sent forth His ministers to beg men to be reconciled to Him. But, alas! men prefer the chains of Satan, and the baits he skillfully lays for them.

This illustrates also the difference between "buying" and "redeeming." Many are now deluding their fellow men with the thought of universal salvation, whereas there is a wide difference between buying slaves and offering them liberty, and the actual bringing them out of slavery. We read of some - lost souls - who deny the Lord who bought them (2 Pet. 2:1), whereas, those who are redeemed are actually translated out of the kingdom of Satan, and "into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. 1:13).

Such then is the parable of the hidden treasure. Christ is the purchaser; His saints are the treasure; all men are the field. It is called the hidden treasure, for none could have discovered that Christ had a treasure where all was sin and wickedness. The doctrine of the Church too had long been hidden; as we read, Paul made known "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations" (Col. 1:26). Then all were to see "what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God" (Eph. 3:9). Christ had then endured the shameful

death of the cross - having become poor, sold all that He had - but He will have the treasure with Him by-and-by - a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing! To His name be all the glory!

## His Person

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"Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid" (Mark 6:50). In the darkness of night the disciples were toiling in rowing in the midst of a stormy sea. Christ came to them, walking on the water. He was unrecognized at first; they thought He was a spirit. Misconceptions of Christ do not bless or give comfort; but when He is seen as Christ the eternal Son of God, all-powerful and never changing in His Person, there is comfort and satisfaction and cheer to the soul.

He comes to us in the midst of the stormy sea of life. In these perilous times there is confusion, unrest, and uncertainty all about us. He, the ever-living and loving Christ comes to us. In every circumstance of life He comes with His fellowship, partnership, presence, and power. He comes with assurance of strength, keeping and safety, saying, "It is I; be not afraid."

## Humility

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There is a difference between being humble before God, and being humbled before God. I am humbled before God, because I have not been humble. I am humbled, because of my sin. If I had been humble, I should have had grace given me to prevent it; for, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5).

The only humble place is the presence of God. It is when I get out of His presence that I am in danger of being lifted up. People say it is dangerous to be too often on the mount. Now I do not think that it is when we are on the mount that we are in danger, but when we come off it. It is when we come off the mount that we begin to think that we have been there. Then pride comes in. I do not think that Paul needed a thorn when he was in the third heaven. It was after he had come down that he was in danger of being exalted above measure - from thinking that he had been where no one else had been.

3) I do not believe that to think badly of ourselves is true humility. True humility is never to think of ourselves at all, and that is very hard to come to. It is constantly, I, I, I. If you only begin a sentence with "I," there is nothing that a person will not put after it.

## I'd Rather Suffer Loss

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"It was in that very spot, Sir," said a working shoemaker, pointing to a place in his little workshop, "Yes, in that very place, Sir, six years ago, that the Lord spoke peace to my troubled soul; and how good and gracious He is." Such was almost the beginning of our happy and profitable intercourse on paying a visit to this dear servant of the Lord Jesus....

After talking generally together, and having had sweet fellowship in the things of our precious Savior and Lord, and we were about to leave, he said, "I should like to let you know something about the exercises of soul I have been lately passing through." To this we readily assented.

He then said something like this: "When I was converted to God, and knew the Lord Jesus Christ His Son as my Savior, I thought, I shall now surely prosper in my little business; but in this I was sadly mistaken, for my earnings very soon fell off. The first year I earned three shillings a week less, the second year three shillings a week less, the third year four shillings a week less, and of late my earnings have been so little that I thought I must give it up and seek some other employment, though I have so enjoyed the Lord's presence with me in this little place. Accordingly, knowing Mr. M. to be a kind Christian man, and that he held a good situation in a large factory near here, I asked him if he thought he could procure me employment of any kind in his place of business; and he promised to let me know when there was a vacancy.

"But after this I became deeply exercised before the Lord as to what I was about. Is that this I am seeking according to my own will, or the Lord's will? Is He bidding me to give up my present calling and seek another? for I have had much of the Lord's presence, and enjoyed His sweet company when working alone in this corner. And just then the Lord seemed to say to me, Which will you have? Will you go into the factory, and mix with the ungodly multitude with large wages, or remain in this corner and enjoy My presence with small earnings; which will you have? I assure you, Sir, it was a serious moment. I turned it over well in my mind. I considered how weak I am, how easily turned aside, and began to think that if I went into that factory to work, I might soon be drawn away, and lose my blessed Lord's sweet company. So I said, 'Lord, let me have Thy company, even if it must be with small earnings; I'd rather suffer loss than not enjoy Thy presence with me.' From that time I became perfectly settled, and told Mr. M. not to think anything more about procuring a situation for me. Now, Sir, it is remarkable that from that time work began to come in more than for a long time before."

We could not help thinking that the result was just what we should have expected. We believe that one of the greatest hindrances to souls is their being so taken up with desire for worldly prosperity. The consequence is that the Lord has not got His rightful place in their hearts; and, however many excuses they may make, the question really is, Am I seeking earthly gain, or the enjoyment of the Lord's presence? Is communion with Him the uppermost desire of my heart? Perhaps no point is of more importance for us really to settle in the presence of God. If worldly advantage, to say nothing of the accumulation of wealth, has the first consideration, let it not surprise us if such go further and further away from the Lord; but if we are willing to suffer loss, and to lay aside

everything that hinders our enjoyment of His sweet company, then we may be sure that He will not forsake us as to food and raiment. We believe the scripture is as true as ever, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." We do well to remember that to the believer it is said, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Matt. 6:33; Phil. 1:29.)

## Ignorance of God

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The haughtiness of intellectual pretension which excludes God because it is incompetent to discover Him, and then talks of His work, and meddles with His weapons according to the measure of its own strength, can prove nothing but its own contemptible folly. Ignorance is generally confident, because it is ignorant; and such is the mind of man in dealing with the things of God.

## Jesus Christ: the Apostle and High Priest

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In the epistle to the Hebrews, Christians are looked upon as traveling through the desert, and Christ is spoken of as both "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." We find this in type in Moses who came out from God with His word to the people as an apostle, and in Aaron, the high priest, who went into the presence of God with the blood of atonement for the people. Both are found in Christ.

In chapter 1 we have Christ as the Apostle. He comes from God to us, revealing all His mind - nay, Himself. In chapter 2 we have Him as the High Priest who goes back in all His suitability to the office, because He is a man. But when He really enters upon His priestly office for us, He goes to represent a reconciled people before God. They are looked upon in their journey here below on earth, and there is no mention in the Hebrews of their being seated in Christ Jesus in heavenly places. Christians are ever there, of course, but are not so seen in this epistle. Having then the ability (chap. 1), and suitability of Christ as High Priest (chap. 2), we are told to "consider Him" in these two characters - the "Apostle" who came from God to us, and the "High Priest" who has gone for us to God.

Then in chapters 3 and 4 we find the people in the wilderness on their journey; and in the end of chapter 4 we have the two instruments by which He carries His people through the wilderness. First, the Word of God - not in its formative, but (as verse 12 shows) in its detective character - "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word of God looks down into your heart while you are in this place of weakness - as His eye - and if there is a thought or purpose there not of God, it deals with you, it "discerns" it. It deals with the will, and when this will would lead you aside, the Word exposes its workings in its true character.

The second instrument is the priesthood of Christ to meet and sustain us in our weakness. If the Word of God in its breaking down power was all we had, we should say that it was very disheartening. But it is not all. There is a great deal more. "Having therefore a great high priest who has passed through the heavens" (J. N. D. Trans.) - the Son of God - not one who cannot be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses (this is the same word as in 2 Cor. 13:4, He was "crucified through weakness") for He was in all points tempted like as we are, except sin. A true heart looks for His sympathy, not with sin, but with the weakness; He looks for us to have common feeling with His against sin. Then He goes on - "Let us approach therefore with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace for seasonable [or timely] help." Heb. 4:16; J.N.D. Trans.

There is a great difference between "timely help" and "help in time of need." Suppose you are walking across the street and fall down and hurt yourself, and I run and help you up - that is help in time of need. But suppose I see you are likely to fall, and I hold you up to prevent your doing so - this would be "timely help." Now, there is a Priest - Christ in glory - who knows your nature, and

that you are likely to fall at any moment. What then is to keep you? Let us go boldly to Him that we may obtain mercy, and find grace for "timely help." What then is the language of your heart? "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." If the heart is always in the consciousness of weakness, knowing its need of being held up, it will rejoice in His timely succor. On our side there is the sense of weakness; on His side there is ability to meet that weakness; and God's instruments to prevent the saint from falling are thus effectual.

We stand in the consciousness of sins having been put away and deliverance from our standing as children of Adam. We have been brought into an entirely new place, with the question of sin and sins all settled, and redemption complete, and we draw near boldly to the throne of grace.

The epistle to the Hebrews is really the complement of that to the Romans. Romans sets us in divine righteousness with God, while Hebrews maintains us there. In Rom. 5:10 we are said to be "saved by His life," and in Rom. 8:34, "who also maketh intercession for us." In Hebrews we find allusion to both - He is gone on high (Heb. 1:3), and "ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

## King Saul Converted? Did Saul Backslide and Lost?

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A correspondent sent me a clipping which said, "Saul was truly converted (1 Sam. 10:6-9); yet he backslid (1 Sam. 15:11), and God withdrew from him His favor (v. 23). It is a very common doctrine, but very far indeed from the truth of the gospel.

The case of Saul (1 Sam. 10:6) has often perplexed anxious souls. But no one can rightly argue from this verse that Saul was a converted man; nor from 1 Sam. 15:23 that after conversion God withdrew from him His favor.

The Spirit came upon him as a prophet; but this in no wise proves that he was converted. At conversion a man is born of the Spirit, and then indwelt by the Spirit. But God may use a wicked man like Balaam as His mouthpiece (Numb. 24:2); and Saul was thus used, not only at the beginning of his career, but even after God had rejected him as king (1 Sam. 19:23). We read of many who will say in a coming day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you," etc. Matt. 7:22, 23. Mark, it does not say, "I knew you once," but, "I never knew you."

One clear verse of Scripture is better than all man's reasonings; "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." John 10:28.

Many years ago when the blessed emancipating truth of the gospel was recovered by God's grace for the present generation, a dear and pious saint of God was groaning out his misery, still under the bondage of the law, and ignorant of the liberty of grace. He had been saying that God had withdrawn the shining of His countenance from him. The one who had been the chief instrument in God's hands of this recovery of truth replied, "God never withdraws the shining of His countenance from a true believer, for all believers are in Christ, and God cannot withdraw the light of His countenance from Christ." "Ah," replied the other, "but I turn my back upon Him." "Then," came the quick rejoinder, "God will shine upon your back." Yes, he has made us accepted in His beloved Son (Eph. 1:6), and believers stand always in His favor (Rom. 5:2).

The doctrine of "falling away" denies the Word of God, dishonors the work of Christ, and destroys the true character of the gospel.

But it remains ever true that the believer is called upon to walk consistently with the grace that has so richly blessed him. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." Col. 2:6.

## What Is It? the Kingdom of Heaven: Leaven Hid in Meal

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My dear Friend,

A more complete study of Matthew 13 will enable you to see your mistake. No doubt most of us have had the same idea with regard to "leaven" as that to which you have given expression. It arises from not understanding the true meaning of the term "kingdom of heaven." When this is seized, all difficulty vanishes.

To what then does the term apply? To the condition of things during the absence of the King. Is this a condition of unmixed good? Alas, far from it. "An enemy" has been at work. He has introduced "leaven" into the "meal." He has sowed "tares" among the "wheat." Are "tares" good? No; they are false professors. Is "leaven" good? No; it is evil doctrine, evil principles, evil influence. The "meal" is good; the "wheat" is good; the "pearl" is good; the "treasure" is good; some of the "fish" are good. But there are bad and good in the kingdom - in the professing church - in Christendom. Christianity is like the beautiful snow as it descends in its purity from the clouds. Christendom is the odious and unsightly slush produced by the mixture of earth's pollutions with the pure material.

But we must not confound the Church or assembly of God with the kingdom of heaven, or the body of Christ with Christendom. The most disastrous results flow from this confusion. It leads to the denial of all godly discipline in the assembly. We are told that the tares and the wheat are to grow together. True; but where? In the field. But is the field the Church? No; the Lord distinctly tells us, "The field is the world." Are we to root up the tares? No; angels will do that by-and-by. Are we to suffer known tares in the assembly? God forbid. "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." 1 Cor. 5:13.

May I ask you to give Matthew 13 your prayerful study? Come to it with your mind free from all your preconceived ideas, and Christendom's false teachings. Most of us have had to unlearn a lot, to unship a quantity of mere rubbish, in order to take in the pure and precious truth of God.

I am, dear friend, faithfully yours,

## Leah's Sons: an Examination of Their Names

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Gen. 29:31-35

Israel, who was the betrothed of Jehovah ("Thy Maker is thine husband"), fair through the comeliness that He had put upon her, proves herself barren and without fruit to God, and is practically set aside: "Lo-ammi" (that is, "not My people") is written upon her. This is typified in Rachel, one of Jacob's wives.

Leah the hated one - figure of the Church in its aspect of being gathered from among the Gentiles - is then brought into blessing and fruitfulness; her reproach is taken away, and she who had not obtained mercy, now has obtained mercy, so to speak; and the result in the names of her children tells its own tale of sovereign grace.

Her firstborn brings out an entirely new thing in God's dealings. Reuben - "see" or "behold a son." The day of bondage is now passed; the servants are no more to possess the house, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." The servants slew the heir, and now the Son had come in and given the freedom of the house, and the title and privilege of sons, to all who received Him, so that we have no longer "the spirit of bondage again to fear," but "a spirit of adoption" is ours, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." This is your place and mine, beloved, for the "fullness of time" has come. God has sent forth His Son, and we are no more servants but sons; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ (Gal. 4:4-7).

How sweetly does her next son carry on the story of grace, and tell us how we are brought into this privileged place. She bore another son and called his name "Simeon" - "hearing"; and so the Apostle asks, Was it by works of law or by the hearing of faith (Gal. 3:2) that ye received the Spirit? By the "hearing of faith," surely; so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by God's Word (Rom. 10:17). "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life." Simeon typifies God's principle of action in this present dispensation - grace by the hearing of faith - for it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5).

Leah bore another son, and called his name "Levi" - "joined" - for she said, "Now... will my husband be joined unto me." He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit - bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. We are severed from our connections with the first man, and united to a risen

Christ in glory; made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; old things have passed away; all things have become new. We are of the new creation, vitally and eternally connected with the second Man, the Lord from heaven, a union now the portion of all God's children, to be known and enjoyed as their proper privilege.

How fitly does her next born son, the fourth (completing the perfect fruit of God's grace) bear the name of "Judah" - "praise"! It is our joy and privilege, as those who are sons of God by pure sovereign grace - once afar off, now made nigh - to offer up "the sacrifice of praise to God

continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." Yes, it is meet that we should praise the Lord, and call upon all that is within us to bless His holy name, since He has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. In seeking worshipers to worship Him in Spirit and in truth, He has sought and found us; let us then not forget that this is our holy privileged occupation. For if, in Levi we get the priesthood, and we are-though after another order-a holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5), still more, we are a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9), and the kingdom is ours in joint heirship with Christ. He that loved us, and has washed us from our sins in His own blood, has made us a kingdom, even priests unto God and His Father.

May we not then exclaim, as we enter into the blessed fact that we are sons - and sons by pure grace - in union with a risen Christ, privileged to praise our God as we wait for the kingdom to be manifested: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!... For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

## Life-Works

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"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Gal. 6:10.

If aught could enhance the value of these lovely words, it would be the fact of their being found at the close of the epistle to the Galatians. In the progress of this very remarkable writing, the inspired Apostle cuts up by the roots the entire system of legal righteousness. He proves in the most unanswerable way that by works of law, of any sort, moral or ceremonial, no man can be justified in the sight of God. He declares that believers are not under law in any way whatever, either for life, for justification, or for walk - that if we are under law, we must give up Christ; we must give up the Spirit of God; we must give up faith; we must give up the promises. In short, if we take up legal ground in any shape whatever, we must give up Christianity and lie under the actual curse of God.

We do not attempt to quote the passages or to go into this side of the question at all just now. We merely call the earnest attention of the Christian reader to the golden words which stand at the head of this article, words which, we cannot but feel, come in with incomparable beauty and peculiar moral force at the close of an epistle in which all human righteousness is withered up and flung to the winds. It is always needful to take in both sides of a subject. We are all so terribly prone to one-sidedness, that it is morally helpful for us to have our hearts brought under the full action of all truth. It is, alas! possible for grace itself to be abused; and we may sometimes forget that while we are justified in the sight of God only by faith, yet our faith must be evidenced by works. We have, all of us, to bear in mind that while law-works are denounced and demolished in the most unqualified manner in manifold parts of Holy Scripture, yet the life-works are diligently and constantly maintained and insisted upon. Yes, beloved Christian reader, we have to bend our earnest attention to this. If we profess to have life, this life must express itself in something more tangible and forcible than mere words or empty lip profession. It is quite true that law cannot give life, and hence it cannot produce life-works. Not a single cluster of living fruit ever was or ever will be culled from the tree of legality. Law can only produce "dead works," from which we need to have the conscience purged just as much as from "wicked works."

All this is most true. It is demonstrated in the pages of inspiration beyond all possibility of question or demur. But then there must be life-works, or else there is no life. Of what possible use is it to profess to have eternal life; to talk about faith; to advocate the doctrines of grace, while at the same time the entire life, the whole practical career, is marked by selfishness in every shape and form? "Whoso," says the blessed Apostle John, "hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in Him?" So also the Apostle James puts a very wholesome question to our hearts: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto him, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful

for the body; what doth it profit?"

Here we have life-works insisted upon in a way which ought to speak home in the most solemn and forcible way to our hearts. There is an appalling amount of empty profession - shallow, powerless, worthless talk in our midst. We have a wonderfully clear gospel - thanks be to God for it. We see very distinctly that salvation is by grace, through faith, not by works of righteousness nor by works of law.

Blessedly true! But when people are saved, ought they not to live as such? Ought not the new life to come out in fruits? It must come out if it be in; and if it does not come out, it is not there. Mark what the Apostle Paul says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Here we have what we may call the upper side of this great practical question.

But there is another side to which every true and earnest Christian will delight to give his attention. The Apostle goes on to say, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained [prepared; J.N.D. Trans.] that we should walk in them."

Here we have the whole subject fully and clearly before us. God has created us to walk in a path of good works, and He has prepared the path of good works for us to walk in. It is all of God from first to last, all through grace, and all by faith. Thanks and praise be to God that it is so! But, let us remember that it is utterly vain to talk about grace and faith and eternal life, if the "good works" are not forthcoming. It is useless to boast of our high truth, our deep, varied, and extensive acquaintance with Scripture, our correct position, our having come out from this, that, and the other, if our feet are not found treading that path of "good works, which God has before prepared" for us. God looks for reality. He is not satisfied with mere words of high profession. He says to us, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." He, blessed be His name, did not love us in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth; and He looks for a response from us - a response clear, full, and distinct, a response coming out in a life of good works, a life yielding mellow clusters of the "fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

Beloved Christian reader, do you not consider it to be our bounden duty to apply our hearts to this weighty subject? Ought we not diligently to seek to promote love and good works? And how can this be most effectually accomplished? Surely by walking in love ourselves, and faithfully treading the path of good works in our own private life. For ourselves, we profess we are thoroughly sick of hollow profession. High truth on the lips and low practice in daily life, is one of the crying evils of this our day. We talk of grace, but fail in common righteousness, fail in the plainest moral duties in our daily private life. We boast of our position and our standing, but we are deplorably lax as to our condition and state.

May the Lord in His infinite goodness stir up all our hearts to more thorough earnestness in the pursuit of good works, so that we may more fully adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things!

## The Lord Is My Helper: Jonathan

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### 1 Samuel 14

In the doings of Jonathan, we get energy of faith in the midst of sad confusion in Israel.

The people of God had sought in a carnal way to establish themselves against their enemies. A people of no faith to lean immediately upon God, they had asked for themselves a king; and, while testifying to His own rejection by them, God had instructed Samuel to hearken unto their voice in all that they said, and make them a king. "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations," was their cry, as again (even after the prophet had warned them as to consequences in accordance with the divine testimony), "Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." (Chap. 8.) The carnal desire is met, and Saul set up to war against Israel's enemies.

Such is the state of things in the midst of which we find Jonathan; and though he enters not into the full mind of God, he is able to act in the energy of faith.

It is hard for faith to endure the afflictions of God's people, and the dishonor done in it to God Himself. Jonathan endures it not - he has faith in the God of Israel, and he makes up his mind to attack the Philistines. He calls to his armor-bearer, and says, "Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side" (v. 1). The sin of the people of God may have subjected them to the power of the "uncircumcised," but that cannot subject the rights of God. Such is faith's reasoning. And nothing is more simple. The moment there is separation unto God, a standing with Him, there is zeal for God and strength in His service. But he confers not with flesh and blood: "He told not his father." There was faith in Saul; and had he consulted him, Saul would most probably only have discouraged - with faith, he would have gone himself - he would either have stopped or hampered him. When he does act, it is only to trouble. Faith has to act on its own responsibility. One way in which we very constantly fail, is in asking counsel of those who have not the faith or the light we ourselves have; we thus sink down to their level.

All that could give authority, or accredit it, in the eyes of the people, religious too, was with Saul. The king, the priest, the ark, were all there. But Jonathan waits not for the people. He has none but his armor-bearer with him; and so much the better for him, for, he is not troubled with the unbelief of others. Where there is a single eye, there is ever confidence in acting, and not hesitation. The flesh may be confident, but its confidence is in self, and therefore only folly. Faith makes nothing of circumstances, because it makes God all. It is not that difficulties in themselves are lessened, but that God fills the eye.

The Philistines' position is a strong one; amidst precipitous rocks, what could human energy avail? Jonathan has to climb up upon his hands and feet (v. 13). The oppressors are there too in great numbers, and well armed. But faith, with a single sword, counts God sufficient. "Come," is the unhesitating word, "let us go over into the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us" (v. 6). The "uncircumcised" have no strength when looked at thus; they

have not the God of Jacob for their help; their hope is not in the Lord. "There is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few." The enemy may be as the sand of the seashore for multitude - that is nothing, and faith knows it. He can give strength to one sword to subdue a host.

Jonathan seeks not other help. Happy in his companion, a man of a kindred spirit (his answer bearing him the witness "Do all that is in thy heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart" [v. 7]), he at once discovers himself to the Philistines (v. 8).

We have already remarked on the strong, simple confidence of Jonathan in the Lord's power; another thing that characterizes his faith is the consciousness of the impossibility of the link between God and His people being broken. Sad as the condition of that people is - the Philistines in power in their midst, pillaging a defenseless land; no means of resistance left to them, not a sword or a spear (except with Saul and with Jonathan) found in Israel (chap. 13:19,22); the very king they have in their midst, one they have sinned in setting up - this touches not His faithfulness. The Philistines are delivered into the hand of Israel (not into his own), in the judgment of the man of faith (v. 12). In isolating itself with God, faith identifies itself with His people. It loses sight of self, passes over their desolations, and recognizes all that is theirs in God. Jonathan is as the Lord's hand. And see what boldness. Though Israel be not able to sharpen a mattock, in the name of the God of hosts, the Lord, God of Israel, he goes straight on his way.

But then while he goes forward thus, conferring not with flesh and blood, there is nothing of boastfulness, no acting in fleshly haste and excitement. His expectation is from God. He can discover himself plainly to the garrison of the Philistines, telling them, as it were, Here am I, an Israelite; but we will wait and see. If they say, "Tarry until we come to you," he will stand in his place, and will not go up to them. But if they say, "Come up unto us," he will go up; the Lord hath delivered them into their hands. There is to be the sign (vv. 9,10). In other words, he will wait for them to come to him, or he will go throw himself into the midst of their camp, just as the Lord may bid. He will not make difficulties for himself; but he will not turn away from difficulties which meet him in the path. His is the real dependence of faith.

Having done this, the very haughtiness and scorn of the hostile power instruct him as to what to do. "Behold," say the men of the garrison one to another, "the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves"; and then, indolently and with fleshly confidence, taunt these true Israelites, "Come up to us, and we will show you a thing" (vv. 11,12). It is the sign for Jonathan; "The LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel." Saul's summons of the people (chap. 13:3) is by their name of Hebrews, the name the Philistines called them by. Jonathan calls them by their God-given name, Israel.

In the energy of faith, Jonathan goes forth and climbs the rock, his armor-bearer following. The Philistines fall before him; it is comparatively easy work for the armor-bearer to slay after him. The power that inspires Jonathan acts for him. The Lord is really there; He uses Jonathan as an instrument, He puts honor upon the arm faith has strengthened, but He manifests Himself. The terror of God falls upon the enemies of Israel (vv. 13,15).

The Lord Is My Helper: Jonathan

1 Samuel 14

But what of Saul? He has been left tarrying under a pomegranate tree in Migron, while God is triumphing over the Philistines through Jonathan (v. 2). "And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another. Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us." vv. 16,17. All that is regular as to form is with Israel, but not faith. "And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not there." That is all they know about it.

"And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God" (v. 18). Here again there is form - the form of honoring the Lord in seeking His guidance. It seems all right, yet it is but the form. Saul will have the ark brought; but while he talks with the priest, the tumult of defeat in the host of the Philistines still going on and increasing, he bids him stop; "Withdraw thine hand," he says (v. 19). There is no simplicity of dependence upon God, but the uncertainty and bewilderment of unbelief.

He joins the battle (v. 20), but it is not as entering into the spirit of the thing. He has no sense of that on which Jonathan had counted, the secret of Jonathan's strength - "There is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few." He calls the people around himself, and adjures them saying, "Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies" (v. 24). "So none of the people tasted any food." There is great apparent energy, it is true; but it is not of the Spirit of God, so that when he gets into the tide of victory he is in reality only a troubler, distressing Israel, and hindering the pursuit. It is a carnal and selfish zeal. We may get into the path of faith, but we shall find there that nothing but faith can walk in it; let the flesh mix itself up in the work of faith, and it is only for weakness.

The people came to a wood; there is honey upon the ground; yet no man puts his hand to his mouth, for they fear the oath (vv. 25,26). Jonathan has not heard that oath; wherefore he puts forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dips it in the honeycomb, and puts his hand to his mouth, and his eyes are enlightened (v. 27). When made acquainted with the curse, and seeing the people faint around him, he at once exclaims, "My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?"

Happy Jonathan! Faith is so occupied with its work, and has so the sense of God's love and grace, that it has full liberty, and whatsoever God presents in the way, it can thankfully avail itself of, taking it and going on; while the carnal zeal of that which is but an imitation of faith, and which never works with God, makes a duty of refusing it. Had Jonathan not been occupied heart and soul in the Lord's work, he might have stopped to think about the honey; as it is, he merely takes it for the refreshment, and passes on. Through the energy of faith, he is carried clean out' of the knowledge of the oath (v. 27), out of the reach of this unbelief. He can avail himself of the kindness of his God with joy and thanksgiving, and pursue his course refreshed and encouraged, while the people (who had not the faith to go with him) are under the curse, and cannot. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Saul has put both himself and the people under this miserable restraint (if the flesh puts itself under bondage, it must keep its oath); and, in result, they are led into sin, for they are so hungry that when the time of the oath is expired, they fly upon the cattle taken as spoil, and slay them, and eat the flesh with the blood thereof, thus violating a direct command of God (Deut. 12:22, 23).

The effect of all this is that of making faith guilty for acting in liberty. Such is ever the way of the flesh in its mixing itself up with faith.

At a moment of manifest outward blessing Saul must build an altar, and make much of the Lord's name, just as previously he had professed to seek counsel at the ark. He builds his altar (v. 35). But let us mark the emphatic comment of the Holy Ghost, "The same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD." Then, through the priest, he consults God as to pursuing the Philistines; "But He answered him not that day" (v. 37). On this he seeks by an appeal to the "God of Israel," to discover the hidden and hindering sin (vv. 36-41). The Lord indeed acts, yet it is only to manifest the folly of the king; the "perfect lot" is given, and Jonathan is taken (v. 41).

"Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die. And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan." vv. 43,44.

The people do not allow this. They interfere, and say, "Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day." That is self-evident. "So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not" (v. 45).

He had "wrought with God." His was the simple, happy path of unhesitating faith which counts on God, on His faithful connection with His people, and walks in the blessed liberty of taking the refreshment He may give by the way - liberty for refreshment, not for licentiousness, while the flesh is making its solemn resolutions not to touch, not to taste, not to handle, and then, the occasion serving, setting aside the authority of God. Faith of this sort confers not with flesh and blood; it acts from God, and it acts for God.

All the religious actings, all the forms of piety, are with Saul. He has the ark and the priest. He makes the vow to abstain from food; manifests zeal for ordinances; prevents the people eating flesh with the blood; builds his altar, when others have got the blessing, and takes the credit to himself. He can be religious when he has comfort and blessing; but there is no reference to God in faith, so as to go through difficulties with God. There is Energy, but it is energy in the flesh; deliberation, when God is acting; and action, when he does act, is in haste and bewilderment.

The Lord preserve His people from the guidance and help of unbelief in the work of faith, blessed in the simplicity which acts with Him.

## Lot's Choice: Present Advantage

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There is much profitable instruction in tracing, in contrast, the characters of Lot and Abraham. Both were saints of God, yet how different as to their walk! how different also as to their personal experiences in regard to peace, joy, and nearness to God! And there is ever this difference between a worldly-minded believer and one, through the grace of God, truehearted. In the scriptural sense of the term (2 Pet. 2:8) a "righteous man," Lot, "vexed his righteous soul from day to day." Abraham walked before God.

The Lord cannot but be faithful to His people; still, He does mark in their path that which is not of faith, and Lot's trials are the consequences of his unbelief. There is one thing very marked in his course throughout - great uncertainty and obscurity as to the path and as to the judgment of God, because of not realizing that security in God which would have enabled him to walk straight forward, while there is no hesitation in things connected with this world. And it is thus with ourselves if we have not taken Christ for our portion heartily. Abraham's was a thoroughly happy life - he had God for his portion.

Lot is seen rather as the companion in the walk of faith of those who have faith, than as one having and acting in the energy of faith himself. Therefore, when put to the test, there is only weakness. In how many things do we act with those who have faith before having it for ourselves. It was thus with the disciples of the Lord; and the moment they were put to the test, there was weakness and failure. The soul will not stand when sifted through temptation if walking in the light of another.

God's personal call of Abraham at the first is mixed with a sort of unbelief in Abraham, much like the reply in the Gospel, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." He set out, but he took Terah his father with him, and went and lodged in Haran (he could not take Terah with him into the land of Canaan). Now God had called Abraham, but not Terah. He left everything except Terah, and entered into possession of nothing. But he tried to carry something with him which was not of God, and he could not. It is not until after Terah's death that he removed into Canaan where God had called him. (Compare Gen. 12:1 and Acts 7:4.) "So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him:... they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

Lot (though having faith) goes in the path he treads as the companion of Abraham. As to actual position, he stands with Abraham. He is truly a saint of God, though afterward we find him treading the crooked path of the world's policy.

God blesses them. The land is not able to bear them so that they may dwell together (chap. 13). They have flocks and herds and much cattle, and there is not room for them both - they must separate. Circumstances, no matter what (here it is God's blessings), reveal this.

They are in the place of strangers, that is clear ("the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land"). They have nothing in possession, not so much as to put a foot upon; all rests on their

valuing the promises (Heb. 11:9). They have just two things, the altar and the tent. Journeying about and worshiping God, they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Abraham confesses that he is such; he declares plainly that he seeks a country; "Wherefore," we are told, God is not ashamed to be called his God. (He is never called "the God of Lot.") This acts upon the whole spirit and character of Abraham.

The land is not able to bear them that they may dwell together; there is a strife between their herdsmen; they must separate. Abraham says, "Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right." His heart is upon the promises of God, and everything else is as nothing in comparison. It might seem a foolish thing to let Lot choose - to give up to Lot - the right to do so is certainly his own; but his heart is elsewhere. His faith goes entirely free from earthly advantage.

Not so Lot - he lifts up his eyes - the plain of Jordan is well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord, and he chooses it. There is nothing gross or wrong in itself, in his choosing a well-watered plain; but it just distinctly proves that his whole heart is not set upon the promises of God. Thus he is put to the test. And thus, in the way of the accomplishments of God's purposes, character is displayed. Abraham's conduct has for its spring a simplicity of faith which embraces God's promises (Heb. 11:13), and wants nothing besides. Faith can give up. The spirit of a carnal mind takes all it can get. Lot acts upon the present sense of what is pleasant and desirable; why should he not? what harm is there in the plains of Jordan? His heart is not on the promises. The companion of Abraham, he is brought to the level of his own faith.

But he will dwell in the cities of the plain if he chooses the rivers of the plain. It is not his intention to go into the city, but he will get there step by step. (He must find trouble in the place he has taken pleasure in.) There is not the power of faith to keep him from temptation. Where there is not the faith that keeps the soul on the promises, there is not the faith to keep it out of sin. It is not insincerity, but people's souls are in that condition, and God proves them.

Abraham's path all the way through is characterized by personal intimacy with God - visits from God - the Lord comes down to him and explains His purposes, so that he is called the "friend of God" (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; Jas. 2:23); and this is not only as to his own portion, but as to what He is going to do with Sodom - the judgment He is about to bring on Sodom. though personally he has nothing to do with it, and the promise is his hope (chap. 18). So now He tells His people what He is going to do about the world. Though their hope is connected with their own views, with the promises and the heavenly Canaan, He takes them into His confidence as to what is to happen where they are not to be.

Lot, the while, is vexing his righteous soul. Does he know anything about the purposes of God? Not a word. He is saved, yet so as by fire; though a "righteous soul," his is a vexed soul instead of a soul in communion with God, vexed "from day to day" (there is so far right-mindedness that it is a vexed soul). He is there before the judgment comes, with his soul vexed, while happy Abraham is on the mount holding conversation with God; and when it does come, how does it find him? With his soul vexed and totally unprepared for it, instead of in communion with God about it.

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation," and He delivers "just Lot." But, while thus vexing his righteous soul with their unlawful deeds, the men of the city have a right to

say to him, What business have you here? "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge" (v. 9). You are quarreling with sin in the place of sin. They have a perfect right to judge thus. All power of testimony is lost by reason of association with the world, when he ought to be witnessing to his total separation from it; there is vexation of spirit, but not power. When Abraham got down into Egypt, he had nothing to do but to go right back to the place of the altar he had built at the first. Lot testifies, but he cannot get out of the place he is in; the energy that ought to have thrown him out is neutralized and lost by his getting into it; his daughters have married there; he has ties where his unbelief had led him. It is far more difficult to tread the uphill road than the downhill road.

Whenever the counsels of God are revealed to faith, it brings out the spirit of intercession. The word to the prophet, "Make the heart of this people fat" (Isa. 6), at once brings out, "Lord, how long?" So here, Abraham pleads with the Lord to spare the city. (But there are not ten - there is not one righteous man in Sodom with the exception of Lot.) As regards his own position, he is looking down upon the place of judgment. And in the morning, when the cities are in flames, he finds himself in quietness and peace on the spot where he "stood before the LORD" (v. 27), not at all in the place where the judgment had come, solemnized indeed by the scene before him, but calm and happy with the Lord.

The Lord sends Lot out of the midst of the overthrow. Angels warn him, and faith makes him listen. But his heart is still there. There are connections that bind him to Sodom, and he would fain take them with him. But you cannot take anything with you for God out of Sodom; you must leave it all behind. The Lord must put the pain where you find the pleasure. "While he lingered" (there is hesitation and lingering in the place of judgment, when the judgment has been pronounced; he ought to have left at once; but the place, the path, and spirit of unbelief enervate the heart), "the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city." And now it is, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed." v. 17. As for the goods, the sheep, and the much cattle, he must leave them all behind. If the Lord's faithfulness is shown in saving Lot, it is shown also in breaking the links that bind him to the place. His mind is all distraction. He says, "Oh, not so, my Lord.... I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil take me, and I die." He has lost the sense of security in the path of faith. Such is ever the consequence of the path of unbelief in a saint of God; he thinks the path of faith the most dangerous path in the world. Lot has become used to the plain, and the place where Abraham is enjoying perfect security and peace is a mountain. The Lord spared Zoar at his request, and lets him flee thither; but, on seeing the judgment, he flees to the mountain, forced to take refuge there in the end.

This is an extreme case; we shall find the same thing true in varying degrees. Abraham could give up (that sacrifice always belongs to faith); but there are trials to the believer because of unbelief - because he is a believer, but in a wrong place. Lot was a "righteous man"; but, when he did not walk in the path of faith, he had vexation of soul and trouble - a righteous soul, but where a righteous soul ought not to be. Observe his incapacity simply to follow the Lord. Observe all his uncertainty. So will it be with us if we are walking in the path of unbelief; there will be trouble which is not our proper portion, but which comes upon us because we are in a wrong, worldly place - the trial that belongs to unbelief. We may be seeking the compassion of the Church of God when we

are only suffering, like Lot, the fruit of our own unbelief - the simple path of faith having been departed from because we had not learned to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Giving up is our proper position, simple sacrifice in the knowledge and present consciousness that "all things are ours."

## The Love That Will Not Let Me Go: the Awakening of Love

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How blessed to have found in Christ a friend who loves with a love that will not let us go, according to that Word which tells us "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

Such love - the everlasting love of Christ that never gives us up - cannot be satisfied until it has drawn out our love in response to His love. The answer to His love will only be realized in its fullness when at last we have reached love's eternal home. Nevertheless, on the way to the home, the love that appreciates Christ in the place of His rejection and the day of His rejection, is very sweet to His heart. This we may surely learn from the value that is set by the Lord on the love of Mary that led her to anoint His feet with the very precious ointment.

Very encouraging it is, and good for our souls, to learn the gracious ways of the Lord with His people in order to awaken love, maintain love, and deepen love, in our hearts. It is these gracious ways of the Lord that we would briefly trace in the New Testament stories of two devoted women.

1) The awakening of love (Luke 7:47, 36-39). In the great scene that takes place in the house of Simon the Pharisee, we see the awakening of love for the Savior in the heart of a sinner. The Lord, in the perfection of His way, had stooped to grace with His presence the feast which the Pharisee had spread. While sitting at the table, an unbidden guest enters, of whom the Lord can say, "She loved much." How, we may ask, was this love awakened in her soul?

There is no question as to the character of the woman. The Spirit of God has described her as "a woman in the city, which was a sinner." Moreover, her bad reputation was well known, for Simon is also aware that "she is a sinner." She was a sinner and knew it, and Simon knew it, and everyone knew it. Further, she was a burdened sinner, and possibly had heard those wonderful words of the Lord's, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Be this as it may, it is beyond question that she saw in Christ the grace that could bless the undeserving. Thus driven by her need, and drawn by His grace, with the boldness of faith, she enters the Pharisee's house and takes her stand at the feet of Jesus.

The Spirit of God calls attention to the fine scene that follows with a "Behold." He would arrest our attention and have us turn aside and see this great sight - the meeting between the devil's hell-bound sinner and God's heaven-sent Savior. Doubtless, the onlookers were struck dumb with amazement as they watched the scene unfolding itself before their eyes. They might well question what would happen. Would the Lord expose her character, condemn her sins, and dismiss her from His holy presence? Ah! no; the proud Pharisee may condemn the sinner, to find himself exposed by the Savior; but the Lord will not condemn a confessed sinner.

The wisdom of His way is as perfect as the grace of His heart. At first no word is spoken. The guests are silent in wonder; the Lord is silent in grace; the woman is silent in sorrow. No sound breaks the silence but the sobs of a weeping sinner. If, however, nothing is said, much takes place, for the sinner's heart was broken and the sinner's heart was won. She "stood at His feet

behind Him weeping" and she "kissed" His feet. The tears tell of a heart that is broken, and the kisses, of a heart that is won.

What was it that had broken her heart and won her heart? Was it not that she saw something of the grace and holiness of the Savior, and in the light of His glory she realized, as never before, the sinfulness of her life and her heart, and this broke her heart? But more, she realized that though she was a sinner full of sin, yet He was a Savior full of grace for one who was full of sin. She found herself in the presence of One who knew her vile life through and through, and yet loved her; and this won her heart.

Good for each one, if we too have been in His presence, burdened and wretched by reason of our sins, there to discover that in Him we have found One who knows the worst about us and yet loves us. Thus to have love for Christ awakened in our souls, as we sing

## The Love That Will Not Let Me Go: the Deepening of Love

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From another incident in the story of Mary of Bethany, we shall learn another lesson in the story of love. If in Luke 10 we have seen how love is maintained in the common round of life, in John 11, we shall learn how love is deepened in the sorrows of life. There life was flowing in its usual channel; here the everyday life is arrested by a great sorrow. Sickness has invaded the Bethany circle, and the shadow of death is creeping over the home. In the trial that has overtaken them, how will the sisters act? Moved by grace they take the best possible course. They draw upon the love of Christ. In Luke 10 Mary is learning the love of Christ in the calm of a quiet life; in John 11 she is drawing upon that love amid the storms of life. There she enjoyed His love in His company; here she uses His love in her sorrow. All this is written plainly in the appeal that these devoted women make to the Lord. They send to Him saying, "He whom Thou lovest is sick" (v. 3). How brightly the faith and confidence in the Lord of these two sisters shines out in this brief message. They turn to the right Person, for they "sent unto Him." They use the right plea, for they say, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." They plead not the feeble love of Lazarus for the Lord, but the perfect and unfailing love of the Lord for Lazarus. So too they appeal to the Lord in the right way, for they do not suggest what the Lord shall do; they neither ask the Lord to heal, nor to come, nor even to speak a word on their behalf. They simply spread out their sorrow before the Lord and cast themselves upon the boundless resources of unbounded love. Will love disappoint them? Ah! no; for love delights to respond to the appeal of hearts moved by love.

However, love divine will take its perfect way, a way indeed that to mere nature may seem passing strange. The sisters have delighted His heart by drawing upon His love; now He will delight their hearts by deepening in their souls the sense of His love, and thus deepening their love for Him. For it is ever thus, the deeper the sense of His love, the deeper will be the response of our love. We love Him because He first loved us.

To accomplish His gracious work He will use the sorrows of life; and, that His love may be deepened in our souls, He will first deepen the sorrow. The saints are called to the glory of God after they have "suffered a while" (1 Pet. 5:10); so, on our way to glory, we often catch some brighter rays of His glory after a time of suffering. It was thus with the sisters. They had to suffer a while, for the Lord tarries, and no word comes from the Lord. The days are passing, Lazarus is sinking, the shadow of death is creeping over the home. At last death has come; Lazarus is dead. They have suffered a while; they shall now see His glory - for "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." To sight it was for death; in reality death was being used to bring into display the glory of Christ, and swell the triumph of His victory over death. To accomplish these great ends, how perfect the way He takes.

Human love, thinking only of the relief of the sick one, would have started at once for Bethany. Human prudence, thinking only of self, would never have gone, even as the disciples say, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee; and goest Thou thither again?" The Lord, rising above human love and human prudence, acts according to divine love moved by divine wisdom. "As for

God, His way is perfect."

After patience has had her perfect work, in love's due time, the Lord comes to the bereaved sisters at Bethany, and reveals the deep love of His heart as He talks with them, and walks with them, and weeps with them. He is going to deepen their love by His words of love, and ways of love, and tears of love. What depths of love lie behind those sublime words, "Jesus wept." It was a wonderful sight to see a sinner weeping in the presence of His love, but more wonderful to see the Savior weeping in the presence of our sorrow. That we should weep because of our sins is a small wonder; that He should weep because of our sorrows is a great wonder - a wonder that discloses how near He came, and how near He is to a sorrowing saint.

Why, we may ask, these tears? The Jews, standing around the grave, misinterpret the tears; for they say, "Behold how He loved him!" Truly, the Lord loved Lazarus, but the tears were not the expression of His love for Lazarus. The sisters may weep for the loss of their brother; there was, however, no need for the Lord to weep for one He was about to raise. It was not for the dead He wept, but for the living - not for the loss of Lazarus, but for the sorrow of Mary and Martha. In a little, love will raise Lazarus, but first love will weep with Martha and Mary. He broke His heart to bind up our hearts, and shed His tears to dry our tears. In so doing He declared His love, and deepens our love. Thus He uses the trials, the sorrows, and the rough ways of life to unfold the treasures of His love, and draw out our love to Him.

After this great trial the sisters would surely have said, We knew that He loved us, but, until the trial came, we never knew that He loved us so much as to walk with us and weep with us in the trial.

At His feet, in Luke 10, Mary was learning His love; in John 11 she draws upon the love of which she had learned, and is deepened in the love that she draws upon.

What holy, happy lessons can we learn from these different scenes. We learn that at the feet of Jesus, as sinners, love is awakened; at the feet of Jesus, as learners, love is maintained; and at the feet of Jesus, in our sorrows, love is deepened.

## The Love That Will Not Let Me Go: the Maintenance of Love

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2) The maintenance of love (Luke 10:38-42). We have seen how love for Christ is awakened, and blessed indeed when at the outset of the Christian life the heart is won for Christ. We have now to learn how the heart, in which love has been awakened, can be maintained in the freshness of first love.

Do we not all know that, with the passing of time, many things may creep in between the soul and Christ? Not always gross things, which indeed might arrest the soul by the very wretchedness they bring, but things that are small and apparently harmless - "the little foxes that spoil the vines," and render the life unfruitful. The allowance of these little things will cast a chill over the affections, and gradually form an icy crust over the heart; and the Lord has to say to us, "Thou hast left thy first love." Thus from one cause and another we often see, while love to Christ has been truly awakened in souls, some make little progress in spiritual intelligence, where as others grow in deeper acquaintance with the Lord and His mind. How then is the love that has been awakened to be maintained?

Will not the home at Bethany supply the answer? In the two sisters we have two saints in whom love to Christ has been truly awakened; yet in one sister we see a believer growing in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, while in the other sister we see a saint who is hindered by self and hampered by her service.

Martha's love was shown by seeking to meet the physical necessities of the Lord as a man. Mary's love was seen in seeking to gratify the deep longings of His heart by hearing His word.

If then we would know how love is awakened, we must in spirit visit the home of Simon; but would we know how love is maintained, let us visit the house at Bethany. Standing at the feet of the Savior, in the house of Simon, love was awakened in the heart of a sinner; sitting -at the feet of the Master, in the home of Martha, love was maintained. At His feet we are in His company; in His company we hear His words, and His words declare His heart. There we are learners in the school of love. How much do we know of the good part chosen by Mary - the turning aside from the busy round of life, and the activities of service to be alone with Jesus, and more, to draw nigh to Jesus for the love of being near Him? The Lord loves our company; He delights to have us in His presence. He may dispense with our busy service, but He cannot do without ourselves. Thus only will first love be maintained, and if lost, regained. We cannot live on the past. Past experiences may have awakened love, but only present communion can maintain love.

## Moral Content of the Ten Commandments: Application to Christians

### Part 1

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Beloved Brethren, I have it before me this afternoon to take up the subject of the ten commandments and their moral bearing upon the Christian. But first let us read the following scriptures.

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16). "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Gal. 2:19. "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." Gal. 3:10. "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." v. 11. "And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them." v. 12. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Now the reason I have read these verses is this: In taking up the subject of the ten commandments, there might be an inclination on the part of some to think that I was taking them up in a legal way, as though we believers of this present day are under the law. No! we are under grace - pure sovereign grace-nothing of legality about it.

Let us turn to the 20th chapter of Exodus where Israel found themselves in the presence of the august law of God, the "ten words" (Exod. 34:28; margin) given to them by Moses at Mount Sinai.

Our thought is to trace these "ten words" as we find their corollary in the New Testament. Of the ten commandments, eight are negative; two are positive; nine moral; one ceremonial.

God's nature is not subject to change; thus we shall find that the nine commandments that are essentially moral in character have their replica in Christianity. Let us seek to trace them. The first commandment is found in the third verse of Exodus 20, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." This stands at the head of the list. It is fundamental. It is an essential part of the Jewish economy. So also the Christian revelation preserves this truth inviolate. Let us turn to 1 Corinthians 8, the end of verse 4, "There is none other God but one." How clear and unequivocal is this statement. Now read the 6th verse: "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things." So when a Jehovah Witness comes to your door to challenge your confession of Christ as God, read to him 1 Cor. 8:4-6. We own but one God, but that one God has been pleased to reveal Himself in three Persons. You remember that Philip asked the Lord Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father." How wonderful was our Lord's reply: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;... I am in the Father, and the Father in Me" (John 14:8-11). Now let us turn to John's first epistle, the last chapter and the 20th verse. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and bath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Oh, how definite! Crystal clear are these pronouncements; Jesus is God. Yes, in Christianity we know but one God. Sometimes He is manifested as the

Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Spirit. (Cf. Acts 5:3, 4.) So in Christianity we find ourselves in hearty accord with Moses' first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

Going back now to the 20th chapter of Exodus, let us take up the second commandment. We will read from verse 4. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments." "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." Now turn to 1 Cor. 10:14. "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." See also verse 7. "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." We are living in a period which is readying itself for the "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:3). The world is going to plunge into the most awful idolatry that it has ever known. The Jews themselves will be sevenfold more deeply involved in idolatry than ever before. (See Matt. 12:43-45.) The rest of the world will follow right along. This trend is apparent today. Have you noticed the rapid increase in the stock of figurines and statuettes for sale in many different kinds of stores? Among such you will see exact replicas of heathen idols. One feels that all this is moving in the direction of having all the materials ready for idol worship and worship of the image of the beast (Rev. 13). When man gives up the true knowledge of God as revealed in the Word of God, he readily falls into idolatry. Such has been his history. Behind the seemingly innocent idol of clay or wood, is the sinister power and presence of a demon. It is really demon worship. Compare 1 Cor. 10:20. (See Rev. 9:20.) Thus we find in this 10th chapter of 1 Corinthians a solemn warning to us Christians to flee from anything that borders on idolatry. Bowing down before images has no place in Christianity. This is in full agreement with the second commandment.

Again back to Exodus 20; this time we shall read verse 7. "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." Let us turn to James, the 5th chapter and verse 12. "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." How completely this substantiates the third Mosaic commandment. Let us go a little more into detail here. I do not believe there is anyone present in this room today who deliberately takes the name of the Lord in vain. But let us notice that James takes the matter beyond this minimum prohibition. "Let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." I wonder how many of us here can plead innocence as we hear that exhortation. If you will look up the word "mince" in Webster's dictionary, you will find the term "minced oath."... This provides a polite way to swear - a refined method of profanity. It is a grievous fact that many of the Lord's people fall into the habit, thus ignoring this salutary warning of James. I have here with me a little pamphlet put out by Good News Publishers, Wells St., Chicago. It is entitled "Minced Oaths." I thought perhaps you would bear with me if I read one paragraph of this tract. "A commonly used interjection is 'Gee.' It is capitalized in Webster's New International Dictionary, and given this definition: 'A form of Jesus used in minced oaths.' Two common words and their definitions are these: 'Golly - a euphemism for God, used in minced oaths; Gosh - a substitute for God, used in minced oaths.' 'Darn, darned, damnation' are said to be

'colloquial euphemisms for damn, damned, damnation.' Persons who allow their lips to utter 'gosh-darned' quite freely, would be shocked if they realized the real meaning of the word." To gain the full victory in this matter of obedience to the Word of God we need to make the prayer of David our daily petition, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer." Psalm 19:14. I think of you young people, especially, in the matter of forming your habits of speech. When you are young is the time to eliminate all from your conversation that borders on the rough, the uncouth, or the profane. Never allow anything of the kind to creep into your utterances. Let us heed this warning of the Word. Let us guard our speech, in the home, in the school, in the factory, in the office; let it be chaste and pure. Let it be such as can stand the Lord's examination at the judgment seat of Christ.

In Exodus 20 again, verse 8. Here we have the fourth commandment. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." Now I will have to confess that I am absolutely unable to produce anything that answers to that commandment in Christianity. It is not to be found. Remember, that word "sabbath," which means "rest," is first used in Exod. 16:23 in connection with the children of Israel gathering the manna. It was not to be gathered on the sabbath, the seventh day. This day was distinctly declared to be a day of rest. But when we enter the Christian dispensation, or administration if you prefer, we find no directions for the observance of any such day. There is only one mention of the sabbath in any of the New Testament epistles; that is in Col. 2:16. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days." But now notice the qualifying statement in the next verse, "Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ!" Evidently the only reason for mentioning the sabbath here is to show that it forms no part of the Christian revelation. On the contrary, it was but a shadow of what was to follow. As far as our day of rest is concerned, we learn from Hebrews 4 that, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." v. 9. We cannot say that the sabbath has been changed to Sunday. The sabbath was always the seventh day of the week; Sunday is the first day of the week, so it could not possibly be the sabbath. So we await our day of rest when the Lord shall take us to His Father's house, that we may rest in His love. The rest is at the end of the journey.

Some may ask the question, "What about the Lord's day, the first day of the week; is that not our day of rest?" To this we must answer, "No." Then what place does it hold in our lives? Does the expression itself not answer the question, "the Lord's day"? The day belongs to the Lord. It is to be used for Him. It is on that day that we come together to break bread. The term Lord's day is found only once; namely, in Rev. 1:10. The word in Greek here might be translated dominical. So we might translate this verse in Revelation 1, "I was in the Spirit on the dominical day." Now if we go back to the 11th chapter of 1 Corinthians, we shall find this same Greek word used in connection with the Lord's supper. Or, it might be called the dominical supper. Now, is it not significant that the only use of this Greek word dominical in the New Testament is in connection with the supper and the day? So the Lord's supper is observed on the Lord's day.

The Lord's day is definitely distinguished from other days by several significant scriptures. Our Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead on the first day of the week; He appeared to His disciples on that day; He appeared to them again the second Lord's day after His resurrection. We note that the Holy Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost, which was also the first day of the week; the disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread; the Apostle told the

Corinthians to lay by on the first day of the week their contribution for the collection for the poor saints. All these scriptures go to show us that in Christianity the first day of the week completely displaces the Jewish sabbath. How inconsistent it would be for the Church of God to celebrate as their day, that during which their Lord and Savior lay under the power of death and the grave. But how glorious to come together on the first day of the week, the day of His victory over the tomb. How sweet and precious to give to Him this first day of the week, His day.

I desire to say something to you young people here today. It grieves me as I go about to find so many of our young folks using the Lord's day for their ordinary tasks of life. You tell me that you would not think of getting out and cutting the lawn on the Lord's day, nor, perhaps, would you consider doing your washing on the Lord's day. But now, let us come nearer home. You say you are in school. Well and good; that is a proper and legitimate part of your life. I hope you do well in your school work. But listen; is your school work of such importance that it can rightfully displace your giving the Lord's day to Him to whom it belongs? Perhaps you answer, "If I do not study on the Lord's day, I will not get an 'A' grade." Perhaps not, but even so, which is of more importance to you, an "A" or the Lord's approval? Let us seek, by the grace of God, to give the Lord His day.

Perhaps some young person is saying, "Well, how then am I to spend my Lord's day?" I happen to know how some of our dear young brothers and sisters make use of their spare time on the Lord's day. They find various ways of giving out the gospel. Maybe it is the visiting of institutions for the passing out of tracts and speaking to souls individually about the Lord. Perhaps it is street preaching. With others it is visiting the sick and the shut-ins. Some take a part of the Lord's day to write helpful letters to Christian friends, or perhaps to unsaved relatives and friends. Others take a part of the day to mail out literature to those whom they think might be helped in their souls by some tract or pamphlet. No, there is no sabbath, no day of rest in Christianity, but there is a day we may be free to serve the Lord. May the Lord give us a tender conscience that it may be truly His day.

## Moral Content of the Ten Commandments: Application to Christians

### Part 2

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Returning now to Exodus 20, we will read the 12th verse. Here we have the fifth commandment. "Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." If we turn to Eph. 6:2 we find this commandment is quoted word for word. Christianity would not ask less of children than would the law. How blessed it is when we see the children of Christian parents seeking to carry out faithfully the request of the Word as given here in the epistle to the Ephesians. Such will never have cause to regret that they sought to give their parents this place of respect. God will not be their debtor. They will reap the blessing of it in their own lives.

In the 13th verse of Exodus 20 we have the 6th commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." If we will now turn to 1 Peter, 4th chapter, verse 15, we read, "Let none of you suffer as a murderer." God's standard on this matter of taking human life is no less strict under the Christian revelation than it was under Judaism. Murder cannot be tolerated in the Christian economy.

Next in order is the well-known seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Here let us turn to Heb. 13:4. We will read this verse as translated in Mr. Darby's version of the New Testament. I quote: "Let marriage be held every way in honor, and the bed be undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers will God judge." Then to 1 Cor. 6:9, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Some of those Corinthian saints to whom Paul was writing had been guilty of these breaches of God's moral code. But is it not a wonderful thing that God has found a way through the sacrifice of His beloved Son on Calvary, to cleanse the vilest of every trace of sin, and make him a child of God? We are sanctified, set apart for God, justified - counted as if we had never been guilty. I have enjoyed so much the little girl's definition of justified. She replied to her teacher who had asked her as to the meaning of that word

justified, "It means I am just-as-if-I'd never

sinned." She was right. God so regards us. See verse 11, "Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Notice that the whole trinity are occupied in this transaction. But let us never minimize the seriousness of immorality in God's sight. He has not changed His attitude one whit from the solemn pronouncement made at Sinai. Listen to His warning today, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

We are living in the last days, just near the end of the present economy of grace. There is a general breakdown in standards all along the line. Some of us that are older have seen a tremendous change in our lifetime. Some of you who are young may have the idea that present

moral looseness has always been rampant just as it is today. But such is not the case. I am not saying that these things did not formerly occur; they did, but at that time there was a measure of public opinion against them. Those guilty of such wickedness were regarded as in disgrace. But now, if we accept Hollywood as our rule of thumb, such breaches of the moral code are regarded almost as badges of honor. These same Hollywood heroes and heroines do not forfeit their acceptability in social circles because of their conduct. But, dear young people, remember as long as you live, God's standards in these matters do not fluctuate one little bit. He is a thrice holy God, who does not by any means overlook sin. Brethren, let us not let down the bars in these matters. Keep the standard just where God has placed it, and we shall never go wrong. The longer we are left here in this scene, the more difficult it is going to be to adhere to God's judgment in this momentous matter. God still speaks with the dignity and authority of the God who knows the end from the beginning. His word is, "Flee these things."

Exodus 20 again, and verse 15 for the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." Now turn to Eph. 4:28. "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Stealing is just as much condemned in the Christian economy as it is in the Jewish. The Ephesian church received the highest truth that God gave to any assembly. There must have been a condition there that qualified them to become the depository of such wonderful truth. And yet after having seated them

in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, God has to come down to the humiliating level of the flesh in them, and talk to them about stealing. Such is man! The law stopped with the blunt prohibition, "Thou shalt not steal", but Christianity goes beyond this and says we are to labor, working the thing that is good, that we have to give to him that lacketh. How lovely! But notice, it is working the thing that is good. Just because you may be working and making an honest living does not in itself clear you. Are you working the thing that is good - the thing that can have God's approval? We knew a brother in Christ years ago. He is now with the Lord. When he was converted he was a bartender in a saloon. He was thus making an honest living, but he felt he was not working the thing that is good, so he sought other work, and found it. We do not steal; that is negative; we work the thing that is good, but for what? That we may have to give. That is Christianity. You know the Word of God speaks about "poor saints." Nor is there any biblical inconsistency in those two words, "poor" and "saints." Let us then keep them in mind, and so fulfill the will of God.

Now for the ninth commandment, Exod. 20:16, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." The equivalent of this we may find in Eph. 4:25, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor." Also note Rom. 13:9, 10, "Thou shalt not bear false witness.... Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." The Christian demand in this matter is the same as in the law, but it goes far beyond the law's demands, and issues in love to the neighbor.

Our last commandment is found in Exod. 20:17, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife,... nor anything that is thy neighbor's." Now to Heb. 13:5, "Let your conversation [manner of life] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This is the one of the ten commandments that slew the Apostle Paul. He seemed to be able to cope with the other nine, but he admits in Rom. 7:7, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.... For

sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." Paul found out what we have all discovered, that it is as natural to covet as it is to breathe. But, nevertheless, the revealed truth of Christianity condemns covetousness no less severely than did the law of Moses. Oh! the sad tragedies we have seen of saints of God sacrificing everything in order to get on in the world. Covetousness is selfishness.

"Be content with such things as ye have." Now that does not mean that if you are at present living in poverty, you will always have to live in poverty. No, it is not that; the meaning of this exhortation is that we should bow to our circumstances, and be content in them until such time as God may see fit to alter them. In other words, do not constantly be feeling sorry for yourself because things are not as you would have them. Do not be groaning and complaining; be content. If God may be pleased to better your present circumstances, thank Him for it. "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things." 1 Tim. 6:6-11. How true is the Word of God! Have we not all seen the above statements of Scripture verified in the lives of saints? Sometimes our young people feel that they must keep up with the standard of living that they see in the lives of others. And so it becomes just one thing after another to be coveted. The fact that we live in the most prosperous age and land that the world has ever known has contributed to accelerate this desire to have more. The more we have the more we desire to have. There is no stopping place. But, oh, how different is the Spirit of Christ! His was the spirit of giving, not getting. So He taught us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Now I am not saying that we are all to give away everything that we have. There was only one man in the Bible to whom the Lord addressed such advice; that was the rich ruler in Luke 18. But the Lord said this to him in order that the young man might be brought to realize what the cancer was which was eating out his own soul - covetousness. No, brethren, worldly possessions are not the secret of happiness. Happiness is a state of soul. It is the enjoyment of Christ, His Person and His work, that keeps the heart at rest and in peace.

Now to summarize. In Christianity we are not under law, but under grace. We are not under the letter of the ten commandments. We are under the moral equivalent of them as set forth in the epistles, save in the case of the commandment that was ceremonial; that is, the sabbath. This has no ritualistic counterpart in Christianity. The other nine commandments, as a matter of their moral content, we do have, but not as a matter of "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not." But we have them as the expression of the new nature that we have as born of God. If we thus respect them, beloved, we shall never regret it. It will be to our good for time and for eternity. The righteous requirements of the law will be fulfilled in us (see Rom. 8:4; J.N.D. Trans.) and thus the fruit of the Spirit will issue in love to God, and to all who are born of God. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. 13:10.

## My Place and My Power to Walk

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What is my place and my power to walk? God has raised me up together with His Son, and given me the Spirit; and because of that I go on, and everything that is not of Him I have to judge. The walk of the Spirit is one of separation from all that is not of the Father. Believers ought to walk as being dead, buried, and risen with Christ; as those who are espoused to their heavenly Bridegroom, saying, "We cannot do what He would not like." Nature may say, "I should like that, or wish this"; but the answer is, "No; you belong to Christ; and if Christ's wish is contrary to yours, you are not to have your own." By His blood He has brought you into the place where He now is, and you can say, "I will give it up; I will count that dead to which He died. It has death upon it; I give it up." G.V.W.

## The Mystery of the Gospel: Year 1616-1679

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As the gospel is a mystery of faith, it enables the godly to believe strange mysteries; to believe that which they understand not, and hope for that which they do not see. It teaches them to believe that Christ was born in time, and that He was from everlasting; that He was comprehended in the virgin's womb, and yet the heaven of heavens not able to contain Him; to be the Son of Mary, and yet her Maker; to be born without sin, and yet justly to have died for sin. They believe that God was just in punishing Christ, though innocent; and in justifying penitent believers, who are sinners; they believe themselves to be great sinners, and yet that God sees them in Christ without spot or wrinkle.

Again, as the gospel is a mystery of godliness, it enables the godly to do as strange things as they believe; to live by Another's spirit, to act by Another's strength, to live to Another's will, and aim at Another's glory; it makes them so gentle that a child may lead them to anything that is good; yet so stout that fire shall not frighten them into sin; they can love their enemies and yet, for Christ's sake, can hate father and mother; they are taught by it that all things are theirs, yet they dare not take a pin from the wicked by force or fraud; it makes them so humble as to prefer every one above themselves, yet so to value their own condition that the poorest among them would not change his estate with the greatest monarch of the world; it makes them thank God for health, and for sickness also; to rejoice when exalted, and not to repine when made low; they can pray for life, and at the same time desire to die!...

The gospel opens a mine of unsearchable riches, but in a mystery; it shows men a way to be rich in faith, rich in God, rich for another world, while poor in this....

Again, the real professors of the gospel are hated because they partake of its mysterious nature. They are highborn, but in a mystery; you cannot see their birth by their outward breeding; arms they bear, and revenues they have to live on, but not such as the world judges the greatness of persons and families by; no, their outside is mean, while their inside is glorious; and the world values them by what they know and see of their external part, and not by their inward graces; they pass as princes in the disguise of some poor man's clothes through the world, and their entertainment is accordingly. Had Christ put on His robes of glory and majesty when He came into the world, surely He had not gone out of it with so shameful and cruel a death. The world would have trembled at His footstool, which some of them did when but a beam of His deity looked forth upon them. Did saints walk on earth in those robes which they wear in heaven, then they would be feared and admired by those who now scorn and despise them. But as God's design in Christ's first coming would not have been fulfilled had He so appeared, neither would His design in His saints, did the world know them as one day they shall; therefore He is pleased to let them lie hidden under the mean coverings of poverty and infirmities, that so He may exercise their suffering graces, and also accomplish His wrath upon the wicked for theirs against them.

Here we learn our knowledge of heaven little by little like one that reads a book as it comes from the press, sheet by sheet; there we shall see it altogether; here we learn with much pain and

difficulty, there without travail and trouble; glorified saints, though they cease not from work, yet rest from labor; here passion blinds our minds, that we mistake error for truth, and truth for error.

When that blessed hour comes, thou shalt no more hear what a blessed place heaven is, as thou were wont to have it set forth by the poor rhetoric of mortal man, preaching to thee of that with which he himself was little acquainted, but shalt walk thyself in the street of that glorious city, and bless thyself to think what poor low thoughts thou hadst thereof when on earth thou didst meditate on this subject. One moment's sight of that glory will inform thee more than all the books written of it were ever able to do.

## New Creation

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The gold is divine righteousness, as in the nature of God. According to this, Christ, having glorified God in all that He is, is received within as man, and sits at God's right hand; we, partakers of the divine nature, being of God in Christ Jesus, created after God in righteousness and true holiness, and renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created us, united to Him whom God has set on high, have our place at God's right hand (not personally, of course; that could not be but in Him) in that heavenly place according to the delight of God's nature, for that is in Christ. It is fellowship with this, or restoration to it, which is the character of our approach to God, as simply enjoying it in the new nature; it is not in contrast with evil; it is not forgiveness of what is past, save as that is in its place. I have for faith - and shall have in fact - entirely done with the nature which sinned, and the whole state of existence in which flesh moved. I exist only in the new creation. Hence, the Apostle says he did not even know Christ after the flesh any more. It is the joy of the new man in the presence and blessedness and glory of God.

## Not Home yet

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When the late Dr. Henry C. Morrison came home from one of his many travels, we are told that he arrived in the city of New York at the same time and on the same ship that brought the great "Teddy" Roosevelt from one of his hunting trips to Africa.

Literally thousands swarmed the docks to greet the noted hunter, but not a soul was there to welcome Dr. Morrison.

Dr. Morrison relates how Satan, the accuser, whispered to him, "Aha, see how they greet the man of the world? - and you - one of God's preachers - without a single soul to greet you."

This man of God admitted that in the loneliness of his heart, there could have been place for a hurt, but the Father sweetly whispered, "Yes, but Henry, you are not Home yet."

## Obedience to God and Love to the Saints: Characteristics of Divine Life

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Perfect obedience characterized the life of Christ here on earth. He was ever the dependent One, ever the obedient One. "In the volume of the book" it was written of Him. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." And when on earth, He could say, "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." And again, "I do always those things that please Him." This was perfect obedience.

But His path of obedience to the Father was also the perfect exhibition of God's love to man. His words, His ways, His acts, all spoke of God's love to His guilty creatures. And the cross was the full revelation of this, together with the infinitely perfect expression of His obedience to God the Father. In the life of Christ as a man on earth perfect obedience and perfect love were united; and the life in which these were displayed in Christ is the life which, through grace, is imparted to the believer.

In Christ there was no imperfection. His was a life of perfect obedience - perfect love. In us there is much to hinder the manifestation of this life; yet the life in us is the same in its nature, its traits, and its characteristics - it is the same life. And whether in Him or in us, it is characterized by obedience. Obedience is the state in which it subsists. "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." 1 John 2:3. No matter what our pretension may be, it avails nothing unless there is this obedience. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." v. 4.

The other characteristic of the divine life is not separated from this. Where there is obedience there will also be love, because they belong to the same life - the same nature. "Whoso keepeth His word" - this is obedience - "in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him." v. 5. His word is the expression of what He is, of His nature; and "God is love," so that if we keep His word, His love is perfected in us.

But "His commandments" are not only the expression of what He is, but of His authority as well. We are called to obey, and to obey as Christ obeyed. We are sanctified unto the obedience of Christ. And if we say that we abide in Him, we ought also so to walk even as He walked; that is, in obedience to God, for His whole life was that. There was not a single movement in His soul, not a single act of His life, that was not obedience to His Father's will. Blessed indeed it is to behold that Perfect One in His path of perfect obedience! And happy they who follow His footsteps, who walk even as He walked!

The commandment to obey as Christ obeyed, to walk as Christ walked, was not a "new commandment." It was the word they had heard from the beginning in connection with the manifestation of the divine life in Christ. It was the Father's commandment to Christ, according to Christ's own words: "For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is

life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak." John 12:49, 50. So John says the commandment was "old". Again, it was a "new commandment," because true in Him and in us. The commandment was the expression of the divine life - "His commandment is life everlasting," and was first seen in Christ. But now it is true in us too, "because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." God had, come out through the cross, and the light of life, was now shining for man, and dispelling the darkness. This life, for man, and in man, as the fruit of redemption, life in Christ, life in the Spirit, was a new thing. It is Christ in us, Christ as our life. The commandment is "old" because the obedience which characterizes this life was seen in Him which was from the beginning, "the word of life." It is "new" because the same thing is seen in the believer now. If they were seeking something new, according to the Gnostic philosophy, the bane of Christianity in that day, the Apostle John gives them this; but he would not disconnect it from Christ, the believer's life, "that which was from the beginning." "Which thing is true in Him and in you.

Until redemption was accomplished, Christ remained alone. Now He is no more alone; we are in Him, and He in us. This is a wonderful truth, and it gives a wonderful character to the children of God. The Holy Spirit in us is the power of it all - the divine answer in us down here to all that Christ is in glory as a man. It is no longer Christ as a man walking alone in this world, but Christ in the saints, and the "eternal life" displayed in them. In John's epistle Christ is seen as "eternal life" down here in this world, first alone, and then in the saints; "which thing is true in Him and in you." And this life, whether in Christ alone, or in Him and in us, is first an obedient life, and second a life of love.

1 John 2:3-8 is obedience and disobedience. Verses 9-11 are love and hatred.

Obedience and love characterize those who are in the light. Disobedience and hatred characterize those who are in the darkness. A man may say he is in the light, but if he hates his brother, he is still in darkness, and has never seen the light. He knows not "the light of life." But if we see the outgoings of divine love toward a brother, we can say, There is a man who dwells in the light. He has found God who is light; and having found the light, he has the love also, for "God is light," and "God is love"; and we cannot have the one without the other, just as you cannot have the sun without having both light and heat.

The light casts out the darkness, and then there is no occasion of stumbling. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And He who has shined in our hearts as light is love also. Wonderful grace to such as were once "darkness," but now "light in the Lord."

Have our eyes been opened to see the light? Have our hearts tasted the love? Oh! then to "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor"; and to walk "as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit [light] is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Eph. 5:2, 8-10. Let us walk in the light and sunshine of His presence who could say, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," never swerving from this path, and who, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

## Only One Right Way

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"And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee... in the wilderness"

(Deut. 8:2).

It is a blessed word we have in the Psalm, "He led them forth by the right way." There is only one right way, and our loving Guide makes no mistakes in it. How dependent we are kept from day to day, and in this way we learn the allsufficiency of Christ. He never fails us, and He never will fail us as long as we are in the wilderness. We may therefore trust Him wholly and always. E.D.

Although 'twas not the bright way, they had no cause to fear,

Because it was the right way, and God Himself was near.

## Our Bodies Shall Be Changed

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"The Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Phil. 3:21.

It is important to see the correct translation of part of this verse; it is "shall transform our body of humiliation," not "vile body." The body is not looked at in Scripture as vile. Our bodies are fitted through grace to be presented to God as living sacrifices. They are bodies of humiliation because they are marked with weakness and infirmity, with the possibility of dissolution and death; but the body in Scripture is not regarded as vile. That is the reason the monkish idea of punishing the body as something vile is all wrong; and when Paul speaks about buffeting his body and keeping it under, he is not speaking of the physical frame, but the lusts that are in the flesh. The human body is not regarded as vile and may be the temple of the Holy Spirit.

With the Christian, that body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are to glorify God in it. This body may finally break up and go to pieces, but by-and-by it is going to be changed for one that will never break up or go to pieces - a body that is fitted for glory. When God gave us a body and put us in this world, He gave us a body that was fitted for this world. When He takes us to glory, He will give us a body that is fitted for glory.

## Our Example: One Who Ran the Whole Race

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In Hebrews 12 the epistle enters upon the practical exhortations that flow from its doctrinal instruction with reference to the dangers peculiar to the Hebrew Christians - instruction suited throughout to inspire them with courage. Surrounded with a cloud of witnesses like those of chapter 11, who all declared the advantages of a life of faith in promises still unfulfilled, they ought to feel themselves impelled to follow their steps, running with patience the race set before them, and above all looking away from every difficulty to Jesus who had run the whole career of faith, sustained by the joy that was set before Him and, having reached the goal, had taken His seat in glory at the right hand of God.

This passage presents the Lord not as He who bestows faith, but as He who has Himself run the whole career of faith. Others had traveled a part of the road, had surmounted some difficulties; the obedience and the perseverance of the Lord had been subjected to every trial of which human nature is susceptible. Men, the adversary, the being forsaken of God, everything was against Him. His disciples flee when He is in danger, His intimate friend betrays Him; He looks for someone to have compassion on Him and finds no one. The fathers (of whom we read in the previous chapter) trusted in God and were delivered; but as for Jesus, He was a worm, and no man; His throat was dry with crying (see Psalm 22). His love for us, His obedience to His Father, surmounted all. He carries off the victory by submission, and takes His seat in a glory exalted in proportion to the greatness of His abasement and obedience - the only just reward for having perfectly glorified God where He had been dishonored by sin. The joy and the rewards that are set before us are never the motives of the walk of faith - we know this well with regard to Christ, but it is not the less true in our own case - they are the encouragement of those who walk in it.

Jesus then who has attained the glory due to Him becomes an example to us in the sufferings through which He passed in attaining it; therefore we are neither to lose courage nor to grow weary. We have not yet, like Him, lost our lives in order to glorify God and to serve Him. The way in which the Apostle engages them to disentangle themselves from every hindrance, whether sin or difficulty, is remarkable, as though they had nothing to do but to cast them off as useless weights. And in fact, when we look at Jesus, nothing is easier; when we are not looking at Him, nothing is more impossible.

There are two things to be cast off: every weight, and the sin that would entangle our feet (for he speaks of one who is running in the race). The flesh, the human heart, is occupied with cares and difficulties; and the more we think of them, the more we are burdened by them. It is enticed by the objects of its desires; it does not free itself from them. The conflict is with a heart that loves the things against which we strive; we do not separate ourselves from it in thought. When looking at Jesus, the new man is active; there is a new object which unburdens and detaches us from every other by means of a new affection which has its place in a new nature: and in Jesus Himself, to whom we look, there is a positive power which sets us free.

It is by casting it all off in an absolute way that the thing is easy - by looking at that which fills the heart with other things, and occupies it in a different sphere, where a new object and a new nature act upon each other; and in that object there is a positive power which absorbs the heart and shuts out all objects that act merely on the old nature. What is felt to be a weight is easily cast off. Everything is judged of by its bearing on the object we aim at. If I run in a race and all my thought is the prize, a bag of gold is readily cast away. It is a weight. But we must look to Jesus. Only in Him can we cast off every hindrance easily and without reservation. We cannot combat sin by flesh.

## Our Prayers: Confidence in God

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God exercises our hearts and our faith in delaying at times to give the answer to our prayers. The earnestness of our prayers will be according to the exigency of our need, and the consciousness that He alone can give the answer. The heart is exercised and kept in dependence, waiting on Him for the reply. Faith is kept alive. Other sources are not looked to when the soul has learned that He alone can do what is needed. It is a mighty engine - that of prayer - fitting expression of the new born soul's dependence on God in contrast to that nature which ever would be independent of Him, though it cannot escape His righteous judgment.

Daniel had to wait in fastings and mournings for three whole weeks at one time before he received the reply (chap. 10). At another time, "While I was speaking," he says, the answer came (chap. 9). It marks the fact that we are not indifferent to the result when the heart can in earnest entreaty wait on God.

We may find, like Paul, that it is better for us that our desires are withheld. He learned also the reason why they were withheld, after his thrice-repeated prayer; thus he could boast in that which was the taunt of his enemies, and the trial of his friends (2 Cor. 12).

We need to be "filled with the Spirit." We need that our faith may grow. Many are the needs of our hearts, and of others; and if God is pleased to bless His people, He exercises their hearts in prayer. Paul could agonize in prayer for those he never saw (Col. 2:1); and Epaphras too could labor earnestly (agonize) in prayer for those he knew and loved (Col. 4:12).

In the midst of our cares and conflicts we have to "be careful for nothing," but to let our "requests be made known unto God." He who has no cares - God - keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. But we have to "continue in prayer." We have also to "watch in the same," and withal "with thanksgiving" for His ever opened ear. One of the exhortations in Romans 12 is "continuing instant in prayer" - "pursuing" as it might be.

The very importunity of the man at the unseasonable hour of midnight, was the occasion of his obtaining the loaves (Luke 11:8). One can lay down no rules in such cases. The truly exercised heart gets its own answer from God. At times we can with simple confidence make known and commit the request to God. At others the heart is conscious that it cannot but cry to God until it is at rest in the petition. He will not give it till His own time, and meanwhile the soul is kept in earnest exercise; faith is tested, and patience tried, and the heart watches and waits on Him. Again, such is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us; and if we know that He hears us, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him (1 John 5:14, 15). He listens to everything which is in accordance with His will. He cannot fail in power, and we get the reply. The true heart desires nothing contrary to His mind and will.

When I am asked for an Old Testament instance of restoring grace, I point to David; if asked for a New Testament one, I point to Peter.

## The Passover: the Red Sea

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Exod. 12-14

Redemption, as presented in the type of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, has two aspects. The one is seen in the feast of the Passover, the other in the passage of the Red Sea.

The history and circumstances of the two disclose in a wonderful manner the redemption which God has wrought for His people in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Passover the deep question is met of how God's power can be thus displayed on behalf of those whom His holiness has condemned as sinners.

"God is light" - "There is none holy as the LORD." He cannot, therefore, link Himself with sin, nor can He bring a people into association with Himself until He has put away their sins.

Hence the Passover comes before deliverance at the Red Sea, even as Jesus must be known as dying for our sins before we can say, through His resurrection, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Passover, which answers to Christ's death, brings redemption before us in connection with God's righteous holiness. The deliverance at the Red Sea, which answers to Christ's resurrection, shows how God's power in Christ is on His people's side, because His death has met the claims of all the holiness of God.

The Israelites were delivered, it is true, on the night of the Passover; but from what were they delivered? Not from the pursuit of Pharaoh, but from God's judgment for sin. The blood was sprinkled on the lintel and on the doorposts to bar the way of God's entrance as a judge. It is not power that delivers in the Passover, but weakness, death, the blood of the lamb!

The question to the Israelite on that night was how God should be stayed from entering his dwelling as a judge. And God showed him that nothing but his trusting to the sprinkled blood of the lamb would cause the angel of death to pass over his dwelling. He entered every dwelling of the Egyptians, where the blood was not sprinkled. For "without shedding of blood is no remission." "For," says the Scripture (v. 23), "the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you."

## The Present Testimony

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The nearer we come to the Bridegroom, the better are we prepared for Him. "She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework" (Psalm 45:14). The cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matt. 25:6), awoke the slumbering virgins. A great reviving of souls, and recovery of truth, followed from this cry; and surely to testify of Him until He comes, must characterize the bride as she apprehends the advent of the Bridegroom. Affection is kindled as the hope of seeing Him increases; and as the heart is fixed on the bright and morning star, the more do we drop the things of the night, and are really with trimmed lamps coming forth to meet Him.

Much light and truth, we know, have been vouchsafed consequent on this cry; but the end and object of the cry must not be lost sight of on account of anything, however great, conferred in connection with it. The cry has produced the revival. It occupies the heart with its true Object and the One who not only satisfies it, but, as He is its Object, furnishes it with grace to be more fully so. If the cry then be overlooked for some of the great truths restored to those who have answered to the cry, the result would be as if one were occupied with a fine flower, or the great branch of a tree, severed from its root. Light and truth would then monopolize the place of the Person of our Lord. If the beauty of our apparel were to preoccupy us, it would be with us as with Israel in another day, when the very riches of the country diverted their hearts from the Lord, the Giver. The testimony now can never be any other than that for which the Holy Spirit was sent: "He shall testify of Me." "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." The wise virgins had oil in their vessels; but whatever the measure of love to Christ in their hearts, they were inactive - they were apparently in a dead state. They might assert that their hearts were awake, yet as to walk and ways they were asleep. "At midnight," in the deepest darkness, unexpectedly, there was a cry made, "Behold, the bridegroom." This cry turned the heart on the Lord - the only true Object for it - and then the lamps were trimmed. Everything was changed. There was a zealous activity to be "ready" for the Lord.

Now, coincident with this awakening, was an opening of the Word and the counsels of God, not to supersede this revived hope, but to help it on in a perfectly divine way. Knowledge does not give heart, but it helps the heart, because it instructs it in the best way to suit the One it seeks. As the heart of the saint is set on the Lord, it is of the greatest interest to him to learn that the oil in their vessels was the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. This great fact stands at the head of all truth for the believer, and if not held in simple and assured faith, no item of the truth is in power in the soul. Then our acceptance is, "As He is, so are we in this world," truth so utterly lost in man's theology, that even to this day few have fully laid hold of it in faith.

Following on this great truth came its companion, the nature of our relationship to Christ; He is the Head of the Church, and we the members, all baptized by one Spirit into one body, for we "have been all made to drink into one Spirit." One was the ministry of the gospel, the other the ministry of the Church. Though each is distinct from the other, the truth of the presence of the Holy Spirit is essential to the understanding of either. Neither has been apprehended by Christians who do not

believe that the Holy Spirit has been sent down from heaven. Hence the first important truth in connection with the coming of the Lord was the fact that the Holy Spirit was here. The effort of the enemy was to divert the minds of those awakened to the coming of the Lord, from it to the gift of the Spirit, praying for Him to come, in fact denying His presence, which plainly was unbelief in the Word of God; and hence those who fell into this delusion, becoming more and more ensnared and entangled by the enemy, surrendered every truth, while those who believed the Word, not only enjoyed forgiveness of sins, but were sealed by the Holy Spirit, and then began to understand and seek the nature of their relationship to Christ, and how they were to be fit for Him as His bride at His coming. The blessedness of greeting Him has been too much supplanted by the great truths which God has been pleased to unfold in order that, knowing our calling, we might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Paul teaches us the nature of our relationship to Christ in a double way - what the Church is to Him, and what He is to the Church. John dwells on His love to us, so that our love is drawn out to Him; still, with each apostle, the coming of the Lord is the hope and goal. When Paul speaks of the Lord's completed desire for the Church, it is "That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5:27. When it 'is the acme of blessing to the saints, it is "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. It is the great aim and incentive to His service to present them as a chaste virgin to Christ. When grace worked with power, they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

John, on the other hand, exemplifies how love begets love; "We love Him because He first loved us." If the Lord goes away to prepare a place for us, it is only that He may come again and receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. If He looks forward to the brightest day on earth, it is when the bride descends from heaven "adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2), when she shall be displayed here in perfect suitability to her Lord. If he speaks of his own service to the saints, at one time it is that he may "not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28); and at another, that he may not lose a "full reward" (2 John 8). And when the Church was hopelessly marred and in ruin, one thing preeminently remained for the saints - "I will give him the morning star." Rev. 2:28. So that the coming of the Lord is the hope of the Church to the end, a bright, attractive light in the darkness, a beacon and an unflinching cheer in the darkest hour.

But while it imparts the deepest joy to the devoted heart, it at the same time insists on a divine suitability. "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty" (Psalm 45:10, 11). The great truths which have been unfolded and to which we have referred, when learned by the Spirit, invest us with this suitability. Is it not then very evident that the present testimony must be greatly characterized by an eager looking-out for His coming, so much so that the book of Revelation closes with the Spirit and the bride inviting Him to come? The Holy Spirit, who is ready to testify of Christ, and who has opened out to us all the great truths respecting us individually and corporately, declares Himself by one very distinct utterance, "Come," in answer to the announcement, "I am... the bright and morning star." Hence the bride - the personal identity of every saint - cannot do otherwise. If she be in the Spirit, she must do so;

and openly she must say, "Come," more glad of heart to greet Him than the family of Bethany if they heard He was crossing the road to their house. The more thoroughly she is suited for Him, walking according to His Word, and not denying His name, the more she is in real concord with the Holy Spirit in saying, "Come." The very nature of the invitation promotes in her the affection to repeat it, and to be in every way prepared for His coming, so that by her the testimony would be, as to practical walk, fully maintained, while no part of true service would be overlooked, but attended to the better the more He was expected, like Elijah working indefatigably his last day on earth.

We cannot conceive anything more attractive to the heart than the bride in company with the Holy Spirit inviting the Lord to come. I do not refer to the sense of delight it must impart to the saints, but it is the testimony then set forth that I desire to describe. The Holy Spirit has been sent by Christ to testify of Himself. His testimony must ever remain the same, and the two great marks of it; namely, to reprove the world, and to glorify Christ. "He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you," must ever remain, man and his sphere exposed, but the rejected Lord glorified, and His things revealed.

Now in company with this blessed One in this exclusive service is the bride, taught and led by Him, and in the delight of her heart saying, "Come." It is a most beautiful spectacle, a brilliant testimony, because it is not only that the great moral lines are maintained, but the deep affections of the heart are drawn out in the expectation of greeting the Lord. Surely we want this much in this clay, the simple sense of delight in the anticipation of seeing Him. It is of deep importance that we apprehend the force and value of the Spirit's saying, "Come." He is set on it, and everyone led by Him joins in it. Hence the bride says, "Come." Every saint may not say it, but one is not in his true state if he, led by the Holy Spirit, does not say it. It is important to note that a person says it; all the members of this one person may not be alive to the value of the word, but yet that which is only true is expressed. Consequently, the bride not only says, "Come," but "let him that heareth say, Come." She represents the only true sentiment of every believer, not merely those in this true state; therefore she seeks all around, that everything belonging to Christ may be prepared and ready for His coming. "Let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." There is the eager persistent service that all may be ready and prepared for the Lord.

## Prophetic Terms: Christ's First Advent

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The Old Testament scriptures abound with prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah.

In Mic. 5:2 it was foretold that this coming "ruler in Israel" should be born in Bethlehem, in the land of Judah. The eternity of His being was also mentioned in the same verse.

Isa. 7:14 said that He was to be born of a virgin and His name called Immanuel.

Then in Isaiah 9, His deity was announced, and it was said that He should have the throne of David.

That He should come through the family of David was definitely prophesied in Isaiah 11 and Psalm 132.

The approximate time of His first appearance was even indicated in Daniel 9.

Many other references might be made to the promises and prophecies concerning Him, but space will not permit. Enough has been quoted to prove the existence of precise information, given by God, whereby His Anointed could and should have been expected, and discovered when He came.

But, how was it? Was the world or even the nation of Israel looking for Him? And when He came, did His earthly people rejoice that He had come? No, no, no. Although coming through the royal line of David, He was an outcast from the beginning. People of wealth and social prominence occupied the inn, but there was no room for Him. He was placed in a manger.

The Jews made their boast of having the Scriptures entrusted to them, and these were read every Sabbath day in their synagogues; but, except for a little handful, none were expecting their Messiah. His birth was almost unnoticed, and an aged woman (Anna the prophetess) could speak of Him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

When Herod the King heard of His birth, he called all the chief priests and scribes of the Jews together for information about this coming King. These leaders could quote from the prophet Micah as to the place of His birth, which proved that they were conversant with the letter of Scripture; but they did not make one move to see Him. Their hearts were far from Him. Sad, sad state indeed!

## Prophetic Terms: Christ's Second Coming

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Now the Lord Jesus has been gone back to heaven almost two thousand years, but before He went away He definitely promised,

"If I go... I will come again" (John 14:3).

Just as surely as His first advent was foretold, so His coming again is promised in words unmistakably clear. The One who has gone back to heaven will soon come again. He did not say, I will send an angel to bring you to Myself, but

"I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Now many dear Christians have read these words supposing that they mean death is coming for them, or that Christ will come for them at their death. But that is very careless reading. He Himself is coming for us. Death has not gone away, nor is it coming again. And when a child of God falls asleep in Jesus, he has gone to be with Christ which is far better (Phil. 1:23). He has gone to Christ; Christ has not come for him.

The early Christians were living in the constant expectation of the Lord's return. This was a real hope connected with their salvation. The saints at Thessalonica

"Turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

The whole character of this dispensation should be one of constant expectancy. Christians should be followers of a rejected Christ, living in view of His return. When this hope ceased to animate the Church, it fell into worldliness. Christians settled down to be at home on earth when they ceased looking for their Lord from heaven. There is nothing that so separates one in heart from all that is here, as the expectation of hearing that shout and being caught up to be with the Lord. If you and I knew definitely that the Lord would come tomorrow, it would make the things here seem insignificant, and we would be seeking to be found pleasing to Him when He comes.

The Thessalonians became troubled because some of their number died before the Lord came, supposing that they had lost something. To correct this fear the Apostle Paul wrote the details as to the Lord's coming.

"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." 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.

He has promised, and will come to call all the redeemed to Himself. At His coming for all the saved, He will not come all the way to the earth, but shout that shout in the air, calling all who died in faith from their graves. Immediately after this, all who are living and believe (John 11:26) will be caught up with the risen saints to meet the Lord in the air. In 1 Corinthians 15 we learn that all this will happen "in the twinkling of an eye." Our bodies of humiliation will be fashioned like unto His

body of glory (Phil. 3:21).

We do not know of one thing that must take place before the Lord comes. He may come and call all the redeemed from their graves, and catch away all the saved ones who are living on earth, before this paper goes to print. There is nothing that must be fulfilled first, and none can give a reason why He may not come today.

Dear fellow-Christian, are we really looking for Him who died for us? Do we long to see Him? I do not ask, Do we accept the doctrine of the Lord's coming? The Jews knew the doctrine of His first coming, but were not looking for Him. May we not be merely believing in the "Lord's coming," but actually expecting Himself. The unbelieving world shall not see Him when He comes to call us into the air to meet Him. Later, when He comes visibly to the earth, we shall come with Him. Then He shall come to execute judgment before He sets up His earthly kingdom and reigns, but the object of this paper is to set before us our proper hope - His coming for His own. May this stir our affections, and not merely increase our knowledge.

## Prophetic Terms: the Apostasy

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There is much prophecy concerning this earth that must yet be fulfilled; and each prophecy relating to the future will come to pass to the smallest detail, just as did those prophecies concerning ancient cities and governments. We should not, however, try to force Scripture and fit the happenings of today into prophecy. Those who are real children of God may see some shadows of future events, but it is not given to us to look for developments of future prophecy. Everything will unfold with lightning rapidity after the Church is gone from the scene, but our special portion is to wait and watch for the Lord Himself. He is surely coming soon to call all His redeemed to meet Him in the air.

What then will be the condition on this earth following the departure of every true Christian? The answer to this question should probably be divided into two parts: that which concerns the great lifeless Christian profession left behind, and the condition of the Jewish people. The taking of every real Christian from the earth will not remove the profession of Christianity. In fact, it appears that there will be more show and pretension than ever before, by a dead, empty, and corrupt Christendom. There may be a temporary upset when the Christians suddenly disappear, but the devil will be ready with a lie to calm any fears of those who are left behind. The empty shell will take new life from amalgamation and soon boast of greatness. It will truly become "Babylon the Great."

Much evil is tolerated and condoned within the pale of the professing church now; then it will "become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. 18:2). Such is the description of the fearful state of that which began in simplicity and truth on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Those who dream of Christianity spreading throughout the world and converting it, so as to eventually establish a sort of millennium on earth, are being sadly disillusioned even now. What a glorious day it will be for the saved, when the Lord calls them home at His coming! What a terrible beginning and awful end for what is left behind! Christendom bereft of those who are real, will readily accept Satan's delusions.

The "gospel of the grace of God" will cease when the Lord comes for His own, regardless of a certain continuation of profession. The gospel door that has stood open for almost two thousand years, will suddenly close at the coming of the Lord. Those who have heard the message of grace and put off the acceptance of the Lord Jesus, will awake with consternation when it is too late.

Reader, on which side of that door would you be, if it were to close right now?

There is a false teaching abroad, that says there will be another chance for those who wait too long, and find themselves left behind. Some, probably well-meaning people, say that those on the outside will have a chance to accept the "gospel of the kingdom." But what does Scripture say? Read the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. It certainly offers no encouragement to such an idea. There were five foolish virgins and they represent millions in this and other countries, who are nominally called Christians, but they have not had any personal dealing with God about their

sins. They have not accepted the Lord Jesus as their own Savior. They know of the "oil," but have never possessed it. They have never "bought" it. Buying suggests more than a knowledge of a thing; it implies a closing of a transaction so that it becomes one's own. After the "foolish" find themselves left behind, they will seek admittance, only to hear those awful irrevocable words, "I know you not."

O reader, if still unsaved, do not longer trifle with God's offer of mercy, or put your trust in any false hope of another chance, which will only land you in hell.

"Now is the day of salvation" - it is not promised tomorrow.

Then there is still a worse description of the condition of Christendom in 2 Thessalonians. As bad as "Babylon the Great" will become, a more shocking and debasing iniquity will quickly follow. The working of this error is already present, but it is yet restrained and will be until the Spirit of God leaves the world with the Church; then wickedness will increase very rapidly. At that time a certain wicked person will come on the scene "with all power and signs and lying wonders." There will be a "strong delusion" sent by God "that they should believe a lie." And why? Because they would not receive "the truth, that they might be saved." Think what an awful thing it will be for rejecters of Christ to be given over by God to believe a lie. What folly to think that one can refuse Christ now, and stand a chance of doing better when all the powers of darkness are turned loose against him!

This consummation of wickedness is spoken of as "a falling away," but more correctly, The Apostasy, in 2 Thess. 2:3. The attempt to overthrow even the name of God, and the substitution of the worship of man and Satan, will precede the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. How comforting to the child of God to know that he shall first be called up to be with and like Christ!

The Apostasy of the Jews will also reach its climax at the same time. They too will go into gross idolatry. The unclean spirit of idolatry, which so long afflicted the Jews, had gone out of them when the Lord was on earth. Idolatry is not mentioned as one of their sins after their return from the Babylonian captivity. But the Lord Jesus foretold that the time will come when the wicked spirit of idolatry, with seven other wicked spirits, will return to them, and their last state will be worse than the first (Matt. 12:42-45).

The same wicked man who will deceive apostate Christendom, will also deceive the Jews. He will show them great signs and wonders, even to the bringing fire down from heaven. He will place an idol, the image of the great political leader, in their rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and compel the worship of this man, and accept homage himself. He is the one whom the Lord Jesus said will come in his own name, and him they will receive (John 5:43). He is called the "king" in the latter part of Daniel 11, and also in Isaiah 30 and 57. He is the second beast - the "beast" with "two horns like a lamb" - of Revelation 13. Figuratively he will have horns like a lamb to deceive as an imitation of Christ - God's Lamb. But his voice will betray him, for he will speak as a dragon. Satan is directly behind this "false prophet" and "antichrist." His deception will be so strong that if it could be possible, it will even deceive the "very elect" Jews (Matt. 24:24). The mass of the Jews still apostatize, but God will have an elect remnant among them who will suffer persecutions, many unto death, for their faithfulness.

The wickedness of man (both Jew and Gentile) reached terrible depths when they cast out God's Son when He came into the world in grace. Still God abounded in grace over their culminating sin, and sent forth the gospel of His grace to the Jew first, and then to the rest, beseeching them to be reconciled. When this grace is being wantonly refused on every hand, is it any wonder that God should finally give man up? No, the wonder is that He should bear with such wickedness and ingratitude this long. The explanation of this strange, lingering forbearance of God is found in 2 Pet. 3:9.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

## Prophetic Terms: the Day of the Lord

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In this paper we come to the subject of the "day of the Lord" which will follow the days of "apostasy" and "great tribulation." The troubles of the "great tribulation" will be terrible, and will end with the Lord coming personally to execute judgment. He will come to cleanse this world by taking vengeance on them that know not God, preparatory to setting up His kingdom on earth. Some have confused the "day of the Lord" with His coming for His saints, but this should not be done. When He comes to usher in the "day of the Lord," His saints will come with Him. When He appears in glory, they will appear with Him (see Jude 14, 15, and Col. 3:4). Previously (that is, before the "apostasy" and the "great tribulation"), He will have come and called His redeemed from the earth and the tomb, according to 1 Thessalonians 4.

Both the Old and New Testaments speak of the "day of the Lord" as a time of judgment and darkness for the earth. Let us notice some of the verses from the Old Testament:

"The day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness.... For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (Joel 2:1-11.)

"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.... Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD." (Mal. 4:1-5.)

"The day of the LORD... is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm." (Zeph. 1:14-16.)

"The day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low.... And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth." (Isa. 2:12-19.)

Many other verses of the Old Testament also tell of the time when the Lord Himself shall come to judge the earth. At that time His enemies, called in Acts 2 His foes, shall be made His footstool. What a serious thing it is to be an enemy of Christ! Since the death of the Lord Jesus at the hand of man, there can be no neutrality with regard to Him; one is either on the Lord's side - for Christ - or against Him. Reader, are you a friend or a foe?

In the New Testament the Lord Himself foretold His coming in judgment. The words of Matt. 24:27-30 are plain:

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.... Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of

heaven with power and great glory."

In the first epistle to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul had to instruct these young Christians in the truth of the Lord's coming to take His saints away from the earth before the judgment. These newly saved ones were distressed because some of their number had died before the Lord came, so the Spirit of God sent this word to them, explaining how the dead in Christ shall be raised, and the living believers caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This will not be at the "day of the Lord," but will take place some time before it. Then in the 5th chapter of this epistle, they are informed of the "day of the Lord" that will be subsequent on the Lord's coming for His own.

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

From this verse we learn that even in the midst of all the troubles of the "great tribulation," men will be working on plans for world improvement, and for the insurance of peace to a ravaged world. They will become quite confident of the success of their plans, and will prophesy "Peace and safety" only to find their hopes dashed to pieces by the coming of the Son of man to execute judgment on His enemies. God will be left out of their plans, and their destruction will be swift and sudden.

What a contrast the "day of the Lord" will be to man's day of the present! Even now man's will is paramount, and God is left out. In that day, with all the Christians gone from the world, it will have become utterly godless and apostate. But the day will come when Christ, once rejected here, will return with His saints to execute judgment. He is despised and rejected now, but the day will come when all must own His rightful sway.

After Paul had written his first letter to these young Christians at Thessalonica, they became further troubled. This time their trouble was concerning the "day of the Lord." They had been passing through troubles as a result of their testimony for Christ. They were suffering persecutions, and were tempted into believing that the reason they were having so much trouble was that they were passing through the "day of the Lord." This was not true, and Paul wrote his second letter to correct the error. In the second chapter he says:

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [the word "by" is in italics and does not belong here] our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, not by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ [most translators render it "Lord" here instead of "Christ"] is at hand" (or more correctly, "is present").

He beseeches them not to be worried by this false report, and calls to their remembrance "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and... our gathering together unto Him." This is to precede the "day of the Lord." They had been instructed in Paul's first letter about how the Lord will come in the clouds and call the saints to meet Him in the air. This hope should be their comfort and stay. The fictitious report said that the "great and dreadful day of the Lord" had actually come - that it was already present, not merely that it was at hand or imminent. This threw them into consternation (remember it bore the forged name of the Apostle to accredit it) for they understood that the "day of the Lord" was to be a terrible time. They no doubt knew some of the Old Testament prophecies

which we have just noticed, so we can well understand their troubled state on hearing such a report.

After reminding them of the coming of the Lord as their own hope, the Apostle Paul goes on to explain that the "day of the Lord" cannot come until after certain other things take place. The "apostasy" and the revelation of the "man of sin" must precede the coming of the Lord to execute judgment. Surely He will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel. His coming in judgment, bringing in the "day of the Lord," is a certainty; but no Christian should be troubled by it, for he will be gone from the scene first to be with Christ, and will come back with Christ in that day.

We might borrow an illustration from another. Suppose a certain city in revolt against their rightful king. The king then gathers an army together to go and punish the rebels. But there are some there who are still loyal to their king, and to them the king sends word that he will first come to a designated place outside of the city and call all those who are loyal to meet him there. He says further, that not one shot shall be fired before they are called out of the doomed city. They are not then to be troubled by false reports that he has already come and the destruction begun, but to calmly await his call to meet him. He also promises his faithful ones that when he does go to execute vengeance they shall accompany him.

The second epistle of Peter also speaks of the coming of the "day of the Lord" as a thief. A thief comes without warning and never for good, so the "day of the Lord" shall come on the godless world very unexpectedly for judgment.

Peter, speaking by the Spirit of God, goes further and tells of events that will take place even after the thousand-year peaceful reign of Christ. He speaks of the dissolution of the present earth and heavens at the close of the "day of the Lord." Thus we see that the "day of the Lord" will usher in the reign of Christ on earth and continue throughout and even beyond it, to the ushering in of the "day of God" - the eternal state, with new heavens and new earth.

## Prophetic Terms: the Eternal State

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While the Old Testament speaks at great length about the coming Millennial kingdom of Christ, and there are some references to it in the New Testament, very little is said in the New Testament about the eternal state - the new heavens and new earth - and it is not mentioned in the Old Testament. Some verses from the Old Testament are quoted in the New, and there they are applied to the eternal state, but the Old Testament does not go beyond the Millennium.

The Millennium will be a glorious time for the present earth, and it will last for one thousand years; yet it will finally come to its close. We have before noticed that at its close, the heart of man at enmity toward God will again be demonstrated even after such abundant goodness. The fire from God out of heaven will consume the rebels.

The devil who again deceives men after his short liberation from confinement in the bottomless pit, or abyss, will then be cast into the "lake of fire and brimstone." This is his final disposition. When he is cast into that awful place, it is said that the beast (that head of a revived Roman Empire) and the false prophet (the antichrist) are still there. They had been cast in there one thousand years before, at the coming of Christ to reign. Although they are in the lake of fire for one thousand years, they are not annihilated. There they and the devil together are to remain, and to be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). Man's wish is parent to his thought of annihilation, but it is foreign to the Word of God.

There is an eternity of punishment for the beast, false prophet, and the devil (and for all who die in their sins), according to the word of Him who "cannot lie."

Some have thought and written that the devil is a king in hell, but the Scripture depicts him as being tormented there day and night. May we have God's thought and not man's.

The wicked dead who had not been raised when the Lord gave the shout that called the bodies of those saints who have died in Christ, from their graves over one thousand years before, will then be raised. Man may speak of one general resurrection at the last day, but they do not get it from the Word of God. Many scriptures teach that there are two resurrections - one to life and the other to judgment. Soon the Lord shall give that quickening shout, and the bodies of those who died in faith shall be raised, but the unbelievers of all ages shall remain in their graves until the time we are writing of - after the Millennium and at the beginning of the eternal. state.

The dead, great and small, are to stand before God at the Great White Throne to be judged. They are to be judged "according to their works" out of the books. Man hopes that God will forget his wicked deeds, but they are all recorded, and the evidence will be produced in that day. The "book of life" will also be there to prove that their names were never written in it. The evidence will be conclusive and their doom eternal.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Rev. 20:11-15. Yes, the eternal state of the lost is to be in the "lake of fire." It is described variously as:

eternal fire (Jude 7); everlasting punishment

(Matt. 25:46); the worm that never dies (Mark 9:44); everlasting destruction (2 Thess. 1:9); blackness of darkness forever (Jude 13); and many other such expressions. Why should men try hard to prove that his existence is not eternal when God says it is? He will either spend eternity with God in bliss, or be tormented with the devil and his angels.

O, the madness and folly of man who will not accept the truth, and take God's salvation which assures him of an eternity of happiness in the presence of God! May the reader make sure that he is one of the redeemed who shall enjoy eternal life in the presence of God. There is no salvation apart from the acceptance of the work of Christ on the cross. One must know the Lord Jesus as his personal substitute before a holy God.

Immediately after describing the final judgment of the unsaved and their consignment to the lake of fire, the Word of God goes on to the eternal state of bliss.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Rev. 21:1.

In 2 Peter 3 we read that we "look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Previously it said that the present earth and surrounding heavens are to be dissolved and melt with fervent heat.

How or where God will sustain the earthly saints at the close of the Millennium when the present earth is dissolved, He has not told us. Let it suffice us to know that He can and will. He will then make the earth over - entirely new. From the statement that there will then be "no more sea," it would appear that many changes will take place. Most of the earth's surface is now covered with water, and that is necessary to life as it is at present, but then all will be new. Life will be suited to the new condition, whatever it may be.

We are told that righteousness will dwell in that eternal state where sin can never come. At present, righteousness is only preached or offered - we may suffer for righteousness now. In the Millennium, righteousness will reign, and put down wickedness; but in God's new heaven and new earth it will dwell. That will be the stable and permanent condition. No breath of sin will ever defile that new scene. Then will be seen the complete fulfillment of John 1:29.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

At present we who believe know our sins put away. In the Millennium there will be a further demonstration of the value of the work of the Lamb of God, but in that eternal bliss we shall see sin completely put away from God's creation.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

Rev. 21:1-8 gives us the most complete description of the eternal state. The Apostle Paul only approaches it in 1 Cor. 15:24-28, where he speaks of Christ bringing all into subjection and then delivering up the kingdom which He ruled as man. Then God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - shall be all in all. This coincides with Rev. 21:3; the tabernacle of God will be with men. There will be no more nations or divided languages, and God Himself shall be with redeemed men in that eternal

state.

When Adam was in innocence in the garden of Eden, God visited him, but He did not dwell with man in that state. With redeemed men in the eternal state He will dwell.

In that eternal day "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." O the glory of that fixed state of bliss! It is truly worthy of God.

And what of the Church, the bride of Christ, in that eternal blessedness? In the preview of the eternal state she is seen as the "holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." She still has her beauty as in the day of her espousal. She is still seen as "a bride." How soon a bride today loses her bridal beauty; but O fellow believer, we shall never lose it as the bride of Christ. After one thousand years the Church will still have the same bridal beauty in heaven. If we but laid hold of these things a little more in our hearts, we would see very little beauty in all here below. May the thoughts of Christ and His coming glory, and ours with Him, so lift our poor hearts above this weary world that we shall live in the atmosphere of heaven.

## Prophetic Terms: the Fullness of Time

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We are living in important times, in days when great changes are taking place throughout the world. It is a time of upheaval, and besides that, the world is on the threshold of even greater events. Many men of the world are perplexed and fearful as to the future. No one can look forward five, ten, or twenty years with any calm. The international waters are troubled, and there are many explosive elements that cause a sober man to fear.

Now in the midst of scenes of confusion, some men prophesy of greater and better times to come. Many have schemes for the improvement and betterment of mankind. Panaceas are offered, tried, and then discarded, but apprehension grows.

Fellow-Christian, this is a time when we should seek to have God's thoughts, and not man's, as to the present evil world and its future. There is only one Book in the whole world that can tell the future, and yet how very few Christians there are who understand much of what it says. Surely God has given us the prophetic word as a lamp in a dark place (2 Pet. 1:19), and we do well to take heed to it.

It would be impossible to give any comprehensive exposition of the prophetic word in these papers, but with the Lord's help we hope to consider some of the expressions and terms used in connection with prophecy. A clearer understanding of these terms should enable the young Christian to have a better outline of prophecy, and thereby to discern the character of the day in which we live. He should then be able to look forward with joyful anticipation to his own blest future, and view the scene around as God views it. To have God's thoughts about the world, and to understand more of what He has decreed regarding it, would tend to give us more calm and peace when we see the tendency to unrest, and to the shaking of everything heretofore considered stable. Then neither the false hopes of the false prophets of our days, who still preach peace, safety, and betterment; nor the cries of the pessimist who sees the undermining of everything solid, will affect us. We shall be able to look beyond the darkness, and enjoy even now the prospect of the things that cannot be moved.

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Heb. 12:28.

"The Fullness of the Time"

It would be profitable to first consider a term used by God, which causes us to look backward, as it refers to the ushering in of the ground of all our blessing.

"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4:4, 5.

The fullness of the time (singular) looks back over the four thousand years of man's history on the earth prior to the birth of Christ. During this time God was testing man in many successive ways.

On man's part all the trials ended in sad and dismal failure. It mattered not in what way man in the flesh was tested, he came short and was found wanting.

The whole course of the Old Testament is a tale of failure. Think of the wonderful opportunity Adam and Eve had where all was fresh from the hand of God in the garden, yet they gave their ear to the deceiver and fell. Man in innocence was not proof against sin, when put to the test.

After fallen man was driven out from the presence of God, he soon filled the earth with violence and corruption (see Genesis 4 and 6). Lawlessness was so rampant, that God cleansed the earth with the flood, and made a fresh beginning in Noah and his family. Almost immediately failure came in, in Noah himself, and soon his posterity had "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Rom. 1:23. Idolatry, which had not been mentioned before the flood, became the rule.

Then God called Abraham out from among idolaters (Josh. 24:14) to walk with Him. He chose the seed of Abraham for His special people, and gave them every opportunity to serve Him. He treated them without the law and with the law; He gave them the priesthood and it failed; He sent them prophets and He gave them kings; but all is the same sad story of failure. If ever a natural people - man in the flesh - had a chance to bring forth fruit for God, the children of Israel had.

God likens them to a vineyard which He Himself planted, but which never bore fruit for Him who planted it. He looked for fruit, but there was none (Matt. 21:33-41; Psalm 80:8-13; Isa. 5:1-7). In Luke 20, after speaking of the lack of fruit He received from His vineyard, God says,

"What shall I do?"

It is as though He had come to an extremity. Every effort and every culture of natural man to bring forth fruit, had proved to be useless; and God asks, "What shall I do?" The decision is reached, and God answers His own question with,

"I will send My beloved Son: it may be they will reverence Him when they see Him." Luke 20:13.

And with this verse we come back to Gal. 4:4.

"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son." Blessed be God! He concluded that man could not bring forth fruit, and He ceased looking for it. He decided to act in the love and grace of His heart, and send His beloved Son.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son." 1 John 4:10.

We all know the answer to this expression of God's love. They cried, "Away with Him." They cast Him out! And God triumphed over their abounding wickedness, and made that blessed One to be an offering and sacrifice for sin. Yes, when man had done his very worst, God did His very best. What a story of love - divine love! - love that gave the dearest object of His heart for most unlovable objects. He sent His Son to redeem. He would bring us to Himself according to His love, but also in keeping with His holy character. His beloved Son must die - must bear our sins - if we were to be saved.

Galatians goes on to tell of being brought to God as "sons" with the Spirit of His Son in our hearts. O the depths of God's love and wisdom! Well may we look back to the "fullness of the time," and

rejoice that we are not on probation, but if we believe on Him who was delivered for our offenses, we are saved and brought to God as sons.

## Prophetic Terms: the Fullness of Times

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We have now considered the term, "the fullness of the time," as being the time when the probation of man ended. God had tried man in every way, so that none could say that anything was left untried or undone. Every trial ended in the failure of man to bring forth fruit for God, and proved all, both Jews and Gentiles, to be under sin. All hope for man had thus ended, unless God would act in pure grace. This God did, for He sent His beloved Son - the dearest Object of His heart - down into this world of sin and sorrow, saying, "Maybe they will reverence my son."

But when men saw the Son, they rejected Him, and finally cried, "Away with Him." Both Jews and Gentiles were guilty of His death, but God again abounded over their wickedness, and brought salvation to men through the sacrificial death of His Son. The offer of a free and full salvation went forth, and today continues to go forth.

Friend, have you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Savior? There is no hope and no salvation for you unless you personally accept and acknowledge Him.

From where we stand today we look back to "the fullness of the time," but we may also look forward to

"The Fullness of Times."

God has decreed, "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times [plural] 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.

This looks forward to a time yet future, but not in the distant future, when all things in heaven and earth shall be brought under the Lord Jesus. Although He is now disowned in this world He created, the time is coming apace when all in heaven and in earth shall own His rights, and confess Him as Lord.

During the interval between "the fullness of the time" and "the fullness of times" it might appear that God is indifferent to the dishonor and maltreatment accorded to His Son in this world. God is patiently waiting and beseeching men to be reconciled (2 Cor. 5:20) while He forbears to execute judgment on this world where His Son was murdered. God shall yet avenge the death of His Son, but today is the time of His longsuffering and patience. He has assured us that judgment will fall, and Peter speaks of the delay in these words:

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3:9.

This world today is in the position of a guilty criminal who has been duly tried, then condemned to execution, and is just awaiting the day and hour of execution.

Should any read these lines who are still unsaved, remember that you are a part of this world over which the judgment of God hangs. You are either saved by Christ's death and precious blood, or

you are numbered among His murderers and rejecters who are awaiting certain doom. There can be no neutrality concerning Christ; you are either for Him or against Him. If you have not already accepted Him, accept Him quickly while there is still opportunity, and before the judgment overtakes you.

During the interval we have spoken of, the Lord Jesus sits at God's right hand waiting until His enemies be made His footstool (Psalm 110:1). During this long period of the non-intervention of God with this condemned world, the gospel goes out, but soon it is going to end. In one place God speaks in His Word of this period as "the mystery of God." Note what God says:

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets.... And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever." Rev. 10:7; 11:15.

Yes, Christ shall yet reign and have dominion over all, but He shall first put down all His enemies. He shall visit this world with great and sore judgments, and gather out of His kingdom all things that offend. Then shall be the "fullness of times," when all things in heaven and in earth shall be headed up under the Man of God's counsels.

When God first made man, Adam, He placed him in the garden of Eden and gave him dominion over the earth. He made him Lord of the creation, and even brought the animals to him to have him name them. But Adam gave his ear to the devil's lie and fell. Ruin, sorrow, misery, and death followed the fall of man. Not only man, but the whole creation suffered because of the fall of its first head. Satan, the deceiver, became usurper of man's place. He, was even able to offer the kingdoms of the world to the Lord Jesus when He came (Matt. 4), for he said, "They are 'delivered unto me.'" The Lord Jesus refused to receive them from Satan.

It might have looked as though God's purpose to place man at the head of this creation had failed, and as far as the first man and his posterity were concerned, it had failed; but God shall yet have all under the Man, the second Man, the last Adam, during the "fullness of times." What the Lord Jesus refused from Satan, He shall yet have from God. He is going to take the headship of the creation, not only by right, but by redemption, for it had fallen under the power of the enemy through man's sin. All that had been ruined in the hands of the first Adam, shall be more than made good in the last Adam - the Son of God and Son of man.

The 8th Psalm, and the second chapter of Hebrews both speak of His coming dominion, and His present exaltation at God's right hand. In Hebrews we read that we do not see all things put under the Lord Jesus yet, but we do see Him crowned with glory and honor.

And during the period of waiting, called the "patience of Jesus Christ," a bride is being gathered out from among the Jews and Gentiles to be His joint heirs, and share His glory in that soon-coming day. Fellow-Christian, such is our portion!

## Prophetic Terms: the Fulness of the Gentiles

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There is a period of time spoken of in the epistle to the Romans, which has a very special reference to the days in which we live, as showing that there will be an end to the present period of grace. It is called "the fullness of the Gentiles."

"I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." Rom. 11:25.

There are several things indicated in this verse and in the whole 11th chapter of Romans:

First, that Israel has been partly blinded in the governmental dealings of God;

Second, that the Gentiles are at present brought into a special place of blessing and favor;

Third, that this present period of Gentile preference is to end, and Israel again become the center of God's ways of blessing on earth.

We might then inquire, How did Israel obtain the special favored place in the past dispensation? We will have to go back into the Old Testament and there see that after the flood, men became idolaters and corrupted themselves in the worship of images, behind which were demons. From this condition God called Abraham (Josh. 24:15; Gen. 12:1-3), and made him promises as to his seed after him. God began in Abraham a line of special promise and blessing on the earth. This special privilege is spoken of figuratively in Romans, as an "olive tree" of which Abraham was the root.

The Israelites were the natural branches of this "olive tree" (see Jer. 11:16).

Before the days of Christianity, it was a distinct advantage to be born a Jew. There were special promises conferred on them. This is well described in the words of Rom. 3:1, 2.

"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

They had the promises, the covenants, the law, the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament, and many other advantages.

The next question that arises is, Why were these favored people blinded and cut off from the olive tree? Their blindness was brought about, first, through their own willful departure from God, and then by God's just decree, when they rejected every means of recalling them to Himself.

We find that God pronounced the decree of judicial blindness against the Jews back in the days of Isaiah.

"And He said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes;

lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." Isa. 6:9, 10.

This sentence was issued against the Israelites over 750 years before the Lord Jesus came into the world. Another question might well be asked. When was this threat of blindness actually carried out? In the answer to this question we are impressed with the wondrous long-suffering of God. God waited long and patiently. He sent prophet after prophet to His erring people, and finally sent His Son, whom they rejected and cast out. Even during the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, His own nation were closing their eyes to the light. In Matthew 13 the Lord made mention of the sentence of blindness pronounced by the prophet Isaiah. It was being partially fulfilled because of their persistent willfulness.

But even then, God lingered in patience over His earthly people; and after the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus, He sent them a message of free pardon and salvation through the testimony of the Spirit of God to the finished work of Christ. This is plainly shown in the defense of the martyr Stephen in Acts 7. After Stephen had charged them with the guilt of resisting the Holy Ghost, they stoned him, thus showing their rejection of God's final offer of mercy before the carrying out of the sentence in full.

The Jews at Jerusalem had thus sealed their own fate. Then as the gospel messengers went about preaching from city to city, they sought out the Jews first. When the Jews rejected the gospel, the blindness descended on them. It seems to have settled down gradually from place to place as they refused the last message of grace. It settled down somewhat in the same manner in which the glory left the temple in Ezekiel - little by little as though loathe to do so. It is fairly easy to trace through the Acts, the progress of the rejection of the gospel by the Jews, and the shift to the Gentiles. We might note some examples:

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Acts 13:46. This was at Antioch in Pisidia. Next notice the same development at Corinth:

"Paul... testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." Acts 18:5, 6.

Finally, we see the Apostle Paul sent to Rome, the great capital city of the empire, the world metropolis, as a prisoner, because of Jewish hatred. When he arrived in Rome he

"Called the chief of the Jews together,... to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets.... And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers." Paul then quotes the sentence from Isaiah 6 as applying to the case, ending with,

"Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." Acts 28:26-28.

Here, almost 800 years after its pronouncement, the sentence is fulfilled. Thus the gospel to the "Jew first" was closed, and the Gentiles became the center of God's special favor upon the earth. They were brought into this through Israel's fall. They were grafted into the "olive tree" on earth. It is a distinct advantage today to be born a Gentile. Yes, the Gentiles now have "much every way."

But in Romans 11 God speaks, through the apostles, to the Gentiles. It is a solemn word of warning which He gives there. He says that if they do not continue in God's goodness, they shall be cut off from the olive tree as Israel was; and then if the Gentiles are cut off, Israel shall be grafted in again.

We must remember that in all this it does not speak of a Christian who fails, being cut off, nor of a Christian being cut off at all. It is not "eternal life" in question, but the special favor of God to people on earth. The Gentiles now have this favor, and not the Jews. The Gentiles have the "salvation of God" preached to them freely, but as God suggests, Have they continued in His goodness? Has Christendom continued in the "faith once delivered to the saints"? NO! NO! NO! The answer is visible on every hand. Infidelity, modernism, evolution, false doctrines, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God! What a sad story and what gross ingratitude to God's salvation prepared at such a great cost!

Reader, if you are not truly saved, be warned. The Lord Jesus is coming to take the real Christians home soon - very soon, now - and then the "fullness of the Gentiles will be come in"; that is, will be completed. The door of grace to the Gentiles will close and the mere professors be left behind for judicial blindness that "they all might be damned who believed not the truth" (2 Thess. 2:12).

Such is the certain doom of fast decaying Christendom.

## Prophetic Terms: the Great Tribulation

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The time during which the apostasy will develop will be one of trial and trouble for the earth. The moment the Church is taken to heaven to be with Christ, God's plans for the earth will open. At present He is waiting in patience for men to be saved; then He will visit the earth with judgments of increasing intensity.

It is well to be thoroughly clear that no true believer in Christ will be left here during this time of tribulation. The book of Revelation gives many details as to the unfolding of the judgments that will fall on the earth; but in it, the Church is not seen on earth after the end of chapter three. It is seen in heaven in the symbol of the "elders" who display divine intelligence as to that which happens. There, as another has said, "They sing the sweetest songs in heaven; they worship more frequently and characteristically than any others. In them combine exalted position on thrones, active office as priests, as well as prophetic intelligence."

While the Church is still viewed on earth in the third chapter, there is a promise made to the overcomer that he will be kept from the "hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." It is not that they are to be preserved through temptation (tribulation), but they are to be kept from the "hour" of it. They will be gone first, like Enoch, who went to heaven without dying, before the flood came. The whole world will feel the awfulness of that time, but Palestine and the apos-tate Jews, and the apostate Christian (so-called) nations will reap special vengeance.

When the Lamb in heaven takes the book of judgment to open its seven seals (chapter 5), the "elders" are seen seated on thrones.

Chapter 6 describes the opening of the first six seals, which are in the nature of providential judgments of God. It is God moving behind the scenes bringing forth horses and riders to fulfill His will.

The 7th chapter is a parenthesis in which a special remnant of Israel is sealed - faithful to God, they will be sealed for preservation. A countless number of Gentiles also will come out of "the great tribulation." The latter will be those who not having heard and refused the "gospel of the grace of God," will in that future time believe in God, and await the coming of Christ as King.

Chapter 8 resumes the unloosing of judgments as the seven trumpets begin to sound when the seventh seal is opened. The severity of the trials increases as the time progresses.

Read carefully Matthew 24:3-14. In these verses the Lord Jesus revealed the course of trouble right down to His return to reign. It is needful to see that in this portion it is the revelation of the coming tribulation as it will concern the Jews. Much confusion has been caused by applying this portion of the Lord's discourse on the mount of Olives to Christians or to our time. The disciples in Matthew 24 represent the faithful Jewish remnant who will suffer great persecutions. They will live in days of unparalleled trouble and also suffer from their own brethren who accept the antichrist.

Their troubles will be from without and from within.

The disciples ask, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" This word "world" should have been translated "age," and the context shows that the world does not then come to an end, although a period of God's dealing with man will end. In answer to their question, the Lord informs them of general troubles to come, which He calls, "the beginning of sorrows." These earlier troubles correspond to the early judgments mentioned in the book of Revelation. The latter troubles are described in verse 21: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

While the whole period is often spoken of as "the great tribulation," this term, strictly speaking, only applies to the last half of it. The first part is only the "beginning of sorrows." The "great tribulation" will be the worst time of trouble the world will ever see. It will be a comparably short time, but will be exceeding fierce and hot. Both parts together will probably not be more than seven years. This is a very small space of time compared with God's other dealings with men; for instance, it is almost 2000 years that the gospel has gone forth.

The 24th chapter of Matthew supposes the Jews to be back in Palestine, and indeed some are already there. They will rebuild the temple and re-establish Jewish ritual. But very suddenly, at the middle of the seven years, their sacrifices and religious services will be stopped, and an idol will be set up in the temple - in the "holy place." At this point their apostasy becomes final, and ushers in that terrible "great tribulation" of short duration. The presence of the idol - image of the great head of western powers - in their temple will be the direct sign for any godly Jews to flee from Jerusalem. When that happens, they are to flee in such haste, that if they are in the field, they are not even to go into the house to get their clothes; desolations are at the very door.

Matthew 24 should not be confused with Luke 21. In the latter the Lord gave instructions for the early Christians to leave Jerusalem before it was destroyed by Titus in the year 70 A.D. At that time the signal to leave, was the presence of the Roman armies around the city. The Christians heeded the Lord's words, and were spared the awful slaughter when Jerusalem fell.

Daniel the prophet also foretold of the days to come. In chapter 12 he described the tribulation as a time of trouble such as never was before. This is the same time of which the Lord spoke, for there cannot be two such times, both of which are the worst. Let us notice the 11th verse: "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days."

The word "abomination" in Scripture plainly refers to an idol or to idolatry. Here we learn that it will not only be the signal for godly Jews to flee, it will be the point from which they can count time. The worst days of trouble will start at that point. Terrible as they will be, they are measured, and will only run their allotted time. Twelve hundred and ninety days is just three and one half years, plus an extra thirty days, (Jewish reckoning of time figures thirty days to each month.)

The idol is called the "abomination that maketh desolate" because that for this, God will send a strong one to scourge them. The same days are numbered in Revelation 11 as forty-two months, and 1260 days, either of which is three and one half years. Forty-two months are given in Revelation 13 as the time when the great head of the united western nations will defy and

blaspheme God. He will be aided by Satan (called the dragon), and the antichrist described as a beast with two lamb-like horns).

The mass of the Jews who are then back in their land, with the antichrist as their leader, will make a league with the united western powers for their protection. Nevertheless, it will fail, for God will send a power from the north of Palestine as a desolator to scourge them. Listen to what God has said by Isaiah:

"Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: . . . The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it" (Isa. 28:14-19).

The prophet Jeremiah calls it "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7).

And now, dear fellow Christian, be assured that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Soon we shall be off from this wicked world to be with our precious Saviour. We shall not be here during the time which we have been considering. God has spoken to us about it, as He would to friends. He has let us into the secrets of what is coming. It is with us as with Abraham; he did not dwell in Sodom, but God told him what was to happen to Sodom.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! (Rom. 11:33).

(To be continued)

## Prophetic Terms: the Judgment Seat of Christ

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In previous issues we have passed down along the line of time from the beginning of the "times of the Gentiles," about 606 B.C., all the way to the eternal state - the "new heavens and new earth." Now with the Lord's help we shall go back and notice some points that were either omitted or passed over with only brief mention.

Previously we considered our blessed hope - the expectation of soon hearing that shout in the air and being caught up, with all the redeemed, to meet our Lord in the air. That blessed moment is now nearer by some months than it was then. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." After considering the Lord's coming for His own, we followed future development of things on the earth, but now let us turn our thoughts to heaven and the "judgment seat of Christ."

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. 5:10.

"For we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ [God; J.N.D. Trans.]... So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:10-12.)

The language is plain and conclusive. All must be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. Man is a responsible creature and must give account to his Creator of everything he does. Not everyone, however, will be manifested at the same time or place. Christ, to whom all judgment has been committed (John 5:22, 27), will "judge the quick [living] and the dead" (2 Tim. 4:1), but not at the same time, nor will believers be manifested before Him together with unbelievers.

The scene in which saved ones are to be manifested will be in heaven (2 Cor. 5:10).

The living nations are to be judged on earth (Matt. 25:31-46), when He comes to reign.

The wicked dead are to be raised to stand before the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15), at the close of the Millennium.

Many people have erroneously thought that there will be only one judgment seat, and that all people, saved and unsaved, will in a final judgment day stand before the bar of justice. Such error is often connected with the equally false idea that then and only then will people know who are saved and who are not. Now the Word of God does not teach that there will be a general judgment, but, on the contrary, carefully differentiates between the various judgments.

At the judgment seat of Christ in heaven only believers are to stand, and they are not to be there to find out whether they are saved or not. That will have been settled long before. Nor are they to be there to be judged, but rather to be "manifested," that is, to have all their works brought in review. Now this does not in the least contradict that blessed verse, John 5:24.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment]; but is passed from death unto life."

The believer in Christ shall never come into judgment. For him, the judgment for his sins is passed and gone. His blessed Substitute bore his sins and the judgment due to them, on the cross.

We can stand on the sure Word of God regarding the believer's perfect security before God. Yet it is also true that everyone who is saved is going to have every act done in the body brought out in the light before Him who will judge righteously.

We need also to remember then when the Lord comes for the believers, we shall all be changed. We shall receive bodies of glory, so that when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ we shall be "like Him." What judgment could there be for those who are already glorified and brought there by the Lord Himself who came to get us?

A beloved brother in Christ, now with the Lord, used to say: "It is like a family where all the children have been away to college. At last, summer comes and all the children come home for a happy reunion. Each one is welcomed home and all enjoy the father, mother, brothers, and sisters, and home; but after a few days the father of the family calls the children one by one to bring out their reports so they can go over the results of their work, to see how they spent their time when away at school. All is then gone over to receive the father's approval or disapproval."

When the Lord calls His own, not one shall be left behind. What a glorious and happy gathering that will be - to be with our Lord and all the redeemed in our Father's house! Are we then going to dread the manifestation that will follow shortly afterward? No, we shall not dread it; we shall desire it. Then all will be brought out in the light and we shall want it so. There will be no flesh in us then. We shall see all as Christ sees it. No hidden motive will warp our judgment in that day. At present hidden motives, almost unknown to ourselves, cast a strange light on what we do. Then, everything will be perfectly transparent. Blessed be God! He does give now the privilege of getting into His presence and judging ourselves there. Even though that is only feebly and partially done by us, we do know something of the happiness of having things out before God. "Blessed is the man... in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psalm 32:2).

May we seek to be more in a state of openness and transparency before God. And yet, we cannot trust our deceitful hearts, and have to say with the psalmist, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults." Psalm 19:12.

Even the Apostle Paul who sought to keep always a conscience void of offense toward God and man, and could say that he knew nothing against himself (1 Cor. 4:4), that is, he was not conscious of anything wrong, quickly adds that his not knowing of anything that was wrong did not justify him. The Lord would be his judge. Have we not all proved even in this life that we were mistaken in our judgment of certain things? We have sometimes thought that we were right, only to discover later that we were wrong - influenced perhaps by some secret wish. Shall we not then see many things differently, when we fully understand and see all as God sees it?

When in that bright glory we stand before Him, with every roving thought gone, every earthly influence removed, and all fleshly desires banished, we shall see as never before the exceeding grace of God. As we see what we were in His light, we shall magnify Him who abounded toward us in all wisdom and love. Of course we shall see what we missed by walking "as men" and pleasing ourselves when we were "in the body" on earth. We shall discover what we lost by not being faithful to Him in the days wherein we had opportunity, but all such discoveries will but awaken

praise to Him who so faithfully loved and cared for us in spite of what we were.

In that wondrous day we shall understand many things that we do not perceive now. When we see how near falling we were at times, and how He in His grace stepped in and hindered us from taking another step, we shall praise Him and adore Him. Some of the troubles and difficulties in our path will then be understood as His gracious preventatives and restoratives.

Then after the judgment seat of Christ, the Church will be presented to Christ as His bride. It will then be said, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." Rev. 19:7.

The making herself ready probably refers to the judgment seat of Christ where every single thing shall be brought out and forever cleared. The glorious bride will not have the slightest concealed thing to mar her perfect harmony and intimacy with her adorable Bridegroom.

Dear fellow Christian, may we seek to live more transparently before God now - to judge all in His presence - and to live in view of that day when every deed shall be brought out at the judgment seat of Christ. Surely these thoughts are wholesome for us now.

But when the Apostle Paul thought of the judgment, his mind turned to those who were unsaved, and who will have to stand before Christ to be judged. Then the thought of the "terror of the Lord" and the doom of the lost - this led him to warn and to "persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11). May we also warn the unsaved to flee from the wrath to come.

## Prophetic Terms: the Millennium

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When the Lord Jesus as the Son of man returns in flaming fire taking vengeance on His enemies, He will be preparing the earth for the wonderful time often spoken of as the Millennium. Many have mistakenly thought that the gospel of the grace of God is to first spread throughout the world and so prepare the way for Christ to come and reign. But on the contrary, the gospel is being despised and corrupted, and soon the real Christians will be taken from the world to be with Christ in the Father's house. Then judgments of increasing severity followed by the coming of the Warrior-King will cleanse the earth before His rightful reign. Judgment, and not the gospel, will prepare the way for the Millennium.

The word "Millennium" is not found in the Holy Scriptures, but has been coined from two Latin words to designate a period of "one thousand years." While the word is not there, the thing itself is very definitely found in many parts of the Bible. The Old Testament abounds with references to the wonderful reign of Christ and its effects on the world, the nations, and the children of Israel. The Lord Jesus also referred to it in the gospels, and when we come to the book of Revelation we find the "thousand years" spoken of six times in the first seven verses of chapter twenty. The Old Testament does not disclose the duration of the time, but the book of Revelation does.

We also get many types in the Old Testament which point on to Christ as King. To mention only two, David and Solomon, we see in them types of Christ coming in judgment and then reigning in peace. David was the rejected, though crowned, king, just as Christ is now. Then the day came when he ascended the throne, and his reign was characterized by war. In his days the enemies of Israel were subdued; and then Solomon, after establishing the kingdom on righteous principles, reigned without "adversary nor evil occurrent." The one is a type of Christ putting down His enemies, and the other of Christ reigning in peace and righteousness afterward. Of course we must remember that these are only types, and the best of men break down as types. What a breakdown there was in Solomon, as a type of Christ reigning in wisdom and righteousness! But the more the types fall short, so much the more will Christ the blessed Antitype stand out in bold relief. Solomon when at his best in his beginning displayed unusual wisdom, but it was only after the sight of his eyes and the hearing of his ears; but of Christ we read,

"He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears" (Isa. 11:3). He will know all fully.

If the Queen of Sheba was overwhelmed by the display of earthly glory found in Solomon, the type of Christ, what will the saved of the nations feel when Christ really reigns! If the shadow was so great, what will the substance be!

In the transfiguration scene (Matt. 17:1-8; Luke 9:27-36) there is a sample of Christ's coming kingdom. Peter refers to it in 2 Pet. 1:16-18, saying that they were eyewitnesses of His majesty. It was the coming kingdom displayed in miniature. There was the Lord transfigured before them.

There were also Moses and Elijah who typify the heavenly saints - Moses a type of those who die, and Elijah of those who go to heaven without dying. Peter, James, and John represent the earthly saints in natural bodies. Thus in the kingdom the heavenly and earthly will be brought close together, with Christ the Object for all.

In the Millennium the curse pronounced on the earth in Genesis 3 shall have been removed. Thorns and briars will not be present as now, for we read that "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree" (Isa. 55:13). Everything will then be wondrously fertile. The crops will be so great that the plowman will overtake the reaper (Amos 9:13). Psalms 65 and 72 also describe the fullness that will be brought forth by the earth in that time. The seasons are to remain, but all will be ordered for blessing, except where there is disobedience among the nations. Zechariah 14 foretells the withholding of rain to any nation that does not go up to keep the feast of tabernacles at Jerusalem.

Even the animals will benefit from the beneficent reign of Christ. At present they are subject to suffering by reason of the fall. They were made subject to vanity through the fall of creation's head - Adam (Rom. 8:19-22). During the Millennium they will be delivered from such bondage, and according to Isaiah 11 and 65, enmity among them will cease to exist.

The Jews who are now hated and despised in many, many places throughout the world, and forbidden from entering their own land, shall be brought back. Those who are apostate and receive the antichrist, will meet their doom when Christ returns in judgment. Afterward the faithful few who were hunted and chased, together with the scattered all over the earth will be brought back by the Lord. It is written in Matt. 24:31,

"He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

So great will be the national regathering of Israel that they will then not refer to the Lord as having brought them out of the land of Egypt, but as having led them out of the "north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them" (Jer. 23:3-8). Both Judah and the ten tribes will be brought back to dwell as one in the land. Their blessing will be as "life from the dead" (Rom. 11:15), and as the resurrection of the "dry bones" of Ezekiel 37. These scriptures, and also Isa. 26:19, do not speak of the resurrection of the body, but of the national resuscitation of Israel for millennial blessing.

Israel can then sing as in Psalm 48, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion,... the city of the great King." The magnificence of the city of Jerusalem will surpass anything that the world has ever seen. Many scriptures foretell the future prominence and blessing of Jerusalem and the land of Israel. From Zechariah 14 we gather that there will be certain physical changes in the vicinity.

Who on earth can describe the horrible sufferings of the Jews since the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70? What recompense for those fateful words, "His blood be on us and on our children." But while "He hath smitten" so it will be said, "He will bind us up" (Hos. 6:1). When the "King of glory" appears, then the words of the poet will be accomplished:

"Those gloomy years have rolled away,

The years of Israel's mourning;

The rising sun with healing ray

Proclaims the King's returning."

As for the Gentile nations, they also will be blessed. Those who are left of the Gentiles after the days of judgment, will be brought into the Millennium, and be blessed as they own Israel's King. At present the nations are seeking means of securing peace, but there can be no lasting peace yet. Before such peace can come to this troubled world, an even worse time is due. Instead of peace, the prophet Joel tells us:

"Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men.... Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears." (Joel 3:9-17.)

But in the Millennium it shall be fulfilled:

"He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isa. 2:4. The business of learning war - scientific research and the like - is to go on and increase for the present, but when Christ reigns, they shall not learn war any more. Lord, how long till then?

But what of the Church - the true Christians of this day - during the wondrous reign of Christ? (Read Rev. 21:9 through 22:5.) In these verses see something of the displayed heavenly glory of the Church in that period. Of course the language is figurative, but withal it is a beautiful description of magnificence and glory. She is seen descending out of heaven, and displayed over the earth. Thus the heavenly saints will reign with Christ (canopy over the earth) in that day. They are to be associated with Him in His reigning - not to be reigned over, as wonderful as that will be for the earth. The saved of the nations are to walk in the light of that heavenly city, of which the Lamb is the light.

Satan, the devil and arch deceiver, is to be bound in the bottomless pit, or the abyss, during the Millennium (Rev. 20:1-3).

"Thou art coming, mighty Savior,

'King of kings,' Thy written name;

Thou art coming, royal Savior!

Coming for Thy promised reign.

"O the joy, when sin's confusion

Ends beneath Thy righteous sway;

O the peace, when all delusion

At Thy presence dies away."

Prophetic Terms: the Millennium

In the last issue we considered the term "Millennium," and noticed that it is a word used to designate the wonderful one-thousand-year reign of Christ. During that time all the earth will be blessed; the repentant and renewed Israel will be especially blessed under their true Messiah. The nations also will enjoy peace and tranquility under the righteous rule of the King that shall reign in righteousness. The seductions of Satan will not tempt men in that day, for Satan will be confined in the bottomless pit, or abyss. But before that glorious time can come, the Lord Jesus will return as the Son of man to execute judgment. His redeemed will soon be taken from the earth to heaven, and will be with Him when He comes to take vengeance on His enemies, and on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel.

Only those Israelites that are born again will enter into the kingdom on earth. The rebels and apostates among them will be purged out and will not see that glorious time. The seed of Jacob will never again turn aside after that, for it is written:

"The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and forever." Isa. 59:20, 21.

But among the saved Gentile nations, there will later be those who will submit themselves because of fear, without true repentance or new birth. It is said of some of them that they will yield feigned obedience. It is written in Psalm 18:44:

"As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto Me." The margin in some Bibles says, "yield feigned obedience," instead of, "submit themselves." (See also marginal reading of Psalm 66:3 and 81:15.)

Therefore, while evil will be restrained and the influence of the devil removed, there will be rebellion and sin among the Gentiles. This will be put down promptly, as we gather from another psalm, which speaks of how the kingdom will be restored.

"Every morning will I destroy all the wicked of the land" (Psalm 101:8; J.N.D. Trans.). Another part of Scripture may be referred to in this connection.

"There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old: but the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed." Isa. 65:20.

There will not be sin and death on every hand as now. Death will be the exception rather than the rule. Men will live out their days then, which they have never yet done, because of sin. Even Methuselah who lived to be 969 years old did not live as long as the Millennium. One entering the Millennium from among the righteous will continue on through and live longer than Methuselah. One who dies for his sin at the age of 100 years will be considered only a youth or child, much as we now consider a person seven years old in relation to the present span of life. He who dies then will be a sinner and be suffering the wages of his sin - "the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed."

There is a mistaken idea that all sin now is the result of Satan's seductions. Such an idea tends to deceive people into blaming Satan for all sin, and excusing themselves, but the truth is that man himself is also bad. Man has an evil nature which of course is easily acted upon by the devil. There are lusts in his heart which are easily stirred to action. During the blessed and glorious time of Christ's reign on earth, when evil will be immediately put down and Satan be confined, there will be proof that man is bad. Even under such favorable circumstances there will be sin. with the resultant death.

Then there is to be still another proof of the evil nature of man. For after he has experienced a time of freedom from war, fear, want, and all other troubles, and enjoyed a time of blessing such as the earth since the days of Adam's fall has never seen, many will rise up in open rebellion against the kingdom of Christ. Let us notice the prophetic Word as to this rebellion.

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." Rev. 20:7-9. In the third verse of the same chapter it was said that after Satan is bound for the thousand years, he "must be loosed a little season."

During that long period of prosperity and blessing - one thousand years - there will be a great increase in the population of the earth, whereas it had been much depopulated by the terrible judgments before the Millennium began. Millions will be born and not be tested by evil in those years. The test will come in the

#### Little Season

at the close of the Millennium, when Satan is loosed. The thousand-year confinement will not have changed that deceiver. He will immediately show himself as the enemy of God, and seduce many of the nations to make one last rebellious outbreak against magnificent goodness. Such is Satan and such is the heart of man that will respond to his suggestion.

The term, Gog and Magog, used of the vast multitude that will rise up in open rebellion, is not to be confused with a similar expression found in Ezekiel 38 and 39. In Ezekiel it refers to Russia and her allied hordes from the north who will come against Israel just as the Millennium begins. They will be destroyed on the mountains of Israel. The scene in Revelation takes place at the close of the Millennium, or one thousand years later than the one in Ezekiel. In Revelation the countless number come from the four quarters of the earth, while in Ezekiel they come only from the north. The judgments also differ, for in Revelation it says that "fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." This judgment, similar to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, is very different from being slain on the mountains of Israel.

When we think of the enmity that there is in the heart of man toward his Creator, we who are saved can praise God that our hearts have been won. We who were enemies have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Man's natural thought is that God is his enemy who must be appeased with a present, but the truth is that all the enmity is on man's part. God is not and never was man's enemy. When man first fell in the garden, enmity was implanted in his heart

to his Creator. While man's sin has separated him from God, God has been seeking man. He even sent His Son into the world to reconcile it, but men killed the Reconciler. But even now God is beseeching lost men to be reconciled to Himself. Every one who knows the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior believes that God is love. This love has been demonstrated in the gift of the dearest object of His heart - "God so loved - that He gave His only begotten Son."

Such love has melted the heart of the believer and, whereas he was once the enemy of God, now he loves God.

Reader, is this true of you? If it is not, may the love of God melt your heart now.

## Prophetic Terms: Times of the Gentiles

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Let us read a verse from the gospel of Luke wherein we find the above term used.

"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Luke 21:24.

The word Gentile is used in Scripture to describe any and all nations who are not Jews. Before the days of Christianity, there were only Jews and Gentiles on earth, but now there is another body known in Scripture as the "church of God," which is composed of those who are saved from among both Jews and Gentiles. All three are mentioned in one verse,

"Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." 1 Cor. 10:32.

Before marking out what is meant by the term, the "times of the Gentiles," we shall have to look at the history of the Jews.

God chose the seed of Abraham for His special people on earth. They were further marked out in Isaac and Jacob; and when God gave to the nations their inheritance on earth, He marked out their bounds "according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut. 32:8). They were His special possession on earth among mankind. He gave them His promises, and then His covenants. After redemption, He came down and dwelt in their midst.

God also gave them the land of Canaan for a possession and drove out the inhabitants of that land. He did not, however, drive them out without just and sufficient reason. The seven nations who inhabited that land were only tenants on it, as it all belonged to God. Through their great wickedness, these nations polluted the land wherein they dwelt; and God said to Abraham that He would give his seed the land of Canaan, but not yet, because "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16). This is a principle with God. He never acts in judgment until there is no other alternative. He waits long in patience, but when iniquity reaches its peak, He must act in judgment.

So when the iniquity of the heathen who occupied the land of Canaan, reached the limit, God gave the land to the children of Israel. He brought them out of Egypt and planted them in the land whereon His eyes were "from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deut. 11:12).

We have not space here to recount the multitude of blessings that were bestowed on the Israelites in their land, but we all know the sad history of failure which followed. While the heathen had polluted the land before, Israel did it afterward. In Psalm 106:38 we read that they polluted the land with blood. They learned the works of the heathen, and worshiped their false gods. In fact, the condition in that land became as bad, or even worse, than it was when inhabited by the heathen whom God displaced because of their wickedness. Note this verse:

"So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken." 2 Chron. 33:9, 10.

Yes, they would not hearken. We read that God sent many messengers to them, but they despised the messengers, and misused His prophets "till there was no remedy." 2 Chron. 36:14, 16.

If God had not acted then, it would have shown Him to be as careless of His glory as they were. He must act! Their very nearness to God, and place of special favor, did not make them exempt from punishment - No! It increased it. God's special favors increase our responsibility, as we read of Israel,

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Amos 3:2.

Finally, after every possible effort on God's part to recall His earthly people, He sent Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, to chastise that guilty nation. Note these words:

"And the LORD gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god." Dan. 1:2.

Yes, the Lord gave the children of Judah into the hands of this Gentile monarch. In fact, God gave this king a universal dominion, and withdrew His throne from the earth. Earlier (Josh. 3:11) God was called the "Lord of all the earth"; but in the book of Daniel, He is called the "God of heaven." Israel who had been called "His people," are then called "not My people" (Hos. 1:9). This great change that took place when God withdrew His throne from this earth, and turned His earthly people over to Gentile control, marked the beginning of the "times of the Gentiles." This change took place about the year 606 B.C.

And while a remnant of Judah returned from captivity seventy years later, they only did so under the power and control of the Gentiles, so the "times of the Gentiles" went on, and today still continues.

When our Lord spoke in Luke 21, He said that after His speaking, Jerusalem was to be "trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." This also came to pass about the year 70 A.D. That word "until" does tell us that there will be definite termination of this period. In fact we are getting along down toward the end of this period - how close we do not know. But it will end when Christ the Lord comes out of heaven with His saints to execute judgment on this Christ-rejecting earth.

"The times of the Gentiles" are pictured in Daniel, second chapter, in the image of a man. The last part of this figure of the "man of the earth," is the feet and toes, which describe the last part and state of Gentile power before the end of this period of time. Then, as we see in Daniel 2, the Lord shall come out of heaven to execute judgment as the "stone cut out of the mountain without hands"; and He will strike the then-existent part of Gentile dominion (the feet and toes of the image - the revived Roman Empire) in His wrath, and break all things to pieces. After executing judgment, His kingdom will fill the whole earth, and Israel will again be brought into a place of blessing and prominence; but it will be a new Israel - they will have a new heart in that day.

May the Lord give us all to see in what close proximity we are to the very end of this age. May we be looking for our Lord from heaven, and holding the things of earth more lightly.

## Prospects

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When a number of men talk together, you will find that they soon begin to speak of their prospects. What are our prospects, fellow believer? Christ is coming into the air. This is our peculiar hope - not His coming to the earth. When He comes for us, all the thousands and millions of saints from Adam and Abel downward will be raised, and their souls reunited to their bodies. Then you and I will be changed, and we shall all be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. That precious dust, beloved, of the saints, of your loved ones and mine, will be raised. We shall see Him, be with Him, and be like Him. Death may come, but the Lord will come.

## Purchase and Redemption

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Redemption supposes taking us out of one condition and putting us into another. In Christ's death we get two questions - God's glory and our sins. Redemption is eternal, but not universal. We get the blessings of the new covenant, but there is no covenant with us; the letter of it is for Israel.

There is universal purchase, but not universal redemption. The believer is the only one who owns the purchase, and acts upon it. Everyone may come as to the presentation of the gospel; but this does not interfere with God's sovereignty. Men will be judged for not believing the gospel, and for sins.

## Ready

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We want to dwell for a few moments on the word which forms the heading of this paper. If we are not mistaken, we will find it to be a word of immense depth and suggestive power, as used by the Holy Spirit in Scripture. We shall just now refer to four passages in which our word occurs; and may the One who wrote these passages be pleased to open and apply them in divine power and freshness to the heart of both writer and reader.

1) And first we shall turn to 1 Pet. 1:5, where it is used in connection with the word "salvation." Believers are said to be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Here then we are taught that salvation is ready to be revealed at this moment; for we are, as John tells us, in "the last times." Note that salvation as here used is not to be confined to the mere matter of the soul's deliverance from hell and perdition. It refers rather to the deliverance of the body of the believer from the power of death and corruption. In brief, it takes in all that stands in any wise connected with the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We already possess the salvation of our souls, as we are told in the very context from which our text is taken. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.... Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Thus we learn in the clearest way that the "salvation ready to be revealed" is linked on to "the revelation of Jesus Christ." This confirmed, were confirmation needful, by Heb. 9:28, where we read, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin [apart from sin] unto salvation."

From all this we may learn that the salvation which is ready to be revealed is the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this we are taught, as Christians, to look at any moment. There is literally nothing, so far as God is concerned - nothing so far as the work of Christ is concerned - nothing so far as the testimony of the Holy Spirit is concerned - to hinder our hearing "the voice of the archangel, and... the trump of God" this very night, this very hour. All is done that needed to be done. Atonement is made, redemption is accomplished. God has been glorified by the work of Christ, as is proved by the fact of Christ's present place on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. From the moment that our Lord Jesus Christ took His seat upon that throne, it could always be said that "salvation [is] ready to be revealed."

But it could not have been said before. Salvation could not be said to be ready until the divine groundwork was laid in the death and resurrection of the Savior. But, when once that most glorious work of all works was accomplished, it could at any moment be said that "salvation [is] ready to be revealed." "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." Psalm 110:1.

2) But the Apostle Peter gives us another instance and application of our word, in chapter 4:5, where he refers to some "Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

Here the word stands before us in a form of awful solemnity. If, on the one hand, it is true that salvation is ready to be revealed for the everlasting joy of God's redeemed, it is equally true, on the other hand, that judgment is ready to take its course, for the everlasting misery of those who neglect God's proffered salvation. The one is as true, and as pointed, and as forcible, as the other. There is nothing to wait for in respect to the judgment, any more than there is in respect to the salvation. The one is as "ready" as the other. God has gone to the utmost in demonstrating His grace, and man has gone to the utmost in demonstrating his guilt. Both have reached their climax in the death of Christ; and when we see Him crowned with glory, and seated on the throne, we have the most powerful evidence that could possibly be afforded, that nothing remains but for salvation to be revealed, on the one hand, and for judgment to take its course, on the other.

It follows that man is no longer on probation. It is a mistake for anyone to think so. It is a fatal delusion. It falsifies man's entire position and state. If I am under probation - if God is still testing me - if He is, even now, occupied in testing whether I am good for anything - if I am capable of producing any fruit for Him - if this be indeed the case, then it is not and cannot be true, that He is "ready to judge." Nature is not ripe for judgment so long as a probationary process is pending - if there is yet something to wait for before judgment can take its course.

But no, reader, we feel bound to press upon you the fact that the period of your probation is over forever, and the period of God's long-suffering is nearly run out. It is of the utmost importance to seize this truth. It lies at the very foundation of the sinner's position. Judgment is actually impending. It is "ready" at this moment to fall upon the head of the unrepentant reader of these lines. The entire history of human nature - of man, of the world - has been wound up and closed forever. The cross of Christ has made perfectly manifest the guilt and ruin of the human race. It has put an end to man's probationary season; and from that solemn hour until now, the true position of the world as a whole, and of each individual sinner, man, woman, and child, has been that of a culprit, tried, found guilty, and condemned, but the sentence not executed. This is the present awful condition of the unbelieving reader.

Dear friend, will you not think of this? Fellow immortal, will you not, even this very moment, bend the undivided attention of thy soul to this eternal question? We must speak plainly and pointedly. We cannot do otherwise. We feel in some small degree the awfulness of the sinner's state and prospect, in view of these weighty words, "ready to judge." We are convinced that the present is a moment which calls for serious and faithful dealing with the souls of our readers. We do not, as God is our witness, want to write essays or sermons; we want to reach souls. We want the reader to be assured of this, that he is not now reading a dry article on a religious subject, prepared merely for the purpose of making a tract, but a solemn appeal made to his heart and conscience, in the immediate presence of "Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

3) But this leads us to the third passage of Holy Scripture in which our weighty motto occurs. The reader will find it in Luke 12:40. "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

If salvation is "ready" to be revealed, and if judgment is "ready" to be executed, what becomes us but to be "ready" also?

And in what does this readiness consist? How are we to be ready? It strikes us that there are two things included in the answer.

First, we must be "ready" in title; and, second, we must be "ready" in our moral state - ready in conscience, and ready in heart. The one is founded upon the work of Christ for us; the other is connected with the work of the Spirit in us. If we are simply resting by faith on the finished work of Christ, if we are leaning exclusively on what He has done and what He is, then are we in very truth ready in title; and we may rest assured of being with Him when He comes.

But, on the other hand, if we are leaning upon our fancied goodness; upon any righteousness which we think we possess; upon not having done any harm to anyone; upon our not being worse than some of our neighbors; upon our church membership; upon our attention to the ordinances of religion; if we are leaning upon any or all of these things, or if we are adding these things to Christ, then we may be assured we are not ready in title - not ready in conscience. God can accept nothing - absolutely nothing - as a title, but Christ. To bring anything else is to declare that Christ is not needful. To bring anything beside is to affirm that He is not enough. But God has borne ten thousand testimonies to the fact, that we can do with nothing less, and that we want nothing more, than Christ. Therefore, Christ is our all-essential and all-sufficient title.

But there is such a thing as professing to be ready in title while, at the same time, we are not ready in our moral condition or practical state.

This demands our gravest attention. There is a vast amount of easy-going evangelical profession abroad at the present moment. The atmosphere is permeated by the rays of gospel light. The darkness of the middle ages has been chased away by the brightness of a free gospel and an open Bible.

We are thankful for a free gospel and an open Bible. But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there is a fearful amount of laxity, unsubduedness, and self-indulgence going hand in hand with the evangelical profession of the day. We notice, with the deepest anxiety, many young professors who have, or seem to have, a very clear insight, so far as the intellect goes, into the truth of the sinner's title, who, if we are to judge from their style, deportment, and habits, are not "ready" in their moral condition - in the real state of their hearts. We are at times, we must confess, sadly cast down when we see our young friends dressing themselves in the empty fashions of an empty and sinful world; feeding upon the questionable literature that issues in such frightful profusion from the press; and engaging in activities that do not honor our Lord and Savior. It is impossible to reconcile such with "Be ye also ready."

We may perhaps be told that these things are externals, and that the grand point is to be occupied with Christ. It may be said - it has been said - "Provided we have Christ in our hearts, it does not matter what we have on our heads, or in our hands." We reply, "If we really have Christ in our hearts, it will regulate what we put on our heads and take into our hands; yes, it will exert a manifest influence upon our whole deportment and character."

We should like to ask some of our friends this question, Would you like the Lord Jesus Christ to come and find you engaged in questionable activities? We feel assured you would not. Well then let us in the name of the Lord see to it that we do not engage in anything which does not comport with our being "ready."

We especially urge this upon the Christian reader. Let this question be ever before us, Am I ready? - ready in title, ready in state, ready in conscience, ready in heart? The times are really very solemn, and we should think seriously of our true state. We feel persuaded that there is a lack of real godly heart exercise among us. There are, we fear, many - God only knows how many - who are not ready - many who would be taken aback and terribly surprised by death or the coming of the Lord. There are things said and done by those who occupy the very highest platform of profession, which we dare not indulge in if we are really looking for the Lord.

God grant that the reader may know what it is to be ready in title, and ready in state, that he may have a purged conscience and a truly exercised heart. Then he will be able to enter into the meaning of the fourth and last passage to which we call his attention. It occurs in Matt. 25:10.

4) "And while they [the foolish virgins] went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut."

How solemn! How awfully solemn! Those who were ready went in, and those who were not ready were shut out. Those who have life in Christ, and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, will be ready. But the mere professor - the one who has truth in the head and on the lip, but not in the heart - who has the lamp of profession, but not the spirit of life in Christ - he will be shut out into outer darkness, in everlasting misery and gloom, the eternal monotony of hell.

O let us, as we take a solemn leave of you, put this question home to your very inmost soul, ART THOU READY?

## The Record of God: Trustworthy Evidence

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"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son.... And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:9, 11, 12.

There are few scriptures which contain more comforting testimony for anxious, troubled souls than the above; they present the very truth which can meet the poor burdened heart, writing bitter things against itself. Nothing can be more distinct than this fact, that the evidence of the soul's acceptance is outside of us altogether; nothing we can either do or feel is any ground of security or rest for our souls; what an unspeakable mercy and comfort that it should be so! For, just reflect a moment. This day all might be favorable and bright around me - happy frames, sweet experiences, and the like, simply produced by my circumstances; then tomorrow, on the contrary, all is as dark as yesterday it was bright - coldness and deadness within, and all that I prized so much and valued as evidence has vanished in a night. What a state of destitution and misery I am now plunged into, in a moment too!

Reader, this is not a supposed case; it is a real and a common one. I have heard of someone who formed his judgment of the sun by looking at it in a pool of water; now and then the water was moved and agitated; every breath of wind troubled it more or less. Consequently this man thought the sun moved as often as it appeared to stand still; but as soon as he learned to judge of the sun no longer by the water on which it shone, then he discovered his mistake, and that the sun was ever the same - steadfast and fixed Oh, how blessed for poor weak things like us to know that our security is in what God has done, and our consciousness of security, or certainty of it, in what God has said; this cannot be too often insisted on, or pressed upon souls - this alone can meet the rage and fury of Satan - this alone can silence the troubles and thoughts of the heart.

"Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself." Luke 24:38, 39.

The risen Savior knew well what perplexed the heart - troubles and thoughts - how does He meet them? By turning the mind out on Himself, from themselves.

Let us look a little at the testimony I have spoken of and found in the scriptures given above.

First, we have, "God hath given to us eternal life." What a sentence that is! It begins with the Giver - "God hath given"; it closes with the gift - "eternal life"; and this, bear in mind, is God's own witness, record, testimony. What is eternal life? Nothing less than the very life of the One who died on the cross as substitute for His people, and rose again from the dead; in His death He closed their history as children, not only of wrath, but of Adam; and in resurrection He became the Head of a new race, and as such communicates His own life. "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." John 20:22. So now, of all who believe in Jesus, who receive the record, testimony, witness of God, it is true they have passed from death unto life - they have

eternal life - they are not in the flesh. So then under the first head or testimony we have God's record of Himself, His Son, His gift - the blessed Giver, God Himself, the source and spring of it all. His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, the One in whom it is all made good, for it is in Him all that God bestows is found - and then His gift, eternal life.

Now the second testimony or record of God is found in verse 12, "He that hath the Son hath life." It is similar to that beautiful verse, the word of Christ Himself, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24. Now observe in the first record which has been before us, God Himself, His Son, and His gift, were all presented; here in the second place, it is God's pledged word. God Himself affirms that He that believeth hath; God has given me testimony not only to the love that was in His heart toward me, but also to the fact that in believing in Christ I have present eternal life. Faith hears Christ's word, believes the Father who sent His Son, possesses Christ, and has everlasting life. Do you not see how the eye of the soul is turned out on God, and on Christ, not in on self? and do you not see that it is the heart of God, the Son of God, the gift of God, and the Word of God, that are all the subject of testimony? Can you not trust such testimony rather than your feelings, frames, experiences, all of which are like the surface of yonder lake, agitated and swept by every wind, even in its gentlest whispers or its wildest fury?

But there is something even beyond the comfort and satisfaction of my heart, and that is that I do not make God a liar; "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son." We receive in this world everything, for the most part, on testimony; when in ordinary conversation people say they cannot believe such and such a thing, it is because the testimony is deficient in some way, generally because of the character of the persons bearing testimony; and on the contrary we find no difficulty in giving credit to testimony from one who is trustworthy and reliable. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater."

"That which can shake the cross,

May shake the peace it gave,

Which tells me Christ has never died,

Or never left the grave.

"Till then my peace is sure; It will not, cannot yield;

Jesus I know has died, and lives; On this firm rock I build.

"I change, He changes not; My Christ can never die;

His love, not mine, the resting place,

I on His truth rely."

## A Right and a Wrong Use of the Eye

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The first great point to establish in order to ascertain the error of anything is to obtain a perfect knowledge of what is true and right. That which is right must be singular, while the counterfeits may be endless in number and variety. A banker once said, on being asked how he knew a bad note, "I never consider whether a note is a bad one; I ascertain whether it be a good one." If I know what is right, it is very easy and simple for me to reject that which does not answer thereto. Many weary themselves to no profit in examining the suspicious to see whether the grounds for suspicion exist, whereas if they had simply adhered to that which they knew was right, they could have discerned and rejected the pretender at once, even though they might not have been able to tell the exact grounds on which they rejected it. I may add that when I have rejected any pretension as spurious, I may then, in order to convince others, examine the imperfections which prove its unguineness; but the first occupation of my eye, whether in choice or in discernment, should not be with the imperfection or evil.

How then ought the eye to be occupied? If I am not able to determine this, I shall not find it very easy to determine how it ought not; whereas, if I can decide the right occupation for my eye, I can easily perceive what is not so.

Here lies the cause of so much indecision and inconsistency. People have not defined to themselves what is right, and hence they make a trial of every offer on its own merits, instead of on the merits of an ascertained standard. Now the right occupation of the eye must be determined by reference to the power that has a right to control it. If the Lord has this right, then its occupation must be in accordance with His mind and appointments down here while in the body. The engagement or occupation of any organ is characterized by the power which controls it. If the Lord controls my eye, it is occupied and engaged with what is interesting to Him. If my eye is controlled by my own will, it will be characterized by my carnal tastes and likings; and it is a very active agent in furnishing the natural mind with provision for its enmity against God. Eve saw that the forbidden fruit was pleasant to the eye; and this promoted in her heart an inclination to act in independence of God. It is wonderful how the verdict of the eye effects us about everything, and how much that judgment is the fruit of our own state of soul.

Two persons may see the same thing with totally different impressions, but the impression imparted to each is in relation to his own peculiar state and condition before his eye thus acted. One admires, while another turns away pained from beholding the very same scene. The body is the Lord's, and the eye is the Lord's. Either the Spirit of God is using my eye to embrace and survey all that is important for me to see in my course, or the natural mind is using it to furnish materials for its own support; and therefore the "lust of the eye" is classed with the "lust of the flesh," though no man ever thinks that they could be placed together as morally equal. Both link us to the world which is not of the Father, and the "lust of the eye" is even the more dangerous of the two, because least feared or discountenanced, although Scripture abounds with warnings touching the dangers for the eye. Remember the eye sends back a message to the soul corresponding to

the power which used it. If the Lord uses it, then an impression furnishing materials for His will is conveyed to the soul; if my own mind has used it, the impression will, on the contrary, furnish materials for its own promotion which, to a Christian, is a double loss; for not only does it deprive him of what he might have gained for the Lord, but it acquires for him that which hinders and shuts out his sense of the Father's love. How little do our souls ponder these things and take them to heart!

## Salt

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"For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." Mark 9:49, 50.

The general meaning of this somewhat difficult scripture is soon apprehended. It was no longer a question now of following a Messiah on earth, or of the present establishment of His kingdom. Christ was in fact already rejected, and the cross was in full prospect. (See vv. 9-11; 30-32.) Rejection, therefore, would be the portion of His disciples; and, consequently, the constant and unsparing application of the cross. Everything was to be sacrificed rather than lose entry "into life," and incur the penalty of "the fire that never shall be quenched." It was thus eternity that was now in view, instead of the glory of Messiah's kingdom on earth; and hence there was no alternative between eternal gain and eternal loss. This will account for the distinction between the two clauses of verse 49 - the first comprises all men, the second only the true followers of Christ. "Every one" - there is no exception - "shall be salted with fire." That is to say, God will test, and search in order to test, every soul of man by His holiness as applied in judgment; for it is of this that fire is a symbol.

Even Christ Himself was so tested, as shown out in the holy fire that fed upon the sacrifices offered to God under the old dispensation. The effect for the sinner will be the eternal fire, while for the believer who is in Christ nothing is lost save the dross. But whether for the saint or the sinner the standard is the same; the former finds the answer to it in Christ, the latter being without Christ will perish. Then second, "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." None but real disciples of Christ are here contemplated, their lives being looked upon as a sacrifice to God. (Compare Eph. 5:1, 2; Phil. 2:17.) This will be the more readily seen if it is recalled, that it is especially in connection with the meat offering, type of the perfect devotedness of Christ to the glory of God in all His pathway (including, no doubt, His death, as in Phil. 2), that salt is mentioned. Now, salt is the energy of grace in the soul, linking it in all its activities with God, and preserving it from the contamination of evil. To borrow words: "Salt is not the gentleness that pleases (which grace produces, without doubt), but that energy of God within us which connects everything in us with God, and dedicates the heart to Him, binding it to Him in the sense of obligation and of desire, rejecting all in oneself that is contrary to Him.... Thus, practically, it was distinctive grace, the energy of holiness, which separates from all evil, but by setting apart for God." A life without the "salt" would degenerate into human grace and amiability, and would thus be characterized by "honey" - that which was absolutely forbidden "in any offering of the LORD made by fire" (Lev. 2:11).

"We are next told that "salt is good"; that is, the condition of soul which is produced by the energy of grace. The activity of grace within begets a state corresponding to its character. (See 2 Tim. 2:1.) But if the salt, through the lack of watchfulness and of self-judgment, have lost its saltiness, wherewith shall ye season it? "It is used for seasoning other things; but if the salt needs it for itself,

there is nothing left that can salt it." When we have lost devotedness to God, together with our Nazariteship, separation from evil, our state is hopeless, unless indeed God once more comes in with His powerful grace to restore the soul. The remedy against the danger is to have salt in ourselves, and to have peace one with another. The more we cultivate true holiness, the more we are apart from all evil, the more we shall be in peace with our fellow-Christians; for it is then that the Spirit of God, being ungrieved, works mightily in us, and enables us also to use all diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

## Saul, David, Absalom, Israel

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"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3:6. Such is the testimony of the Son of God; and the Holy Spirit says, "These are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. 5:17). Self is always the object of the nature derived by birth from the first Adam, whatever may be the degree of its activity; but God Himself is the Object of the life that He has given to us in His Son. In the activities of flesh God is shut out and ignored, or His name used to sanction the fruit of unbelief and self-will; but the new nature recognizes God as not only the source of its being, but His will as the only true spring of its activities, and the controller of all circumstances and events. It can therefore count on God Himself, not only in scenes where His will is effectuated in fullness of blessing, but also in times of trouble and difficulty caused by self, sin, and Satan's power, and the failure of all around.

Thoughts suggested by the consideration of Saul, David, Absalom, and Israel will be of present profit if they lead by God's grace to exercise of soul in His presence, and to a clearer discernment of what are the works of the flesh among ourselves, and what "the fruit of the Spirit."

Saul - the finest specimen of the flesh that Israel could produce, the man head and shoulders taller than any of the people, on whom the Spirit of God had come, as well as having been anointed with oil - was elevated to a higher position than anyone had yet been, as king over Israel; but when he was tested as to obedience and dependence, like Adam, he entirely broke down, and was set aside for the man after God's heart, whom the Lord had sought to be captain over His people.

David - chosen of Jehovah and anointed with oil in secret - was not, like his predecessor, at once exalted to sit on the throne, but had to reach it through a variety of circumstances, often of deep difficulty, trial, and sorrow, the trial of his faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth (as all has which he prepared for Solomon's temple), being found to his honor, praise, and glory. In nothing is his confidence in, and dependence on, Jehovah more strikingly exhibited than in the way he ever treated the one who stood in the way of his being crowned; that is, Saul himself.

Saul had been raised out of deep obscurity into prominence and position without any action that might win the attention or attract the hearts of his subjects, so that, if the Lord's sanction of him were lost sight of, there was nothing in his own conduct to command their respect or retain their confidence. But whatever may have been the thoughts of Israel generally, to David's faith Saul was always "the LORD'S anointed," and as such entitled to the deepest respect; so that, when once and again his life was in David's hand, David would not touch him. Even when David cut off a piece of Saul's robe in the cave, his heart smote him for the oft-repeated reason, he is "the LORD'S anointed." (1 Sam. 24:6.) When the news of Saul's death was brought to David by one who, thinking to meet with reward, professed to have given the finishing stroke, David's resentment broke forth in, "How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand against the LORD'S anointed?" and soon the Amalekite's own life measured the extent of David's indignation. Was it that David had sympathy with Saul's conduct and ways, or fellowship with him and personal

affection for him? Surely not. But in the spirit of Him (David's Son and yet his Lord) who said, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat," etc., David leaves it to the One who put Saul on the throne, to put him from it in His own time and way. He was content meanwhile to suffer, and to have his name cast out as evil by Saul until the day should come when God should publicly vindicate him, and the united tribes of Israel should accept him as their king.

Far otherwise was it with Saul (as ever with the flesh) on David's first introduction to Israel in the valley of Elah. What a bright display of the courage of faith in contrast to the cowardice of unbelief - Saul and all Israel being dismayed and sore afraid in the presence of Goliath! The shepherd youth, ruddy and of a beautiful countenance, sent by his father on an errand of love to his brethren, thus unexpectedly heard the challenge of the proud Philistine foe, and witnessed its effect on the Israelites. His soul was filled with a sense of the reproach to Israel, no one being found to accept the challenge of him who, to David's faith, was but an uncircumcised Philistine, defying the armies of the living God. Strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, David stepped into the arena of conflict with the calm confidence of unquestioning faith in Jehovah, God of Israel, having one only object and desire, that God's name should be vindicated, as being still in the midst of Israel (17:46) and ready to intervene on behalf of His poor and trembling, because unbelieving, people.

David's victory, completed by the giant's own sword, and the expressive evidence of that victory (his returning with the Philistine's head in his hand) made him the object of attention to Saul, to his generals, to every soldier in the army, and to all Israel. What was the effect on Saul? Did he share the joy of victory and the delight of his subjects in the victor? No, the flesh saw only a rival; and anger, envy, jealousy, hatred, took possession of Saul's heart toward the one to whom he owed his life and kingdom. Secretly first, but soon publicly, he sought with all the power at his command to ensnare and destroy David. No gratitude for deliverance from the evil spirit in private, or from the terrible giant in public, had any place in his bosom toward the one who had been the instrument of both deliverances. What was the ultimate result? While every step of David's endeared him more and more to the hearts of the people, every step of Saul's only alienated them; so that at last when Saul and Jonathan lay dead, who was there to weep for them but David himself? The daughters of Israel, who spontaneously sang David's praises in the day of his victory, were exhorted by him to weep over Saul, but without meeting, as far as we know, a responsive throb from their hearts, or a tear from their eyes, so complete had the alienation become.

Thus in the righteous government of Jehovah was the man of flesh (Saul) disappointed and set aside; and the man of faith (David) first enthroned in the affections of all Israel and Judah (18:16), and then firmly seated on the throne of a united nation. How beautiful it is to see that when there, wielding the power of life and death, David not only remembered his oath to Saul (24:21,22) not to cut off his seed after him, but going beyond the unhappy, unbelieving king's utmost thoughts, he inquires (2 Sam. 9) if there were not any left of the house of Saul to whom he might show the kindness of God. The touching story of the son of Jonathan is the witness in David's day of that full divine grace, that kindness of God our Savior toward man which has appeared (after all the full sevenfold outburst of the evil of the flesh, Titus 3:3), "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Titus

3:5-7. What a perfect cluster of divine activities in our Savior God, our Lord Jesus, the true Beloved, showing us that faith finds suited occasion for its activities alike in the day of rejection and contempt, and in the day of acceptance and honor!

Notice as to this the same difference in Nabal and Abigail. To the one David was a runaway servant, to the other he was the one who, as in the valley of Elah, fought the Lord's battles, whose life was bound up with the Lord his God. Abigail counted on God to yet accomplish every word that He had spoken concerning David, whose anger she deprecated, whose favor she desired, though never thinking that the day would come when she would be united to him and become his wife, after the first man had gone under the judgment of Jehovah.

Varied were the activities of faith in David during his reign, but the incurable evil of the flesh is also brought out. Under the pressure of the power of evil, it is weak and fearful; and in the enjoyment of that which is good, it soon manifests its wickedness.

David's family grows, but faith is not always successional, as it was in Timothy's case; and Ammon's guilty passion and crime furnish occasion for Absalom's wicked and murderous revenge. The father's weakness leaves the rights of the throne unvindicated, to his own eventual deepest anguish and sorrow. What an example David set them, through the allowance of the flesh in himself, in the awful story of Bathsheba, and Uriah the Hittite, showing us that flesh is as bad in the man of faith as it is in those who "have not faith"! The allowance of Absalom's return into the midst of Israel without righteousness being vindicated by a full confession of guilt, and submission to whatever consequences the rights of the throne demanded - his seeing the king's face and being kissed by him did not melt his soul, but introduces to us the person of the rebel, and the heresy which shook the nation from its center to its circumference. He goes out from the king's presence to cherish and nourish the secret purpose of his soul, to drive the Lord's anointed (his own father) from the throne, and to seat himself upon it. 2 Sam. 14:25 gives us a description of Absalom: "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him."

Note too his personal graciousness, his plausible ways and manner, his pretended anxiety for the good and right to have justice, his condescension and familiarity with the men of Israel whose hearts he was stealing away from their true object. Then we get his pretended conscience as to his vow to the Lord in Hebron, the spot once honored by the presence of the king, the Lord's anointed, but now to become the center of the movement of the arch-rebel, who to accomplish his purpose would cause an open breach between the ten tribes and the two. This breach, though healed over for the time on the death of Absalom and the defeat of his followers, yet burst out afresh when Rehoboam listened to the counsel of the young men, and found its expression in Israel's answer to the king: "What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David" (1 Kings 12:16). So they departed to their tents, taking their first step on that path which led them eventually to Assyria, and their present unknown abode.

Thus we see how the flesh, whether in an individual or a nation, having no ability to see God's kingdom, has no respect for His anointed, no true thought of the unity of God's Israel, like the men of another day speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. In Absalom we see no natural affection exhibited, if it stands in the way of his purpose of revenge, or pride and exaltation;

he complains of injustice when about to perpetrate the greatest injustice that a son and subject could be guilty of; he spends years in useless activity, but is full of restless energy when the day comes for putting his long-cherished plans into execution; and at last, in the presence of his father, the Lord's anointed, he sets out on his awful course, with a hypocritical profession of respect for the Lord, and of gratitude to Him for His goodness in bringing him back to Hebron. Surely it is Satan himself changed into an angel of light!

Many are the lessons the Lord would have us learn from this portion of His divine Word, written for our instruction, and deeply profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; for who has not "the flesh" still in him, however intelligent he may be in the truth that, as to our standing, we are not in the flesh but in Christ Jesus. I ask myself, therefore, and my reader, What should we learn from what God has written about the past, and from our recent experiences of what we are? Should we sit down and give up in hopeless despair? No; if the moral confusion in David's house, and the political confusion in his kingdom, is duly and deeply felt by the man of God, as weeping, with his head covered, he ascends Olivet, leaving the ark of God and his throne behind; so the faith that prays, and worships, and discerns the right thing to do, shines out as brightly now as ever.

While owning the Lord's hand in all, and counting on Him even in a Shimei cursing, David goes on meekly whither he may, until the day when peace is restored to all Israel by Absalom's death, and by Sheba's head being thrown over the wall. Then, by Jehovah's judgment on the long-forgotten rash zeal of Saul with regard to the Gibeonites, order is restored, and officers have their places in the kingdom - the civil and domestic war gives way for renewed conflicts with the Philistines. Notice the beautiful song of 2 Samuel 22, and the activities of David's mighty men in chapter 23, while he personally devotes himself (1 Chron. 28) to providing for the building of that temple on which his heart is set though his eyes were never to see one stone of it laid.

May we, beloved brethren, be made to feel with God by His unfailing grace, our own failures in the light of His faithfulness, and with increasing distrust of self, trust Him more simply and fully. Having then internal peace restored, through all hearts bowing to the rightful claims of our one and only Lord and Master, may each servant learn his place and appointed work, may each soldier desire to imitate Him who conquered the Philistine in the valley of Elah (Phil. 2) and may all hearts be filled with the hope of the speedy coming of the day of glory, when no unbelief will hinder the bright shining in of the pure light of His own blessed presence!

## Saul of Tarsus

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In contemplating the character of this most remarkable man, we may gather up some fine principles of gospel truth. He seems to have been peculiarly fitted to show forth, in the first place, what the grace of God can do; and, in the second place, what the greatest amount of legal effort cannot do. If ever there was a man upon this earth whose history illustrates the truth that salvation is by grace, "not by the works of the law," Saul of Tarsus was that man. Indeed, it would seem as though God had specially designed to present, in the person of Saul, a living example, first, of the depth to which a sinner can descend, and second, of the height to which a legalist can attain. He was, at once, the very worst, and the very best of men - the chief of sinners, and the chief of legalists. He traveled down to the lowest point of human wickedness, and climbed to the loftiest summit of human righteousness. He was a sinner of the sinners, and a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

Let us then, in the first place, contemplate him as

The Chief of Sinners.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." 1 Tim. 1:15.

Now let the reader note particularly that the Spirit of God declares, concerning Saul of Tarsus, that he was the chief of sinners. It is not the expression of Paul's humility, though, no doubt, he was humble under the sense of what he had been. We are not to be occupied with the feelings of an inspired writer, but with the statements of the Holy Ghost who inspired him. It is well to see this. Very many persons speak of the feelings of the various inspired writers in a way calculated to weaken the sense of that precious truth, the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture. They may not mean to do so; but then at a time like the present, when there is so much mental activity, so much of reason, so much of human speculation, we cannot be too guarded against aught that might, even in appearance, militate against the integrity of the Word of God. We are anxious that our readers should entertain the very highest thoughts respecting the inspired volume; that they should treasure it in their hearts' affection, not as the expression of human feelings, however pious and praiseworthy, but as the depository of the thoughts of God. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. 1:21.

Hence, therefore, in reading 1 Tim. 1:15, we are not to think of the feelings of man, but of the record of God; and this record declares that Paul was the chief of sinners. It is never once stated that any one else was the chief of sinners. No doubt, in a secondary sense, each convicted heart will feel and own itself the vilest heart within its entire range of intelligence; but this is quite another matter. The Holy Ghost has declared of Paul, and of none other, that he was the chief of sinners; nor does the fact that He has told us this by the pen of Paul himself, interfere with or weaken, in the smallest degree, the truth and value of the statement. Paul was the chief of sinners. No matter how bad any one may be, Paul could say, "I am chief." No matter how low any one may feel

himself to be - no matter how deeply sunk in the pit of ruin - a voice rises to his ear from a deeper point still, "I am chief." There cannot be two chiefs, for if there were, it could only be said that Paul was one of them; whereas, it is most distinctly declared that he was "chief."

But let us mark the object of all this dealing with the chief of sinners. "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." The chief of sinners is in heaven. How did he get there? Simply by the blood of Jesus; and, moreover, he is Christ's "pattern" man. All may look at him and see how they too are to be saved; for in such wise as the "chief" was saved, must all the subordinate be saved. The grace that reached the chief can reach all. The blood that cleansed the chief can cleanse all. The title by which the chief entered heaven is the title for all. The vilest sinner under the canopy of heaven may hearken to Paul saying, I am chief, and yet I obtained mercy; behold in me a pattern of Christ's long-suffering. There is not a sinner at this side the portal of hell, be he backslider or aught else, beyond the reach of the love of God, the blood of Christ, or the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

We shall now turn to the other side of Saul's character, and contemplate him as

The Chief of Loyalists.

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." Phil. 3:4. Here we have a most valued point. Saul of Tarsus stood, as it were, on the very loftiest crag of the hill of legal righteousness. He reached the topmost step of the ladder of human religion. He would suffer no man to get above him. His religious attainments were of the very highest order. (See Gal. 1:14.) No one ever got beyond him in the matter of working out a self-righteousness. "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." Is "any" man trusting in his temperance? Paul could say "I more." Is "any" man trusting in his morality? Paul could say, "I more." Is "any" man trusting in ordinances, sacraments, religious devices, or pious observances? Paul could say, "I more." Is "any" man proudly wrapping himself up in the pompous robes of orthodoxy, and trusting therein? Paul could say, "I more." In a word, let a man mount up the hill of legal righteousness as high as the most towering ambition or fervid zeal can carry him, and he will hear a voice falling upon his ear, from a loftier height still, "I more."

All this imparts a peculiar interest to the history of Saul of Tarsus. He lay at the very bottom of the pit of ruin, and he stood on the very summit of the hill of self-righteousness. Deep as any sinner may have sunk, Paul was deeper still. High as any legalist may have stood. Paul stood higher still. He combined in his own person the very worst and the very best of men. In him we see, at one view, the power of the blood of Christ, and the utter worthlessness of the fairest robe of self-righteousness that ever decked the person of a legalist. Looking at him, no sinner need despair; looking at him, no legalist can boast. If the chief of sinners is in heaven, I can get there too. If the greatest religionist, legalist, and doer that ever lived had to come down from the ladder of self-righteousness, it is of no use for me to go up. Saul of Tarsus came up from the depths, and down from the heights, and found his place at the pierced feet of Jesus of Nazareth. His guilt was no hindrance and his righteousness no use. The former was washed away by the blood, and the latter turned into dung and dross by the moral glory of Christ. It mattered not whether it was "I... chief," or "I more." The cross was the only remedy. "God forbid," says this chief of sinners and

prince of legalists, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Gal. 6:14.

Paul had just as little idea of trusting in his righteousness as in his crimes. He was permitted to win the laurel of victory in the grand legal struggle with his "equals" in his own nation, only that he might fling it as a withered, worthless thing at the foot of the cross. He was permitted to outstrip all in the dark career of guilt, only that he might exemplify the power of the love of God and the efficacy of the blood of Christ. The gospel has a double voice. It calls to the slave of vice who lies wallowing in the mire of moral pollution, and says, "Come up." It calls to the busy, self-complacent religionist who is vainly endeavoring to clamber up the steep sides of Mount Sinai, and says, "Come down." Saul was no nearer to Christ as the chief of legalists, than he was as the chief of sinners. There was no more justifying merit in his noblest efforts in the school of legalism, than in his wildest acts of opposition to the name of Christ. He was saved by grace, saved by blood, saved by faith. There is no other way for sinner or legalist.

Thus much as to Saul of Tarsus in his twofold character as chief of sinners and chief of legalists. There is one other point in his history at which we must briefly glance in order to show the practical results of the grace of Christ whether that grace is known. This will present him to our notice as

#### The Most Laborious of Apostles

If Paul learned to cease working for righteousness, he also learned to begin working for Christ. When we behold, on the road leading to Damascus, the shattered fragments of the worst and best of men - when we hear those pathetic accents emanating from the depths of a broken heart, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" - when we see that man who had just left Jerusalem in all the mad fury of a persecuting zealot, now stretching forth the hand of blind helplessness, to be led like a little child into Damascus, we are led to form the very highest expectations as to his future career; nor are we disappointed. Mark the progress of that most remarkable man; behold his gigantic labors in the vineyard of Christ; see his tears, his toils, his travels, his perils, his struggles; see him as he bears his golden sheaves into the heavenly garner, and lay them down at his Master's feet; see him wearing the noble bonds of the gospel, and finally laying his head on a martyr's block, and say if the gospel of God's free grace - the gospel of Christ's free salvation - does away with good works. Nay, my reader, that precious gospel is the only true basis on which the superstructure of good works can be erected. Morality, without Christ, is an icy morality. Benevolence, without Christ, is a worthless benevolence. Ordinances, without Christ, are powerless and valueless. Orthodoxy, without Christ, is heartless and fruitless. We must get to the end of self, whether it be a guilty self or a religious self, and find Christ as the satisfying portion of our hearts, now and forever. Then we shall be able to say with truth,

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,

More than all in Thee I find."

Thus it was with Saul of Tarsus. He got rid of himself and found his all in Christ; and hence, as we hang over the impressive page of his history, we hear, from the most profound depths of moral ruin, the words, "I am chief" - from the most elevated point in the legal system, the words, "I more" - and from amid the golden fields of apostolic labor, the words, "I labored more abundantly than they all."

## Scripture Note: Galatians 5:17

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Gal. 5:17

The translation of the last clause of this verse, as may be seen from better translations, is altogether faulty. Taking it as it stands, it would teach that both the Spirit and the flesh are equally impotent, or rather that the result for the believer of their mutual antagonism is that he cannot do anything, that, whatever his desires, the desires of the new nature, even though indwelt by the Holy Spirit, he is utterly helpless, cannot do the things he would. An examination of the context (v. 17, for example) shows at once that such a thought is wholly alien from the mind of God; and, in fact, the words should be rendered, "that ye should not do those things which ye desire." This at once clears away the difficulty.

The Galatian saints were not walking according to the character of their calling. Losing the sense of grace, they had put themselves back, through the influence of Judaizing teachers, under law; and the consequence was, that the flesh assumed its old dominant place in their lives. (v. 15.) The only remedy for this, as the Apostle points out, was to "walk in the Spirit." (Compare Rom. 8:13.)

Thereupon he takes occasion to bring before them the abiding character of the flesh, and its irreconcilable contrariety with the Spirit. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." The two are, and must ever be, opposed. The flesh will always be evil, and cannot be ameliorated, improved, or changed; and the Spirit, blessed be God, is holy; and it is impossible therefore that the two can be in agreement. The flesh "lusteth" against the Spirit, ever antagonizing, and ever seeking, in opposition to the Spirit, to gratify its own inclinations. The Spirit, on the other hand, is ever in opposition to the flesh, and seeks to repress its activities, and thus to lead the believer according to God.

The question then is, To which shall the believer yield? If by grace he walks in the power of the Spirit, he will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (v. 16); but if, on the other hand, he surrenders himself to the dominion of the flesh, there is then, as verses 19-21 indicate, no sin, however abominable, into which he may not fall. Give the Spirit His place in our souls, He will produce the beautiful fruit mentioned in verses 22 and 23. But then, as the Apostle warns these saints, it is a characteristic of those "that are Christ's," that they "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." If, therefore, any were allowing the sway of the flesh, let them take heed lest, after all, they had but deceived themselves with a vain profession, and did not really belong to Christ. If we live in the Spirit, let it be seen - for this is the force of the exhortation - by our also walking in the Spirit.

## Scripture Note: Hebrews 4:12-13

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Heb. 4:12, 13

Altogether this is a very remarkable scripture, as setting forth the all-searching character of the Word of God when it is applied to us in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is necessary to observe that it is its action on Christians which the Apostle has in view. He has been pointing out that there remaineth a rest for the people of God, that it is not therefore to be looked for here in the wilderness, and that it is future, that God's rest, in fact, into which He is bringing His people, is in heaven. Joined to this is the exhortation, "Let us labor [use diligence] therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example [as shown out in the case of the children of Israel] of unbelief." Thereupon he proceeds to speak of the provision God has made to search our hearts by the living action of His Word upon our souls, which, penetrating into all the secret recesses of our being, detects every tendency to unbelief and departure from God, and reveals everything cherished there unsuitable to Him. Nothing whatever can escape it when once it finds entrance into our hearts and consciences. It is, indeed, the light which makes everything manifest, as well as that which, sharper than any two-edged sword, cuts down between the most hidden parts of our nature, and exposes everything to view. Then it is that the words follow, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight," etc. The reader will observe this striking connection between God Himself and the Word. We might have expected its "sight," but no, it is "His sight." The reason is, God and His Word cannot be disjoined. When He speaks, when His Word comes home to us, it is Himself we hear speaking; we are brought into His presence, and it is only as being consciously there, that we can judge everything in the thoughts and intents revealed by the Word as contrary to Him, according to His holy nature. Even God's own Word remains a dead letter until it comes to us as a revelation of Himself and of His mind. This at once explains to us why we read in verse 13, "His sight," and also that "all things are naked and opened [laid bare] unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Truly we are, in this sense also, in the light as God is in the light; and we can, blessed be His name, be there in perfect peace and liberty, when we remember that "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

## Scripture Note: Hosea 14:8

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Hos. 14:8

This scripture, when rightly understood, is most interesting and instructive. The chapter opens with an exhortation to Israel to return to the Lord their God with words of confession and supplication. Together with this there is the renunciation of all other helpers, whether of Assyria, on whom they had so often leaned to their own confusion, or if false gods, whose impotence they had so often proved in the time of their calamities. Israel was now learning that in Jehovah alone "the fatherless findeth mercy." This state of repentance and confession draws forth as ever an instant response of forgiveness, restoration, and blessing. (vv. 4-7.) Thereon comes our scripture. First we have the effect of grace on the heart of Ephraim, who says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Then Jehovah, who ever delights to mark the action of His Spirit on the hearts of His people, speaks, "I have heard him, and observed him." The next clause again is the language of Ephraim: "I am like a green fir tree." And then once more Jehovah speaks, to remind Ephraim of the source of his new-found blessing, and says,

"From Me is thy fruit found," a needed instruction for God's people at all times. The last verse, we apprehend, is a lesson drawn from the whole book, as it speaks of Jehovah's ways in the government of His people. To understand them, divine wisdom is requisite; and blessed is it for those who can say with the prophet, "The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein."

## Scripture Note: John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7

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### Scripture Note

The word rendered "Comforter" is difficult to translate. It is embodied in some hymns in its Greek form - Paraclete - and is given in 1 John 2:1 as Advocate. Speaking generally, it means one who undertakes and manages the affairs of another. This is very interesting especially if we remember that Christ is the Paraclete with the Father, and the Holy Spirit the Paraclete for the saints on earth. As such, the latter has taken the place of Christ; and He is thus termed "another Comforter," one who (in contrast with Christ in this respect) abides with His people forever. Two distinguishing features may be noted. The office of Christ as the Paraclete with the Father is limited to the believer's sins; and it is thus based upon what He is in Himself as "Jesus Christ the righteous," and on the fact that "He is the propitiation for our sins." The object of its exercise is the restoration of the communion which had been interrupted by sin, by producing self-judgment and confession. In the case of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete or Comforter there would seem to be no such limitation. It would rather appear that He undertakes all that concerns our interests as saints in our various divine relationships. It must not be forgotten, however, that the activity of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter in regard to our failures is dependent upon the action of Christ as the Paraclete above; and that, indeed, all His work here in testimony to, and in the maintenance of, the glory of Christ, in guiding the saints into all truth; in a word, in all His ministry, is carried on in connection with the ministry of Christ on high. In grace, both the Paraclete in heaven, and the Paraclete on earth, have become the willing servants of those whom the Father has given to Christ in order to secure their present safety, instruction, and enjoyment, as well as their perfected and eternal blessedness.

## Scripture Note: Romans 5:2-3, 11

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Rom. 5:2, 3, 11

It is well known that the words "rejoice," "glory," and "joy," in these verses represent the same word in the original, and that the true rendering is to "boast." The beautiful connection in the Apostle's argument is, to say the least, disturbed by the needless change which our translators have made. Thus, after showing that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," that through Him "also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand," the Apostle adds, "and rejoice [boast] in hope of the glory of God." We are not in it yet, but, having the sure and certain hope of its possession, we can boast of it as in prospect, But what of the persecutions and trials by the way? The answer is, "We glory [boast] in tribulations also," knowing that God takes them up and uses them for our needful discipline and blessing. Moreover, during this process, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." The proof as well as the measure of this love is seen in the death of Christ, and in the death of Christ for us as "without strength," "ungodly," "sinners," and "enemies." This leads the Apostle to show what God will yet do, on the ground of what He has already done. A legal person argues, that God's attitude depends upon what he is for God; but grace concludes, as in this scripture, what God will be and do, from what He has manifested Himself to be, and from what He has done, in the death of His beloved Son. Hence we read, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." The close of the argument is now reached: "And not only so, but we also joy [boast] in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [reconciliation]." We "boast" thus in hope of the glory of God; we "boast" in the tribulations that beset us on our journey to this consummation of our hope; and, finally, we "boast" in God Himself, who is the blessed fount and source of all the blessing we have received, or shall receive, and who, in the display of all that He is as already revealed in Christ, will be the blessed Object of our "boast" throughout eternity.

## Scripture Notes: Exodus 24:17; Hebrews 12:29

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Exod. 24:17; Heb. 12:29

It is more than probable that there is an allusion in the latter scripture to the former; and it is very evident that the two scriptures are morally connected. "The sight of the glory of the LORD was like the devouring [the word might be rendered `consuming'] fire." This was the glory of Jehovah as revealed in relation to Israel in connection with Sinai; in a word, it was the expression of His holiness as set forth in His righteous requirements. But His people were sinners, and could not, therefore, satisfy His just demand. The consequence was that this glory became in Jehovah's government, as based upon the law, a "consuming fire" in the judgment that was continually visited upon Israel because of their repeated transgressions. Moses thus said, "We are consumed [a kindred word] by Thine anger" (Psalm 90:7). In the passage in the Hebrews the Apostle says that "Our God is a consuming fire." It is to be distinctly observed that it is of "our" God, the God of Christians, that he thus speaks. After the declaration that God is about to shake not the earth only, but also heaven, he proceeds, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear," and this for the reason that the God whom we serve is a "consuming fire." Once more then the "consuming fire" is an expression of the holiness of God - in testing all our service, and in the necessary judgment of all that is evil in it. (Compare 1 Cor. 3:13.) Grace was unknown at Sinai; but while now God is known as the God of all grace, this in no wise weakens His holiness. He is light as well as love; and, whether in our worship or our service, it should never be forgotten that our God is holy, and consequently a "consuming fire" when He has to do with evil. In the holiness of God, indeed, lies our eternal security.

## The Secret of Blessedness: the First Psalm

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The thesis of this psalm is the blessedness of the godly man in contrast with the certain doom of the sinner whenever the time may come for judgment to be executed. Blessedness is a preferable word to happiness, inasmuch as the former attributes to God who blesses, what the latter word, as used by man, assigns to fortune or chance. Still the word "blessed" is to be understood as meaning what is usually implied in the word "happy." The psalm is thus an answer to the almost universal inquiry of mankind after happiness. It shows us where true happiness - real blessedness - is to be alone found.

Happiness is a positive state of existence; but so truly is this world a vale of tears, that the idea of happiness most familiar to men's minds is a negative one, and views it as depending on the absence of pain, weariness, disappointment, sorrow. Scripture itself stoops to our weakness in this respect, and represents the future happiness of the saints as partly consisting in entire exemption from every kind of grief. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Again, "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

But there are deeper and surer sources of unhappiness than any of the afflictions thus enumerated; the sources, in fact, from which all these afflictions flow. But for sin, not one single sensation of bodily pain, nor one moment's mental anguish, would have been experienced by a single member of the human family. Not that present exemption from these effects can be secured by moral and spiritual deliverance from sin, which is the cause. The godly suffer as well as others, and in many respects more than others; but this prevents not their blessedness. It may and does hinder the perfection of it, but not its reality.

In this world of evil, a man without sin would be the greatest sufferer on the earth. Of this we need no other proof than "the Man of Sorrows who was acquainted with grief." But who doubts His blessedness? It is in Him indeed that we have the only perfect instance of the character here described.

In the description here given of the godly man, his character is viewed first negatively and then positively. The first verse shows him exempt from those deeper sources of unhappiness from which afflictions have really sprung, while the second reveals the positive secret of his blessedness. As for the first, it is not, Blessed is the man that feels no pain, sheds no tears, suffers no loss or disappointment. No! "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

We have here a double climax: first, as to the characters named; second, as to the attitudes described. The ungodly - sinners - the scornful. Walking - standing - sitting. The ungodly are the least culpable in this climax of evil. Their fault is negative. They know not, love not, fear not God. He is not in all their thoughts. They do not wish to remember Him, or to know His will, or obey His

commandments. "Without God in the world" is the solemn portraiture of their state. Such people have their counsel - their habits of thought - their grounds of judgment - their principles of conduct. In all these God has no place; they are ungodly. Blessed is the man that heeds not their counsel, that follows it not. It includes all the maxims of the decent, reputable, but ungodly part of society - persons free from gross vices but with whom self is the master spring, the main object. Even with their freedom from gross vices, this is the case. They would not for their own credit frequent a low tavern; but neither would they, and for the same reason, attend a cottage prayer meeting. It is respectable to go to church or to a well-cushioned, fashionable chapel, and they go there; but it is equally respectable to attend the theater or concert, and as it is even more agreeable it is more willingly practiced.

For these and a hundred other habits and deeds, such maxims are pleaded as, We must do as others do; What good is there in being singular? We must act comfortably to our station; This or that is expected of us; What harm is there in it? These are but a small specimen of that which is here termed "the counsel of the ungodly." Sinners add to the ungodliness of the former class, positive ways of evil, wicked habits and pursuits. These differ according to constitution, early education or the lack of it, and a number of influences besides. Every one has turned "to his own way." One may be a way of violence, another of fraud, and another of intemperance. Blessed is the man who equally abstains from all - who does not stand "in the way of sinners."

"The seat of the scornful" is occupied by the one who has so hardened himself against God as to mock at sin, deride the piety of others, and make a jest of sacred things. Then, as to the second climax, to be in movement, walking, clearly affords more hope of being turned in a right direction than where evil has been deliberately chosen and a person stands in the way of sinners. But to be seated, and that in the scorner's chair - to be at ease - where God, and Christ, and heaven are only named to point a joke or raise a laugh - this is beyond a doubt the crowning attainment of such as call evil good, and good evil. Yet not only from this final maturity of shameless vice, but from all the steps which lead on to it, the subject of the psalm abstains. In the scorner's chair he declines to sit; in the way of sinners he will not stand; in the counsel of the ungodly he refuses to walk.

Where then does he find the positive secret of his happiness? The psalm informs us, "His delight is in the law of the LORD; and in His law doth he meditate day and night." Man must have a positive object or he cannot be satisfied. He is possessed of an understanding and of affections for which employment must be found. On the nature of this employment, more than on anything else, does man's happiness depend. Let the understanding be either unoccupied or ill occupied; let the thoughts rove at random or be fixed on subjects corrupt in themselves and debasing in their tendencies; let the affections cling to objects in themselves unsatisfying, and which separate from God; or let the affections, directed toward proper objects, be destitute, of those objects; how in any case that has been supposed, can the soul be happy? And if the soul be unhappy, mere bodily ease and accommodation serve but as a mockery of its woe.

On the other hand, let the thoughts be rightly directed and diligently employed, let the affections be in habitual exercise on their proper suited objects, and circumstances are of little power to hinder happiness in such a case. Such occupation for both the understanding and the affections, is found in the Word of God, here called the "law" of the Lord. We must not restrict the expression to the

ten words spoken on Sinai, or even to the whole law given by Moses. It is used of the entire revelation which God at that time had vouchsafed to man; and as it was in and to the nation of Israel that this revelation had been given, the name of God here used is that of His covenant relation with Israel - Jehovah.

"His delight is in the law of Jehovah." What a number of thoughts is suggested by this statement. We have the idea of authority, for it is a law that is in question, however extended the signification and use of the word. But it is an authority cheerfully acknowledged. His delight is in the law, and how evident it is that the Lord Himself - Jehovah - must be both known and loved for the heart to find its delight in His law, His Word. For us, of course, divine revelation is now much more extended; it comprises the revelation of God in the Person and work of Christ, already come. God has thus made Himself known in a much more personal way than in Old Testament times, so that while the authority of the Word is no less absolute, the affections find a personal object to rest upon, much more distinctly manifested, and love takes the place of law. I speak now of the terms by which the whole revelation as known by us may be designated, and of the difference between these and the one here used --"The law of the LORD." But even in the psalmist's day, how easy the yoke of a law in which his delight was found! His delight was in it. Surely there is no less for us to delight in now that God is fully revealed, and revealed as "love."

#### The Secret of Blessedness: the First Psalm

But lovely as is this portraiture of a man whose delight is in Jehovah's law, this is not the whole of what is presented here. "In His law doth he meditate day and night." This is the natural result of delighting in it; and by a happy reaction the result becomes, in its turn, a cause of increased and ever increasing delight. The more we delight in God's Word, the more habitually shall we meditate therein; and the more we meditate on God's Word, the more shall we delight therein.

Just as a man's speech or writing is the means or instrument by which he communicates his thoughts and makes known his feelings, so is God's Word the instrument or means by which He makes Himself known. Meditation is the means by which we, on our part, become possessed of that which is made known. In the case of a fellow creature - suppose I find all my happiness in keeping company with him, listening to his discourse; or, supposing him absent, in reading his letters or writings, poring over their contents, repeating them to myself and following out the trains of thought to which they give rise - clearly, in such a case, it is my delight in the speaker, or writer, my admiration of his character or abilities, my sympathy with his thoughts and principles and pursuits, my attachment to himself, which accounts for the delight I have in his writings and discourses. So if my delight is in the Word of God, and if in that Word I meditate day and night, it is because God Himself is known, loved, and delighted in. If it be then the secret of true happiness which is here unfolded to us, what is it but that God Himself alone suffices for the happiness of His intelligent creature, man?

"The LORD is my portion, saith my soul." "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." Such breathings as these are the expressions of the counsel of the godly. Even as to the means of enjoying Him as our portion, other scriptures are not wanting. "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart." Psalm 119:111. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart."

Jer. 15:16. See also Psalm 19:7-11, and the whole of Psalm 119.

The happiness attendant on the character and course of the godly man is described in verse 3 - first under the figure of a tree, and then in literal terms. What a picture does the former part present! "A tree" - one of the loveliest objects in creation - a specimen of living beauty. "Planted" - not a wildling growing from seed scattered haphazard by the wind and alighting anywhere, but planted - some skillful eye discerning the suited situation, and some careful hand removing all obstructions to the future growth of the tree thus planted in a generous soil with every advantage of watchful culture that could be bestowed upon it. "By the rivers of water," and not dependent, therefore, on the fitful shower, though profiting by it whenever it falls A river at the roots, this tree is secure from drought. What a representation of the man who depends not for happiness or usefulness on any creature supplies, who leans not on an arm of flesh, but trusts in the living God, and finds all his springs in Him! "That bringeth forth his fruit," and "in his season" too.

So the godly man - active when in health and vigor, patient and resigned when sickness compels retirement, firm when firmness is required, yielding and submissive when it is for God's glory that he should be so - he "bringeth forth his fruit in his season." "His leaf also shall not wither." Instead of any decay in his profession - that which man's eye sees as the leaf in the tree - that profession is sustained in ever fresh and changeless vigor and consistency by the life from which it springs. "And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Such is the literal statement of the blessing from God which attends the godly man.

"The ungodly are not so." Entirely contrasted in character, whatever prosperity they may have for the present, it is short lived, and they themselves like "the chaff which the wind driveth away." Think of the difference between the tree planted by the rivers of water, and the chaff which the wind driveth away! It is only till the judgment that the wicked can be supposed to prosper; but the judgment is sure, and "the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." They are mingled together now, however different in character; dwelling in the same city, perhaps under the same roof, sitting at the same table, or sleeping in the same bed. But judgment will distinguish accurately between the one and the other. And mark well, there is no hint here of the translation of saints to heaven, such as we are now taught to expect at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a mystery never revealed till apostolic times, when redemption had been accomplished, and the Holy Ghost had come down.

This is our hope as Christians; while on the other hand, the judgment treated of in the first psalm, and throughout the Psalms, is a judgment by which the wicked are removed, and the righteous left as Jehovah's congregation on the earth. It is the judgment of Luke 17:24-37, Matt. 24:37-41, and numerous scriptures besides in which we read of the wicked being taken, and the righteous left. Meanwhile, "The LORD knoweth" (both discerns and approves) "the way of the righteous"; "but the way of the ungodly" (however seemingly successful now) "shall," in the time of judgment, surely "perish."

## Service

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It has been well said: "A Christian worker is good; a worker for Christ is better; but Christ, in a worker, working out His will through him, is best of all."

May it be yours and mine to experience much of the latter, and thus glorify the One whose precious blood has redeemed us, so that it can now be said of each believer, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Every true Christian will agree that to know Christ is to love Him, and to love Him is to serve Him, and to serve Him is the greatest honor and delight imaginable!

Brainerd said, "I care not how or where I live, or what hardships I go through, so that I can but gain souls to Christ."

Fletcher of Madeley said to Samuel Bradburn, "If you should live to preach the gospel forty years, and be the instrument in the salvation of only one soul, it would be worth all your labors."

It is comparatively easy to shine on great occasions and to meet special emergencies. It is not so easy to shine in ordinary duties and to meet the momentary requirements of daily living. We need, it is true, our great experiences to "mount up with wings as eagles." Nor must we be without power for the times of exceptional pressure, to "run, and not be weary." But far above all we need grace for the little things of life, to "walk, and not faint."

In looking out for opportunities of doing great things in the Lord's cause, we lose daily, hourly opportunities for little acts of self-denial which especially require the grace of Christ. To be crucifying self when no eye but that of God sees us, this is the most acceptable service to our Lord and Master.

True service begins with Christ who is the Head; and when Christ is forgotten, then the service is defective. It has lost connection with the spring and fountain of service, because it is from the Head that all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, increaseth. Now the constant effort of Satan is to disconnect in our minds Christ from our service - and this much more than any of us, perhaps, have fully discovered. Whether in reading, praying, or speaking, how seldom do we find that we act as toward Christ alone! How often sentimentality and natural feeling affect us in our service, instead of simple love to Him!

A dewdrop does the will of God as well as the rainstorm; so the humblest service of the most obscure of God's saints, if done in the name of Christ, will receive His "well done," as the act of a faithful servant, while the ostentatious display of many will be ignored at the judgment seat of Christ. Be content to "fill a little place if God be glorified."

The secret of true ministry is an overflowing heart. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. If Christ be filling the heart, Christ will be expressed by the believer. There is no effort in overflowing. A vessel overflows when it has been filled to the full and because the supply is still flowing in. Whatever the gift and eloquence may be, we come round to the truth that a man is but a

vessel, but what the vessel contains, that satisfies. Let the believer say, "By the grace of God I will live and do in the power of my risen Lord."

No gift or special endowment of the Spirit is needed to serve our Lord Christ. The spring of all real service is love. Without it the most abundant and diversified services are robbed of the savor which would make them acceptable to God. The meanest service undertaken and accomplished in the spirit of love has a fragrance altogether its own. The service of love and the service of legality are diametrically opposed.

## Leading of the Spirit of God and Sonship

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It is only by the surpassing riches of the grace of God that any of us are His children; and because it is wholly of grace, it must be therefore on the principle of faith, and not of works. Hence we read, "Ye are all the children [sons] of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:26. It is, however, very blessed to know it on the authority of the Word of God as a divine certainty; but more blessed still to have the enjoyment of this new and everlasting relationship by the truth brought home to our hearts in the power of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Rom. 8:16. Another inspired Apostle says, "Beloved, now are we the sons [children] of God" (1 John 3:2). It is scarcely possible that anything can be more simply or more definitely stated. There is no "if" or "but" in the sentence-no "hoping to be" or room for the shadow of a "doubt." The fact is unmistakably set forth, that all who truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are "children of God." Let us never forget that this is what the Spirit of God teaches, and it is therefore God's truth, and not man's opinion. Till we receive what God says about the death and blood-shedding of His own Son, and because He says it, we are not believers, not children of God. But having been born of the Spirit, and having received the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit is given to indwell us as God's seal, His anointing, the earnest of the inheritance, to lead us also and teach us, so that we might know and enjoy, on the authority of Scripture, our new and everlasting relationship of children. He witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God; and it is a never-ending source of holy enjoyment, thanksgiving, and praise. In this way the soul begins to know God as Father. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Gal. 4:6.

Nor is that all; for we are further instructed, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." Rom. 8:17. Let us not, dear reader, lightly pass this by, but consider how far we know and enjoy this blessed relationship to God into which we have been brought. Let us remember that we have "joy and peace in believing"-not in knowing the doctrine merely, but in receiving the truth of it into our hearts as from the mouth of God. Thus eating the words of God for ourselves, making them our own, we live day by day in the comfort of this unchangeable and everlasting relationship. Sure it is that, however pious we may appear, we cannot walk as children of God unless we know we are His children. Many will say, "Yes, I see it," or, "I have known it for some years," but to live day by day in the enjoyment of it as a settled reality, and look on to the blessed prospect laid out before us, produces gladness of heart and holy liberty as nothing else can. Let us then not fail to receive from God by His Word, and enjoy before Him, the astounding truth that His own unfathomable grace has made us His children to care for and comfort forever to His own everlasting praise and glory.

Observe too that the Spirit given to us to make us know that we are God's children is spoken of as "the Spirit of His Son," that we may have in our measure His own feelings and affections; and that He is also spoken of as "the Spirit of adoption," to make us realize our position, and give us thoughts, feelings, and affections suited to Abba, Father. Our Lord prayed that the love wherewith the Father loved Him may be in us. and also referred to a time when the world will know that the

Father has loved us as He loved Him. Precious grace!

The Holy Spirit is also our leader. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." And be it remembered that He is here also to guide us into all the truth. He is never spoken of as driving us, but in all the tenderness of a loving nurse leading the little children. This is in full keeping with divine love, and being led by Him is a mark of sonship. As to this leading of the Spirit of God, it is easy to say, "I am led of the Spirit to do this or that"; but it is certain that He never leads us to have confidence in the flesh, or to covet a position in the world which has crucified the Lord of glory, or to do anything contrary to His Word. Doubtless, His usual way of leading is by the written Word, though as to time, place, circumstances, and other details, if we walk in the truth, watch His eye and hand, having no will of our own in activity, but with all humility having an eye to His glory, He will assuredly guide. The Spirit is the glorifier and testifier of the Son of God, and takes of the things of the Father and of the Son, and shows them unto us; and these are important landmarks never to be lost sight of. To separate, therefore, the operations of the Spirit of God from the testimony of the written Word, and from the Person of the Son, would be misleading and unsound.

The Holy Spirit brings us into conscious association with Christ. Even if He occupies us with ourselves to reprove us for sin, it is to bring us with self-judgment into the presence of God. As we are called into the fellowship of the Son of God, to have parted company with Him is to have descended to the thoughts of the flesh. Communion with the Father and the Son is the normal state of the child of God, and it is maintained only in the power of the Holy Spirit. The world does not receive the Holy Spirit "because," as our Lord said, "it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him"; to His disciples, however, He blessedly added, "But ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John 14:17. All believers who know they are God's children, know in some feeble measure the Holy Spirit, and something of His gracious operations and ways. Those who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them have a personal consciousness of God's love, for it is shed abroad in their hearts; they delight to bow to Jesus as their Lord as well as Savior; and they know that they are God's children. They realize also His power in ministering the precious things of the Son of God to them, while drawing their hearts upward to Christ, and outward for Christ. Examples of the leading and operations of the Spirit abound in Scripture, not only in associating our hearts and minds with Christ, but always in the most suitable and seasonable way as meeting our circumstances and service. Let us look at some of them.

In Acts 2, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood up to preach. And to what did the Spirit of God lead him? His sermon from beginning to end was concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter refers his hearers first to the prophet Joel, who spoke of the Spirit being poured out. He proves that Psalm 16 was fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. He quotes from Psalm 132 to show that Messiah must be of the fruit of David's loins according to the flesh. He turns to Psalm 110 to show the fulfillment of the ascension and session of Christ at God's right hand, till He comes forth to judge, and His enemies are made His footstool. He also sets Christ before the people as the One who received in glory the Holy Spirit, and sent Him down. Peter brings in all his hearers guilty of the crucifixion of Christ, but earnestly commends to them God's grace as willing to give them remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. We ask, Could there be a finer example of the Spirit's leading and operation in using the written Word concerning the glorified Savior consequent upon His finished work upon the cross? And could any line of

things be more suitable to the preacher and the hearers in their then circumstances and need?

Let us look also at Stephen in Acts 7. How did the Spirit lead him? We read that "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." The Spirit occupies him with the glorified Man on the throne of God as an absorbing Object, and the most suitable ministry that he could have at that time. His testimony, therefore, was not a word about himself or his sufferings, but of Jesus. He said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Could there be a more touching witness of the Spirit's leading an afflicted soul into the present sustaining and comforting blessing of the ever-living Son of God? Can we conceive anything that could be more truly meat in due season? And what was its effect? Was he not so strengthened to bear his terrible sufferings, that in his measure, like our blessed Lord, he could pray for his murderers, and calmly commit his spirit to his Savior, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit?"

We read of John that he "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." And what did he see and hear and learn? He heard a great voice as of a trumpet saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." He saw the Son of man, in His own faithfulness and grace, "in the midst" of the assemblies on earth. And he learned his own nothingness and weakness, the mystery of the Lord's Person, and that He had died and was alive again, and that for evermore. He felt the surpassing tenderness of His right hand laid upon him; he tasted the exceeding comfort of His "Fear not," and knew Him now in the place of authority over death and hades, for He held the keys of both. Can anything, we ask, more fully show that when the Spirit leads He brings us to have to do with Christ, and that too in the best possible way to meet us in our present state or circumstances or service? How else could John have been fitted to discern and communicate to us the mysteries of the visions which were to pass before him for our guidance and untold blessing? Hence the next words were, "Write the things which thou hast seen," etc. Happy are those who thus go into service from personal intercourse with the Son of God. How else can we expect to be divinely used instruments?

So clearly is the testimony of the Spirit connected with true thoughts of Christ, that the Apostle John lays it down as a test of those with whom we come in contact, that "every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God; and every spirit which does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God" (J.N.D. Trans.). whatever their pretensions may be. So vital is this point that it is prefaced by the saying, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God." Such also not only "love the brethren," but are subject to the Apostle's words, "He that knoweth God heareth us.... Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (1 John 4:1-8.)

Look also at Barnabas when full of the Holy Ghost, and see what characterized his ministry. Did he not direct the young converts to have to do with the Lord Jesus Christ? Yes; he "exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." (Acts 11:23, 24.)

We may be sure that when the Spirit leads, He gives us to have to do with Christ, to honor, serve, and look for Him, and to see everything in relation to Him, according to His own blessed word of truth. May we more rejoice that we are God's children, and as such look for the constant leading and operations of the Spirit till Christ comes!

## The Sparrow and the Farthings

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How often have our Lord's words about the sparrows comforted the hearts of His people!

Yes, dear Christian, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." Luke 12:6,7.

There are certain things in God's Word which scientific persons declare cannot be true, because they cannot understand them. Here are two difficulties - not ONE sparrow is forgotten before God; ALL the hairs of the heads of God's children are numbered! Very charming "difficulties" are these.

Our heavenly Father loves us perfectly, and according to the infinitude of His own being. How can little creatures like men understand God? If we could understand Him with our natural powers, we should be as great as He! Our heavenly Father is infinite in love and power, and most delightful it is to know from the lips of His blessed Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, what His love is.

The little birds of Palestine are called sparrows in our English Bibles, and as sparrows are our most common bird, and the least thought of and valued in our land, it is a very happy translation. We need to feel that the insignificant and the common things, as men speak, are those as to which the care of our heavenly Father is exercised.

Many of us are insignificant and commonplace! We should not be missed if we died - perhaps hardly more than a pebble we cast from the beach into the sea is missed from among the multitudes that form that shore. But the humblest and the poorest is the special object of our heavenly Father's care.

Our Lord bids us "Fear not" in the light of the gracious wisdom and care of our God. Perhaps, when all goes well, we do not sufficiently value His "FEAR NOT," but when trials arise, when illness is upon us, when, it may be, we lie powerless, then how comforting are His words! And how tenderly He assures our hearts! We are of VALUE in our heavenly Father's eyes.

## Spiritual Understanding

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The knowledge of God's will is based on the spiritual state of the soul - wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col. 1:7). And this is of all practical importance. No particular direction by man as to conduct meets this at all - rather saves us from the need of spiritual understanding. No doubt a more spiritual mind may help me in the discernment of God's will; but God has connected the discovery of the path of His will, His way, with the inward state of the soul, and causes us to pass through circumstances - human life here below to test and to discover to ourselves what that state is, and to exercise us therein. The Christian has by his spiritual state to know God's ways. The Word is the means. (Compare John 17:17, 19.) God

has a way of His own which the vulture's eye hath not seen, known only to the spiritual man, connected with, flowing from, and to, the knowledge of God (Compare Exod. 33:13.) Thus the Christian walks worthy of the Lord; he knows what becomes Him, and walks accordingly, that he may please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the knowledge of God.

## The Talents

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Matt. 25:14-30

This parable shows that all have not the same ability, but all have the same Lord to serve, and all should have the same zeal in their Master's service. Each is to use the gift; and this implies it is not something already possessed in nature; it is bestowed by the Lord, to be used for Him. It will be seen the words, "kingdom of heaven," have been added. It is the faithfulness of His servants, rather than the kingdom.

Here the sovereign goodness of the Lord comes out. Surely it would be more than an ample reward to rule over "many things"; but it is added, they are to enter into the joy of their Lord - to be brought into immediate association with Himself. Who can estimate what this will be?

Thus we are called upon to be using our talents for the Lord in His absence. It follows the parable of the ten virgins. We are to use our talents, not to sleep. When He returns, He will ask us as to how we have used these talents. It may be that the reader has but one - let him use that faithfully, and not, as is the temptation to many, wish he had more or different gifts, and thus be neglecting the one he has; and our Lord will accord to him His divine approval on His return, and make him a sharer of His own joy.

We feel the especial danger is, as in our parable, to those who have but one talent. It may seem so small in comparison with the gifts of others, and it may be for our doing things unseen by mortal eyes. Ah, but God sees; He has given the talent, and the one talent is given according to "ability," even as to those who have more. Then such could not use two if they could get them; their work is to use the one they have. May God arouse all to use the gifts He has given in dependence upon Himself, the living God.

As in the parable of the pounds, so here, all receive gifts. This agrees with Eph. 4:16 where, under the figure of a body, there is that which every joint supplies - supplies, mark, not receives, though that is true also. But every part has its office to fulfill, and each has to do that which specially belongs to it; and no one is so insignificant, that the most advanced can say, "I have no need of thee." Yea, the parts that we think to be less honorable, have the more abundant honors. All is so beautifully tied, that there should be no superfluous member, and no lack. (See 1 Cor. 12.)

We doubt not many of the complaints of the lack of gift, would cease were each using faithfully, as to the Lord, what he has. We are also told to "covet earnestly the best gifts"; but he that is not faithful in a little, cannot be entrusted with that which is greater, while the talent of the slothful servant is given to the one who had received the ten. Let us not forget also that even a Timothy needed the exhortation to stir up his gift (2 Tim. 1:6), or it might lie dormant and unused.

There is much need in many places, but who can tell the amount of talents there are buried in the earth, or earthly things? May God arouse us to the sense of need, and to our individual responsibility.

The Master will return, and we shall have to give an account of our stewardship. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. 5:10. But the Apostle joins with this, "We labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of [or acceptable to] Him."

As in the parable of the pounds, all who take the place of servants will be judged as such. The unprofitable servant said he knew his master was a "hard" man; yea, more, that he took what did not rightfully belong to him; and he was afraid and went and hid the talent in the earth. All a tissue of excuses to cover up his unfaithfulness; but it shows how man, and even those who profess to be God's servants, may regard their Master in heaven. All is hard work to the slothful, and it is wicked to charge injustice to God. So he is called a slothful and wicked servant, and is consigned to the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But the faithful enter into the joy of their Lord, a rich compensation, surely, for any little service we can do here for that One to whom we owe all we have, and all we are, though nothing is little done for such a Master. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15:58.

## There Is One Body

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1 Cor. 3:16 and 6:19

These scriptures set forth a truth which I believe to be of cardinal importance to every one of us, individually as well as corporately; the Church as a whole is the temple of God, and every believer is made such as really, as literally, as absolutely as the temple of old in which God dwelt, only, of course, in a different way. He dwells in each individual believer today. Mark that fact; ponder it. It is not a question of opinion; it is God's truth. If people do not bow to Scripture, it is of no more use to argue with them, than it is to talk to the ignorant scavenger about the highest principles of mathematics. I am deeply and thoroughly persuaded that I have a right to demand of every servant of Christ to bow down his whole moral being to the authority of Scripture.

The truth presented here is not one about which you may think this or that. God has a house here on earth. Take in that fact, beloved; ponder it. Do not say it is what we ought to be, but what we are, and then see the conduct that flows from it; see what becomes God's house: "Holiness becometh Thine house, O LORD, forever." Psalm 93:5.

This is the basis of the truth which underlies all discipline from the time that God had a house on earth. We never hear a word about God dwelling with man until redemption is accomplished. But the moment that Israel is out of Egypt, on the shore of the Red Sea, the first note that falls on our ear from the lips of a redeemed people is, "I will prepare Him a habitation." And the moment the last pin is put into the earthly tabernacle, the glory of God comes down in haste to take up His abode in the midst of His people.

But His presence demands and secures holiness. Read Joshua 6 and 7, and see how we get there two grand consequences of the self-same presence; Jericho in ruins, and the heap of stones in the valley of Achor. One man dared to defile the assembly of God! How solemn it is! It is a fine thing to see these bulwarks crumbling to dust beneath the feet of God's people. But mark; the same presence that laid Jericho in ruins could not allow that one man's sin to escape notice. The Holy Spirit has penned these records for us, and it is our bounden duty to hang over them, and to seek to drink into our souls the instruction in them.

The very instincts of faith ought to have taught Joshua that there was some hindrance. God's people were His habitation. That fact gave them a characteristic which marked them off from every other nation upon earth. No other nation knew aught of that great privilege but Israel. But God is God; He will be true to Himself; He will take care of His great name. Joshua thought the glory of that great name was involved, but there are more ways than one to maintain that glory.

If Jehovah is present to give victory over His enemies, He is also present to discipline His people. "Israel hath sinned"! God does not say, One man has sinned - find him out. No; it is the six hundred thousand of Israel, because Israel is one nation; one divine presence in their midst stamped and marked and formed their unity. Do not try to reason about it, brethren, but bow down your whole moral being to that truth. Do not judge it, but let it judge you. "Israel hath sinned"; that

is the reason why they could not get the victory. And Israel must come up man by man, so that he who has transgressed the covenant of Jehovah may be taken. God cannot go on with unjudged evil. Weakness is no hindrance; wickedness is. Can God lend the sanction of His presence to evil? Never! If we are God's dwelling place, we must be holy. This is one of those eternal principles which can never be given up.

But the question is raised, How could it be said that Israel had sinned? Six hundred thousand innocent people! The answer is, The nation is one, and that unity has to be maintained and confessed.

In Leviticus 24 we read that twelve loaves were placed on the golden table before the Lord continually, with the seven lamps of the golden candlestick to throw their light upon them. The end of the same chapter shows us a man brought outside the camp, where all Israel is to stone him with stones. Why this grouping of passages? It is full of power. The grouping of Scripture is among some of its brightest glories; the very way in which the Holy Ghost groups His materials commands our attention. Every fact, every circumstance, tends to illustrate its infinite depths and its moral glories.

Why then do we find this connection in Leviticus? For the simple purpose of illustrating this great principle. Faith's power to grasp the eternal truth of Israel's unity, and to confess it in the face of everything - a grand, magnificent, practical truth. There is first the divine side, what Israel was in God's mind; and then what Israel might become under God's discipline. And it ever behooves the faithful company to confess and maintain the original truth of God, even in the midst of the ruin around. I earnestly, urgently, ardently press the necessity as from God today, to maintain the great truth of the unity of the body of Christ as that which we have to hold, maintain, and confess in face of everything. There is no truth in the whole range of revelation that the devil hates more cordially than the truth of the unity of the people of God.

Elijah on mount Carmel, when the kingdom was divided, called for twelve stones with which to build the altar. But Israel is no longer twelve tribes, it might be said; Israel's unity is broken and gone. No; it is an indissoluble unity, a unity which is never to be surrendered. Israel is twelve while God's eye rests on the twelve loaves on the golden table, on the twelve stones in Aaron's breastplate. Faith holds fast that truth, and Elijah builds his altar of twelve stones. The unity is never to be given up, though it may be like a chain flung across a river, with the tide flowing over it, so that you cannot see it. It was one on the day of Pentecost; it will be one in the glory; but it is as true today that there is one body and one Spirit, as it was when the Holy Spirit penned the fourth of Ephesians. How is this unity formed? By the Holy Ghost; it is union with the Man at the right hand of God.

Thus I get three substantial reasons for a life of holiness; I am not to dishonor Him to whom I am united; I am not to grieve the Spirit by whom I am united; and I am not to grieve the members to whom I am united.

I feel my responsibility to urge this truth upon you, beloved hearers. Let not the devil cheat you of the blessing of walking in it. See that you realize its formative, influential power. Think how your state and walk at this moment are affecting the saints in New Zealand. If "one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." All Israel was affected by Achan's sin. He thought nobody saw,

nobody knew, and quietly hid the forbidden thing in his tent. If this is your state, there is a complete stoppage at once; there is no more power put forth on your behalf by God; there is power truly, but power not to act for you in victory, but to act toward you in discipline - power to smash you to pieces.

Let us not measure the Word of God by our consciences, or by our sensibilities, but in simplicity believe what it says. We read that there is one Spirit uniting every member to the Head in glory, and uniting every single member on the earth to every other. In this body a saint out of communion is like a waster in a candle; he affects the state of the saints of God everywhere. Confess this great truth, own it simply, come what may. Never deny it, never give it up. Take your eyes off your brethren, and fix them on the truth of God. Are you conscientiously gathered on the ground of the one body? I speak freely and pointedly to you, because I believe this truth is assailed. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17), and is joined to all who belong to Him. There is no such thing as independence in the Word of God. The assembly in each place is the corporate local expression of the whole Church of God, as we saw of the twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament.

This truth, like a golden thread, shines from cover to cover of the Book of God, and is always known to faith. Why did Daniel pray toward Jerusalem? The house of God is not there to the eye of man, but it is there to faith. Faith still recognizes the twelve loaves upon the golden table, and prays, though the lion's den be its reward.

Again, Paul before Agrippa. The nation may be scattered "among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other" (Deut. 28:64), but Paul will speak of "the promise unto which our twelve tribes hope to come"; and the noun is in the singular (in the Greek). Could Paul have shown them?

And are you going to give up the unity of the Church of God? Are you going to have to do with things got up by the devil to cast dust in the eyes of God's saints, and to hide from the mind the everlasting supreme truth of the one body? Is the body of Christ a little society based upon certain principles? How can you talk of joining anything? If you are converted to Christ, all the joining is done! You are "added unto the Lord"; you are a part of that which man cannot touch for a moment; no man can cut off one single member of the body of Christ which, according to the eternal purpose of God, and according to the operation of the Holy Ghost, is united to Him.

Have I got to organize a body? No, thank God, it is not man's work at all. The Holy Ghost came down at Pentecost to form a body, and He is still here. I would not surrender that great truth for ten thousand worlds, for, in the full view of all that has occurred, I can boldly say I have a deeper sense and a firmer belief that it is the truth of God for this present day, than I had forty-two years ago, when I first placed my foot on the ground which, through God's grace, I now occupy. It is not to be touched by any efforts of man. "Holiness becometh Thine house, O LORD, forever." In the glory it will be "the holy city, new Jerusalem,... prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," in which He will show forth "the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus."

## They That Sow in Tears Shall Reap in Joy

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Once we have learned that the old man is "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," deliverance is the greatest relief; and the relief is always in proportion to the sense of pressure. There is sowing in tears, deep distress when one cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is in answer to this that deliverance is first learned - "I thank God through Jesus Christ." If the distress was great, the relief is accordingly great.

But the deliverance is not only learned once and forever, it has to be continued, practically, every day. There is the continued need of deliverance. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." As I appropriate His death, as I reckon myself to be dead unto sin, I eat the bread of affliction indeed; I am alive unto God in Jesus Christ. I am free. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." No one abides in practical deliverance who does not value it. There is no conscious relief when there is no pressure; and hence, when it is a relief, there cannot be continuance in that from which I am relieved. I have sown in tears, I have been sore distressed because of oppression, but I now reap in joy. I am in the blessedness of relief.

It is thus very evident that as the Spirit leads a soul to any and every gain in Christ, His first action is to "mortify," that is, He does not suffer that in me to remain which would counteract His work. The removal is death to him, but I am more than requited by the gain.

It is evident that one is not justified until he is, by faith, resting on Christ risen, believing in his heart that God hath raised Him from the dead. And now being justified by faith, he is as clear of all that was against him as Christ is - the new history begins. But as there had been a sowing in tears up to this before reaping in joy, so now there must be a practical deliverance from the flesh (dead to sin and the world) a deliverance which must be kept up, so that the flesh ever suffers. It is a great day when one has learned that the man under the judgment of God (the wages of sin) has been judged in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that it is my great privilege to say, "I am crucified with Christ." I am delivered from myself, and Christ lives in me. It is an immense relief when I have learned that by being dead with Christ I am dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus; but though it is a very great gain to have learned it, yet, as I have said, it is not once and forever, but having learned it, you are to continue in it. The Corinthians had the Spirit, and the Galatians had the Spirit, but they did not continue in practical deliverance; they did not walk in the Spirit. They were not "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

When Christ obtains His rightful place in the heart, then Ishmael must go out. It was grievous to Abraham (Gen. 21:11). It is grievous to man naturally, but the joy of the Lord is our strength. Now this opens up to us in the daily history. In the Old Testament the discipline occurs when the blessing is reached. That which would mar the blessing is then by discipline removed, so that the blessing may be unalloyed; while with us there is first, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." And then there follows by the hand of God the discipline to help us: "We which live are always delivered unto

death." As to principle, we must suffer before we reign. Now in every increase of the Spirit's work in us, there is, by His power, a corresponding abnegation of the flesh; that is, that I conscientiously deny myself where, at one time, without any reproach of conscience, I gratified myself. The liberty of the Spirit is better than the gratification of the flesh, so that even what was gain to me, I now count loss for Christ. And under the discipline of God I am confirmed in the step to which I have been led by the Holy Spirit. "We which live are always delivered unto death." The Spirit arms me with the death of Christ in order to deliver me from that which would naturally fascinate me. I suffer in the flesh as I hear about the dying of Jesus, while God, in addition, to help me, rolls in death in such a way that I am set free from the temptation; the snare is broken and I am delivered. Jacob had broken from the false gods which Rachel countenanced before Rachel was taken away.

In a more general way, as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so does our consolation by Christ. It is in the presence of our enemies that the table is prepared (Psalm 23); that is, that where there was suffering or reproach for Christ, the promise is that there, and connected with it, there should be a distinct mark of favor. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you"-as Paul and Silas at Philippi, or Stephen before he was stoned.

I trust that my reader will appreciate the manner and order of God's way with him individually.

First, as he is led by the Spirit; that is, as his conscience is enlightened and as he accepts the Word in faith, so does the Spirit expose the flesh in him which would interfere; and as he is delivered from this, as being dead with Christ, so is he established by a discipline which annuls it, as the stone before the wheel. So that with every divine acquisition there is a sowing in tears before there is a reaping in joy. Job passes through a great ordeal before he learns himself, and then his captivity is turned, and the favor of God abounds to him. David at Ziklag was reduced to the lowest point, when he had no resource but to encourage himself in the Lord his God (1 Sam. 30:6).

I must add a little respecting how the servant is subjected to this mode of preparation in a peculiar and an enlarged way. Though the servant be enlisted and ordained for service before he knows anything of it, yet his service in public is only genuine as it is a transcript of his exercise or drill in private as only known to himself. The Lord subjects him to trials and sorrows in order that he may be able to comfort others as he was comforted of God. No servant is competent or effective in imparting to others but as he has been taught of God, and has been formed in His school to be an exponent practically of the truth he would impart.

Noah was the true preacher, for his work corroborated what he announced. Moses was forty years in the wilderness before he was sent to conduct Israel through it into the land. Joshua, after being in the land, and seeing the greatness of it, had to tarry in the wilderness forty years before he conducted Israel into it. I need not add how the prophets, even as to bodily sufferings, were prepared for the service to which God had called them. It is remarkably exemplified in both Paul and John. Paul was reduced in person before he was qualified for his chief service. John was an exile in Patmos when he wrote the Revelation; the natural brightness wanes and disappears before he is conducted by the Spirit to a full survey according to God of the things here in this scene of desolation and opposition, and of the glory of Christ, and of the bride. He sowed in tears, but he reaped in joy. Little anyone can apprehend, but as he is in it, the nature of the joy which the

Lord vouchsafes to the one suffering in any measure for Him. As the real nature of things here is disclosed to him personally, so is he conducted into the real nature of the things in God's presence, where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore. The one continued and ever increasing comfort, "I was brought low, and He helped me."

## Three Blessed Things to Know: Will, Work, Testimony

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Heb. 10:10-15

In the ninth chapter of this epistle is set forth in the most complete argument the manner in which sins are put away by the one offering of Jesus Christ; whereas in the tenth chapter the subject is how this is applied to the conscience, so purging it that no dread of God's judging because of sins any longer remains. This is the meaning of "no more conscience of sins." So full, perfect, and sufficient is Christ's offering, that by Him all who believe are not only justified from all things, but are entitled to be within the holiest, and to know it. Could anything be more wonderful or excellent? to be inside the veil - where of old only one man, of one tribe, of one nation, on one day of the year, could enter - and that not by sufferance, but by right and title, and suited for such a place, having a conscience so purged that it is fit for the presence of God. I may just observe in passing that Hebrews shows the twofold position of a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. As regards heaven he is, as in this chapter, within the holiest now; as regards this world his place is outside the camp, as in chapter 13. On this latter I do not now enlarge; it does not come within my present purpose.

Let us look a little at the foundation of this great salvation. First, as we have it in verse 10, "By the which will we are sanctified." God willed not, and had no pleasure in the death of a sinner, nor had He pleasure in the sacrifices offered by the law, which could never make the worshiper perfect. In these repeated sacrifices there was a remembrance of sin every year: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. 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... to do Thy will, O God." Thus we are let into the secrets that passed between the Father and the Son in the council chamber of eternity before the foundation of the world. It was the will of God, and the Son set Himself to do that will - "A body hast Thou prepared Me." Oh, how different from man's natural thoughts of God! How eclipsed even the very best thoughts about His love. He willed it, and what His heart conceived, the Son of His love undertook to accomplish.

Will you, beloved reader, say what are your thoughts about God? Whoever could have stooped so low in a love that removed out of the way all that hindered its expression, and that too at the cost of all that was dear to itself! Such then was His will which is the great source and spring of this wonderful display of grace.

Second, we have the Person and work by which it has been accomplished. The Person, the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of the Father, He it was who took a body prepared for Him by God, and in it glorified Him, as well as established a righteous ground upon which God can be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Hear His own words - "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." John 10:17. "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." John 17:4. He was the One who shed His blood. The righteousness of God demanded the blood of such a victim, so perfect and so blessed. Sin could be put away by nothing less; and for the purging of the conscience there was

nothing more needed. He it was who, by the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God (and only He could); and now that very same righteousness of God raises Him up from the dead, from the very death by which He glorified God, and sets Him in glory, and likewise rends the veil from the top to the bottom. Could anything be more wonderful? "This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down [that is, sat down in perpetuity] on the right hand of God.... For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." This one offering accomplished what the blood of bulls and of goats, shed from the beginning, could never do. This one offering needed no repetition, so there remains no more offering for sin.

Last, we have the way by which it is known and enjoyed, in those words, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us.... Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Oh, how blessed to have the knowledge and enjoyment of this. Could there be anything equal to the blessed certainty in the soul, founded on God's will, Christ's offering, and the Holy Ghost's testimony? The Holy Ghost could not have come down until Jesus was glorified; but Christ being glorified out of the very judgment by which He forever put away sin, the Holy Ghost came down. Wherever I look I see infinite power and infinite love - the love that gave Christ, and brought Him down to the grave, and the power that raised Him up and seated Him in glory.

## Time

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We are told to redeem the time because the days are evil (Eph. 5:16). Paul said that knowing the time, it is high time to awake out of sleep (Rom. 13:11). We should be careful what we do with our time. Bernard Berenson said,

"I would that I could stand on a busy street corner, hat in hand, and beg people to throw me all their wasted hours."

Another said, "One today is worth a dozen tomorrows. Therefore, use today wisely. Take time to do the things that matter and that will bring eternal dividends."

Time is too precious to lose. Horace Mann wrote, "Lost, yesterday, somewhere between sunrise and sunset, two golden hours, each set with sixty diamond minutes. No reward is offered, for they are gone forever."

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Psalm 90:12.

## **Trials: From a Letter**

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"In simple, childlike faith we accept these dispensations of suffering and sorrow, seasons of heaviness through the manifold temptations; but knowing and seeing the end, His ever blessed end for us, sickness of various sorts, weakness and trial seem in these days the especial portion of the beloved of the Lord; and if in all these things is the life of our spirits, and by them we live, are we not the richest gainers? - the flesh put down and withered up, the true character of things here more clearly seen and estimated at their true value, the Father's love, the sympathy of Christ our Lord, our High Priest, realized, His strength made perfect in our weakness, heaven and the things that are there where He sits entered into a little more in spirit, in heart and affections more at home with Him, I say it must be well, and how great our gain!

"Let us pray for the supply of the Spirit of Christ, a joyful consent of heart to the Father's will, a living in spirit with Him our Head, and the ever present expectation of His return.... His blest ways are beyond our ken or praises."

## Under His Eye

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John Wesley once said, "Suppose that a messenger of God, an angel, were now standing at your right hand. Would you not care to abstain from every word or action that you know would offend him? Yes, suppose one of your mortal fellow servants, a holy man, stood by you. Would you not be extremely anxious how you conducted yourself both in word and action? How much more cautious ought you to be when you know God Himself, the Holy One, is inspecting your heart, your tongue, your hand, your every movement!"

## Walk Softly

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We should, every one of us, bear in mind that if not kept each moment by the grace of God, we are capable of anything. We have materials in us for any amount or character of evil; and whenever we hear anyone saying, "I would never do that," we may feel assured he does not know his own heart. And not only so, but he is in imminent danger of falling into some grievous sin. It is well to walk humbly before our God, distrusting self, and leaning on Him. This is the true secret of moral safety at all times.

## What Are Your Priorities?

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Things are secondary in importance. First things first. That is only logical. It is a basic principle in the science of mathematics. It is a basic principle in the science of life. First things first. "Seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6:33. The basic need of the human heart is not for things, for they cannot satisfy its deepest longings. Man is not mere clay. He is a living soul.

The body craves for material things, so we buy food and clothes and houses and cars - things for the body. But the body eventually dies. The mind cries for intellectual things, so we build schools and buy books. We read and study and cultivate friendships. But toward the end the mind fails. The spirit calls for spiritual things. It needs God. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." Psalm 42:1. The spirit craves for something that material things can never supply. It craves after God. There is an emptiness in each human life that only God can fill. "Seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

## Where I Found Peace: Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachtani

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Mark 15:34

For myself - I speak as a man - I never found peace before God, or conscious rest with Him, until I was taught the force and meaning of that cry of Jesus of Nazareth - "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani!" Never until I understood that He who knew no sin had (then and there on the cross) been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, could I rest as a sinner in the presence of a holy God. And, as I suppose, it is owing to the distinctive peculiarity of that - His sorrow under the wrath of God - not being understood, that so many Christians have no settled peace at all.

The question of sin and of guilt have never been met in their consciences. The incarnation is amazing and beautiful. That the eternal Son of God, the only begotten Son of the Father, should have become a babe and been laid in a manger of an inn! The contrast between the glory He came out of and the place man assigned to Him, is a contrast! God and heaven could express their delight over Him, then and there, as well as feel it (Luke 2:8-14). But the bearing of our sins in His own body was not in the cradle but on the Cross.

The flight into Egypt, the return and settling at Nazareth of the Child, the Youth in the temple and in returning from Jerusalem, the hidden retirement of His early manhood - all is beautiful, each in its place, but none present us with Him as in the act of bearing our sins. Again, when we look at Him (when He voluntarily identified

Himself with those that owned their need of repentance, confessing their sins) at His baptism, in His service and ministry all, and each part of all, is beautiful and perfect; but, if heaven could approve Him in each step, heaven too could give its avowals of approval to Him. Yet He stood not as sin-bearer under the judgment at any of these periods.

Again, what a contrast! and who ever felt it as He felt it, between Himself as the seed of the woman, and the race of man to whom He had come. What a contrast between Himself personally and individually, and the House of Israel, His own, among whom He had come. Himself, not only God manifest in the flesh, but that holy thing that was born of the virgin - holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, apart from sin - and yet voluntarily amid sinful men and guilty Israel, the immaculate seed of the woman, the King of Israel in His holiness. This brought with it sorrows. So, when He had entered upon service, did the constant persecution for righteousness which He endured, and the consciousness that there was none that could sympathize with Him, and that fallen men welcomed not the mercy of which He was the messenger - sorrows He had to endure at the hand of the world and man, but even that was not forsaking of God. But in none of these parts, nor in the being straitened when His soul turned to His coming baptism, nor when, in the garden, His soul passed into the scenes which then lay immediately before Him, was there (any more than anywhere else) that which there was when He cried out, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" Here too He was perfect; forsaken of God, He would not, did not, forsake God. Never did God or

heaven see perfection shine out of Him as then and there when His obedience was at the goal - "Obedience unto death, even the death of the cross." But if heaven found its delight in His submission under forsaking, for the sake of others (for it was the revelation of God as the Savior God) there was, there could be (just because it was forsaking for sin, our sin, which He had to endure) no expression of approval, nothing but forsaking. "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

I do not see how a sinner can find rest until he has learned somewhat of that which is distinctly peculiar to Calvary, learned that then and there, there was a cup drunk by the Lord in obedient submission to God - cup of wrath due to us only, undergone by Christ at Calvary. The only spot I turn to when in conscience the question is about sin or guilt, or sins (of the human family, of myself as an individual, etc.), is Calvary, and to the Lord there, crying out, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"

He bore my judgment in my stead then and there in His own body on the tree, in the presence of God, and received the woe of wrath and forsaking at the hand of God. And there is my quittance, clear, and full, and complete - but there alone.

The experience of His soul when He said, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" was altogether peculiar and distinct from that which He had to endure and experience at any other time whatsoever. In that suffering of His, as forsaken, I get the measure and the judgment of my sin against God.

## Why Preach the Gospel?

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"What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." Phil. 1:18.

The Apostle rejoiced that Christ was preached. He didn't necessarily have to preach, but he rejoiced if anyone preached Christ.

We heard of a brother who was greatly offended because he was not asked to preach the gospel. Let us ask, Why do we want the gospel preached? I trust it is just for two reasons -for the glory of that blessed One who suffered and died for sinners, and that the lost might be saved. If I am passed over and neglected in preaching the gospel, does that mean the gospel has suffered? No; it may hurt my pride, but perhaps that is exactly the thing I need to show me how much pride is there. C.H.B.

## Why Then Is All This Befallen Us?

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Judg. 6:13

If we study the history of Corinth and of Ephesus as given to us in Scripture, we shall learn where and how we have failed, and that the state of things which we deplore is the result of our departure from the grace made known to us.

The church at Corinth came behind in no gift. God's favor to them was very manifest; all that the Head could confer by the Holy Ghost to them in the way of gift was theirs, and yet we know that they were a reproach; no testimony for Christ in the assembly, in the world, or in private life. Now Ephesus was greatly in advance of Corinth. The fullest light had been communicated to them, and we may assume that the saints there were "perfect," able to receive the wisdom of God in its entirety. They were also most zealous in their care of the assembly. The Lord says to them, "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted." Rev. 2:2, 3. And yet after all this they were disqualified and unfitted to be a candlestick to hold the 'light of God in testimony here, because they had left their first love.

Now in Corinth, they were not in practical deliverance; that is, they were not free of the old man, and were walking after the flesh. If I am living in the pleasures of the flesh or of the mind, it is very clear that I am not delivered from it. As I am delivered I am morally apart from that wherein I was held. It is very humbling to note that at Corinth, though so largely blessed by the Holy Spirit, yet they were carnal and walked as men. They had not accepted the cross as the termination of man morally in the sight of God. They gloried in men, and they reigned as kings on the earth. It is important to bear in mind that if we seek exaltation for man, we have not accepted the cross of Christ. No flesh can glory in His presence; the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God. If a saint is carnal, he is not able to receive the wisdom of God, and the same one who cannot receive the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, which are beyond all human conception, will, as a necessary consequence, seek to enjoy the earth and its things as much as he can; that is reigning as kings; he has not learned the untold blessings on God's side which are his own; but he seeks what is not his own - even earthly things. Because he has not the greater, he seeks the lesser.

Thus we see that these two are concurrent; when the joys on God's side are unknown, all that ministers to man is coveted.

It is easy to see the difference between the Corinthian and the Ephesian declension; the Corinthians had not accepted the cross (when the snare is to exalt the man, there will be concurrently an attempt to advance or enjoy one's position on the earth, so forcibly expressed in the words "reigned as kings"), while the Ephesians had lost what they had held in faith, and thus were unable to be in testimony for Christ. It is a great help to learn from Scripture the cause of our

low estate. The first thing for an invalid to ascertain is, from what does his ill health spring; and the next is to obtain the remedy which will effect a cure. After the Apostle had exposed to the Corinthians all that had befallen them, the reproach they had incurred in every circle they were found in, he addresses them in chapter 10, "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say." v. 15. He directs their attention first to the obligation they were under at the Lord's table, that they were in communion with Christ's blood, and with His body; that is His death; thus establishing that they were identified with Christ's death here on the earth; consequently they could not minister to the flesh for which Christ died, in any form; that is, if He, the perfect Man, was dead as to the man here, and that they had avowed themselves to be identified with Him in His death, how could they acknowledge the man in the flesh, or accept distinction for the man here? They all as partakers of the one loaf were in this common bond. This is the responsible side. There is beside what I may call the heart side, where they were to answer to the Lord's desire, "This do in remembrance of Me." Where were they to remember in this world the One who loved them best? They were to remember Him in death. How could they reconcile this with their self-consideration and reigning as kings? What a moral denial were they in their own ways of the One they assumed to remember! And more; they betrayed themselves. One is hungry, another is drunk. The rich lived in excess, even at the Lord's supper, and the poor were neglected. Sad indeed all that had befallen them; they did not discern the Lord's body. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." 1 Cor. 11:30.

Next, the Apostle dwells on their corporate responsibility baptized by one Spirit into one body - the Holy Spirit the power - He is to lead and to guide; all must be determined by Him; man's mind has no place there in any form; every one is in relation to the rest by the Spirit of God, not by any human means. So, if one member suffer, all suffer with it; or if one be honored, all rejoice with it. At the Lord's table they avowed their identification with the death of Christ, and thus morally abrogated all the glory of man in the flesh; while as the assembly of God, they have no power nor ability but by and through the Spirit of God. Now the Apostle in the second epistle, not only reminds them of his ministry (in chap. 3), finishing up with their beholding the Lord's glory, where no flesh could be, but also he tells of the effect on himself, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." Thus the surpassingness of the treasure on the one hand, and the dying of Jesus on the other hand, completely distanced them from the flesh. Also it was of great importance that they should walk agreeably to the Lord, even with regard to the future (which they had overlooked), because "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. 5:10.

One word more as to the Corinthians. The Apostle has been led in a very full way to establish them on true Christian ground; and now he presses on them that the first distinct mark that they had not received the grace of God in vain, would be that they would come out and be separate and touch not the unclean thing (2 Cor. 6:17). It is evident that it was here their failure began. They were caught in the Balaam snare. The point of departure must be the point of restoration. A warning word to us all, intimating the failure which is imminent when we touch the unclean, when our divine sensibility is so weakened that we can admit of and enter on social intercourse with the world - the dead bone.

Why Then Is All This Befallen Us?

Judg. 6:13

In the above brief review we have, seen the sad consequences which result when saints, however favored of God, give the natural man a place as to his mind and tastes, even when there was no breach of the law. Now let us turn and learn how Ephesus, to whom so much light and truth had been committed, became unfitted to be a candlestick.

Ephesus, as we learn from the Acts, had a bright beginning, and evidently had advanced far beyond the Corinthians, to whom the Apostle could not make known the wisdom of God, and to whom he could not speak as unto spiritual, but as unto babes in Christ. The Ephesians were established in grace, and the Apostle had declared to them "all the counsel of God," had "kept back nothing that was profitable" unto them, as we read in Acts 20; and he adds to this in his epistle to them, where he writes, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." Eph. 3:4. In Revelation 2 they are commended for their works and labor, and endurance, and because they could not bear them that are evil. They were morally far beyond the Corinthians; "hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not." They carefully attended to the Apostle's warning in Acts 20, and in everything they surpassed the Corinthians, who evidently had been so damaged by false teachers that the Apostle in the end of the second epistle insists on the great moral difference between them and himself.

The Ephesians had borne and had endured, and for Christ's name's sake, had labored and had not fainted; and yet after all, they had failed to such an extent, that unless they repented and did the first works, their candlestick or lamp would be taken away. It is deeply affecting and important to apprehend the nature of their declension which is conveyed in the words, "Thou hast left thy first love." What is first love? When does one leave it and thus lose so much? As far as I have gathered from Scripture, I should say that first love was that absolute personal devotion of the Church to Christ, that it could say in the language of another, "Whither thou goest, I will go." A peculiar energy of the Spirit is manifested in Stephen when "he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus." Peter had first love when he would leave the ship and enter on a path unknown and fatal to a mere man, in order to join the Lord. Nothing can satisfy first love but association, which in the Church involves union. As has been said, "The first estate must be maintained or God's glory and the truth are falsified." The consummation of first love is union. It is there only that the first love of the Church rests. The Church is in first love when union with Christ in heaven by the Holy Spirit is known; and the first love is left by the Church, or the individual saint, when faith as to union with Christ wanes. Winds and waves distract a Peter; anything which diverts us from Christ where He is as the one absorbing object, not only deprives us of the joys that love imparts, but spoils our testimony, as with Peter and Barnabas in another day.

Love is the heart absorbed with its object; and the Church enjoys its love in Christ's love which generated it. We love Him because He first loved us; our love wanes as this knowledge of His love wanes. It is in heavenly association that we reach His love that passes knowledge. When His attractiveness wanes, the love wanes. When He fully commands the heart, we are in His banqueting house, and His banner over us is love. The nearer love is to its object, the more it is satisfied and renewed. It is there it is nourished and cherished. It is there that "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." Christ dwells in our hearts by faith when our union with Him is realized.

When the Church or the individual is in first love, there is an assured sense of right "to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." When I feed on Christ, when He dwells in my heart by faith, I am enabled to be a true witness of Him here. I must imbibe Christ in order to reflect Him. If I do not imbibe Him, I have lost my first love, and I cannot reflect Him. It could not be possible. The lamp is taken away. But if I am living in the faith of being united to Him in heaven, I am feeding on Him there, and then I am enabled to be a witness for Him here, so that every one who wanes in the assurance of faith of being united to Christ where He is, wanes in power to express Him here; and on the other hand, the one who does the first works, cleaves to Him where He is, feeds on Him there, is a witness for Him here.

I need not add more; may the Lord grant that the above may be a word of warning and of help to each of us. May we lay it to heart, that if, like Corinthians, the natural man is allowed a place, his influence will crop up in the Church, in the world, and in social life; self-consideration and a love of earthly things will characterize us. And again, though we may be Ephesians as to growth and intelligence, yet' we may have waned from our first love, and thus after -all that we have received, be nothing of a lamp to our fellow Christians on every side seeking and needing help; and as to ourselves, not eating of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. The Lord help us. From "Voice to the Faithful"

## A Word of Admonition: Uzziah Strengthened and Strong

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### 2 Chronicles 26

Uzziah, we learn from this chapter, "sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper." v. 5. He went forth and warred, and "God helped him." "He strengthened himself exceedingly." He built towers in Jerusalem and fortified them, and towers in the desert, and digged many wells. He had husbandmen also, and vinedressers in the mountains, and in Carmel. Moreover, he had a host of fighting men that went out to war by bands. "The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valor were two thousand and six hundred. And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to cast stones. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal." We need not dwell on the description of the numerous army of King Uzziah. We will turn to God's instruction for ourselves about it. "And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was filled up to his destruction." vv. 15, 16.

Of all the words we find put together, there are few more remarkable than these.

One would have thought that the very object to be gained by Uzziah was to be strong. Alas! the strength we naturally covet is independence of God. Saints are found mourning over their weakness, and what do they mean? Is it not that they have no resources in themselves? We forget that all real strength is derived from the fullness that is in Jesus, otherwise we should ever be able to say, with Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong." We need to be deprived of every resource in ourselves, that we may know our strength to be in Him. When Uzziah felt himself to be strong, God left him.

There is great danger of our putting multiplied means in the place of the Lord Himself; we may go the whole round of means and forget that they are not the supply.

What has been the history of the Church? Marvelously helped till she was strong; when she was strong her heart became lifted up. The saints at Corinth, who had multiplied resources, men, and wisdom, and the like, and whose temptation it was to think that by the exercise of this wisdom they could refute the heathen, were told by the Apostle, No, it is only by the bringing in of the "wisdom of God," that which is "foolishness" with man, and of the "strength" of God, that which is "weakness" with man. The Spirit of God shows us, in the Acts, the Church, few in numbers, marvelously helped. But how soon did the Church begin to look to itself, to its own resources and greatness, instead of to the Lord. And has this no voice for ourselves? Our blessing is in taking the place of weakness, so that God may, for His own name's sake, help.

There is danger in our saying, or supposing that we have attained to something. It is a mark of failure when a Christian (or a number of Christians) looks to his own honor and credit, instead of to the honor of the Lord. The great thing is to be regardful of His name. A single eye will be occupied with Christ.

It is a very strong word, in reference to a saint that we have here - "his heart was lifted up to his destruction." But there is as strong a word in the New Testament - "he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." If any, even a saint of God, "soweth to the flesh," he will reap but a sorrowful harvest of corruption, all his time having been misspent. We need to give heed to the searching words of Scripture, not turning away the point of them from ourselves, under the supposition that they cannot apply to us. This thought has been the source of much mischief in the Church. That soul will prosper which trembles at God's Word, and is willing to face the most searching parts of it. The saint of God can sow "to the flesh," can walk according "to the flesh," can "war after the flesh," but the miserable end will be that he will "of the flesh reap corruption."

When Uzziah was strong (his strength being in his own resources), his heart became "lifted up," and more like Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon's heart (Dan. 4:30), than that of God's anointed king of Judah. A heart that is "lifted up" is in a dangerous state and on the eve of a fall.

Though Uzziah was God's anointed king, he was not God's anointed priest; yet would he have nothing restrained from him, and we find him transgressing "against the LORD his God" and going into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense, which appertained not unto him, but unto the priests only, the sons of Aaron, who were consecrated to burn incense, to do. Let us too beware of dealing with the Lord in unholy familiarity; a humble spirit is always a confident spirit, but a humble spirit can trust only in the blood of Jesus; it does not rush into God's presence as the man who is "lifted up" in heart does. We can only come there through the incense of the Lord Jesus, not on the credit of our own graces, or devotedness, or in fleshly fervor.

"Neither shall it be for thine honor from the LORD God," said Azariah the priest, as, with fourscore priests, valiant men, he withstood the king. "Then Uzziah was wroth,... and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD."

Beloved, this history of King Uzziah is written for our admonition. Lifting-up of heart is always self-seeking, not God-seeking. We have (blessed be God) liberty to enter into the holiest, for we are priests unto God by the blood of Jesus, but it is ever through the incense of our great High Priest.

In chapter 27:6, we have no mention of Jotham's great army; he "became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God." This is the way for the saint to grow in practical strength. Thus it was with the Thessalonians; their "work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope" was "in the sight of God and our Father." Jotham set the Lord always before him and went on in an even tenor of conduct. In the eyes of man he might not be as mighty as Uzziah, but the Holy Spirit records his name as that of one "mighty" in the eyes of God.

## The World to Come: Answers to Questions

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"For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." Heb. 2:5. Here the scene is the habitable earth that is to come - the millennial earth. Angels will serve, but not rule. God intended that man should rule, and so placed the first man on this earth in the relation of ruler to everything else here, but he soon sinned and not only fell himself but pulled down the whole scene with him. God's purposes, however, shall be fulfilled; the second Man will rule. He, the Son of man, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, is exalted far above them, crowned with glory and honor. But He will not rule alone; He will bring others into association with Himself in reigning, having opened the way for it by His atoning death.

The Apostle in writing to believers from among the Hebrews, warns them against turning back to Judaism, a religion that was only one of types and shadows. He says that if they do this it would be impossible to renew them to repentance, even though they had tasted of the "powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:4-8). By this expression is meant the marvelous display of power that introduced Christianity - the lame were made to walk, the dead were raised, the sick were healed, and the gospel was spread in the various dialects by means of the gifts of tongues, etc. Though these signs were great, they were only a foretaste of those of the age to come. The Old Testament scriptures abound with references to the wonderful things that will take place during the Millennium.

The sin that cannot be forgiven is the one against the Holy Ghost; the Jews were attributing the Lord's acts of power, done through the Holy Spirit, to the prince of demons. This was serious, and would not be forgiven then, nor would it be forgiven in the age to come - in the day of the Messiah. Though the Jews will be cleansed from their sins to participate in that great and glorious time, the sins against the Holy Ghost would not be forgiven, even then. (Read Matt. 12:22-32 and Mark 3:22-30, noting v. 30 especially.)

In Mark 10:28-30 we read: "Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." (See also Luke 18:28-30.) These disciples were not yet on Christian ground, and had Jewish hopes and aspirations, the center of all being the day of the Messiah in the age to come. Well, if they gave up things for the Messiah here, would they not be manifoldly blessed and rewarded in the age of His glorious reign? The eternal life of Mark, and everlasting life of Luke are in this connection. When we come to John's gospel we find that believers have eternal life now. Such a distinction should not confuse anyone, but should show us marks of the perfect accuracy of Scripture which keeps everything in its proper place.

5. In 1 Timothy 6:17-19 we have the rich addressed - those whom God has permitted to have earthly possessions. They were charged not to be high-minded, nor to trust in the uncertainty of

riches, but in God. They were exhorted to be "rich in good works," and ready to distribute of their possessions, and so to use this world's goods in a way to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against "the time to come." They might hoard their money, and yet lose it because it is a very uncertain thing; or they might retain it, and leave it to their posterity; but in neither case would they have gained a reward for themselves in the time that is yet to come. Not that the reward should motivate one to be liberal in giving of what God has given him; it should proceed from love to Christ, and the sense of holding all for Him; but the reward should encourage one - such giving will not be forgotten by the Lord, the righteous judge.

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