

# CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 5

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

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*A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 5, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

136 Chapters

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## Christian Truth Volume 5

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## A Reader Inquires: a Reader Inquires

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"Would it be correct to say to a sinner that he will not be judged for his sins, but only for rejecting Christ? or would it be proper to tell him that God does not raise the sin question with him, but rather only how he treats His Son?"

ANSWER: This could be said by some without intending to express anything contrary to the truth of God, but it is better to hold fast to what the Scripture says. You will never find that the Apostle Paul so preached. He pressed on men that they were sinners and needed to repent. See what he says at Athens: "God... commandeth all men every where to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained." Acts 17:30, 31.

Man is a sinner, and as such he needs to repent. When anyone, like the Philippian jailer, sees himself to be a sinner and lost, and desires to be saved, then the word for him is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts 16:3 t.

We cannot drop the sin question - it must be settled between the sinner and his Maker, or he will perish in his sins. Cornelius was told to send for Peter to hear words whereby he could be saved. What were those words? "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10:43. Notice that -being saved is connected with the remission of sins.

The crowning act of man's sin is the rejection of the Savior, the Son of God. This sin is the fatal one. No one need ever perish, for a Savior has been provided, but if He is rejected, the sinner's doom is sealed. In that sense the rejection of the Son brings the sinner into judgment, for had he accepted Him, he would never come into judgment. (Sec John 5:24.) This is probably what some persons have in mind when they make statements such as our inquirer mentions, but we should carefully avoid using phrases that are only half truths.

When the day of judgment comes, the sinner who stands there shall be judged for all his wicked words and deeds, not merely for rejecting the Son.

"God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing." Eccles. 12:14.

"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men." Rom. 2:16.

"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matt. 12:36.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." Rev. 20:12, 13.

It is to be feared that there is much shallow preaching today that does not plow up the soil and reach the conscience of the sinner. He needs to be brought into the presence of God where he sees himself in his true condition - a sinner on the road to hell. Then the good news of salvation through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ brings him peace and joy. The whole fabric of the gospel has to do with the sin question. It was this that brought the Savior to the cross, and there God has been declared righteous in saving the guilty sinner who believes.

## An Act of God: the Editor's Column

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The world recognizes that there are circumstances which arise from a higher power than any known to man. It is common practice to expressly exempt from human obligation (unless otherwise specified) any loss or failure to perform Certain duties which arises from an "act of God." It is a legal term and is used by avowed infidel and atheist, and Christian alike to cover "such an extraordinary interruption of the usual course of events that no experience, foresight, or care which might reasonably have been expected could have foreseen or guarded against it, as lightning, tempests, etc." (-Webster's International Dictionary). It is an admission, however inadvertent, that man is but a creature after all, and that there is a Supreme Being who is above him and One who does not give account of His ways.

The ingenuity of men has been called upon to guard against such acts as would produce great exigencies. That progress has been made in this direction is admitted; for instance, men can now track down a hurricane in its early stages, and with some accuracy predict its movements in advance so as to warn men at sea and on land to make all preparations for a wind of a certain expected velocity at a stated hour. They cannot stop the hurricane, but much loss of life and property has been averted by advance warnings, and such preparations as men can make. By anticipating where floods may come, and building flood control dams upstream, many floods have been prevented, although the best forethought of men is often shortsighted indeed, and proves to be inadequate. The power of wind, water, and fire is dreaded, and justifiably so, for each has proved time and again how puny man really is. They are forces that often defy every effort of men to conquer them. Even the tiny, beautiful snowflake, when accompanied by God's hosts of them, have brought all men's great works to a complete standstill, and silenced all his noises.

Men compare themselves with themselves and are not wise, but when God "bringeth the wind out of His treasures" (Psalm 135:7), and sends the "treasures of the snow" and "treasures of the hail" ( Job 38:22) upon the earth, and "prepareth rain for the earth" (Psalm 147:8), "whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy" ( Job 37:13), man appears in his relative insignificance. "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." Psalm 39:5.

There is another "act of God" which emphasizes man's finitude and narrow limits; that is, an earthquake. We know we are going to have more earthquakes, but seismologists cannot foretell when or where they will occur.

Some areas of the world have them frequently, but no spot of the earth's surface can be said to be free from the possibility of a quake, and even in the areas where they are the most common, the ablest seismologist cannot predict when they will occur, nor where the epicenter of the shake will be. Some time ago we read the statement of one seismologist who said that the nearest approach they had to being able to predict when the next earthquake will take place would be to say that the longer it has been since the last one, the closer it is to the next one.

When the earthquake shook Southern California on July 21, 1952, one of the leading universities which had installed the latest and most expensive equipment for measuring such quakes had just shut down their instruments for some adjusting. If they had known that the worst earthquake in California in 46 years would come, they surely would not have chosen that time to have the equipment out of operation.

Seismologists rate earthquake intensity by a mathematical scale with 10 as a peak. The disastrous quake of San Francisco on April 18, 1906, was rated as of 8.25 intensity; the one in Southern California on July 21, 1952, was rated as 7.5, and was said by some to have been much more energetic in continuing motion. In the mercy of God, the epicenter of the recent quake was out in or near the Mojave Desert in largely uninhabited territory; if it had been in downtown Los Angeles - the center of more than 4,000,000 population - in all probability it would have been one of the worst disasters in history for loss of life and property. God speaks and warns, but at present He is showing mercy even in judgment. As it was, a small town of 3,000 population, Tehachapi, was nearest to the epicenter, and 11 were killed there, and every structure in town was either damaged or ruined. A lesser quake 35 days later which centered near the city of Bakersfield killed 2 and injured 32, while causing property damage of \$30,000,000.

All man's bravado leaves in a second of time when God shakes the earth. When all is well and easy, some may deny that there is a God, but let God shake the earth under them and their dormant consciences suddenly become active and they give way to fear and trembling, and many cry out to God for mercy. The effect is often quite transitory and when the shock is passed people go on in forgetfulness of God as before. What a solemn verse is found in Psalm 9: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." v. 17.

The July earthquake in California brought into sharp contrast just a little of the power of God with man's greatest ability to unleash power. The United States Government has been using the Nevada desert as a proving ground for atomic weapons. Some of these explosions of man's greatest achievement have broken a few windows in the city of Las Vegas less than 100 miles away, but when God shook the earth and all man's works upon it approximately 100,000 square miles were affected. Who can measure the power that could shake such a large area? It is beyond human calculation. When the law was given, His "voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." Heb. 12:26. This is a quotation from Hag. 2:6 where it is prophesied that God will shake all things before bringing in His order, but the Spirit of God in quoting it in Hebrews says that it is a promise - a promise of judgment to prepare the way for God's Christ.

Earthquakes are often mentioned in Scripture. The first one is in 1 Kings 19. In that instance Elijah was being taught a lesson. He was thinking much of himself and of great demonstrations to prove who the Lord was. The Lord allowed him to experience a strong wind that rent the rocks, then an earthquake, and then a fire; but when all these were passed there was a still small voice. In the presence and quietness of the still small voice the Lord spoke to him. This chapter has been greatly misused, and we are told that a preacher used it for his text after the San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906, saying, "The Lord was not in the earthquake" (v. 11). Such an interpretation of the scripture is tampering with the Word of God, for God is in every earthquake, as in many, many other things, to reach men's consciences. The point in the verse is that God had

to teach Elijah that these manifestations of power were not everything, but rather God speaking in power to his soul, though in a still small voice.

There was a great earthquake in the days of Uzziah King of Judah. The people fled in that day (see Amos 1:1 and Zech. 14:5). Josephus the Jewish historian states that this happened when the king went into the temple to burn incense upon the altar of incense, which only the sons of Aaron should have done.

Whether this was so or not we cannot say, but we do know that at that time he was stricken with leprosy and remained a leper until the day of his death.

Another earthquake rent the rocks when the Lord gave up His Spirit on the cross (Matt. 27:51, 54), testifying to a great transaction having taken place; and still another great earthquake gave testimony to the power that raised Him from the dead (Matt. 28:2).

Special places have been shaken by God in marking His approval or disapproval of certain acts. In the early days of the Church when the disciples prayed "the place was shaken where they were assembled together" (Acts 4:31), thus assuring them of God's power being exercised on their behalf in the proclamation of the gospel, and their witnessing to the resurrection of Christ. Then in Acts 16 the prison where Paul and Silas were bound was shaken. This produced a great shaking in the soul of the jailer and ultimately led to his conversion through the preaching of the gospel by Paul. It also secured the release of Paul and Silas.

Earthquakes will mark the closing days of man's wickedness. When God gets ready to speak to this world that crucified His Son He will shake many things, the earth among them. "Great earthquakes shall be in divers places" (Luke 21:11), not only in California or Japan. And as terrifying as great earthquakes are, men will actually prefer them in a coming day. They will call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them "from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Rev. 6:16. How different is the account we heard of a Christian who calmly sat on his porch during a rather severe earthquake and remarked that he was glad he had a God who could shake the earth.

Christian readers, our God and Father is the One who can shake the earth, and who will shortly shake all things. May we rest quietly and confidently in His loving and wise hands, knowing that all things work His will and serve His might.

"Through waves, through clouds and storms,

God gently clears the way;

We wait His time; so shall the night

Soon end in blissful day.

"He everywhere hath sway,

And all things serve His might;

His every act pure blessing is,

His path unsullied light.

"When He makes bare His arm,  
Who shall His work withstand?  
When He His people's cause defends,  
Who then shall stay His hand?  
"We leave it to Himself  
To choose and to command,  
With wonder filled, we soon shall see  
How wise, how strong His hand! "  
We comprehend Him not,  
Yet earth and heaven tell  
God sits as sovereign on the throne  
And ruleth all things well."

## Advice on Fishing: Fishers of Men

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One day a sportsman was fishing in a Scottish Highland stream. You could see he was a sportsman by his long boots, his large basket (which was empty), and his hat covered all round with the most brilliant artificial flies. You could see he was a fisherman too by the long rod with which he kept whipping the stream. In spite of his boots, his basket, his hat, his rod, and his flies, somehow or other the fish would not bite.

Now this was all the more provoking since just opposite to him was a little ragged barefooted boy with no particular dress on him at all (at any rate, his feet and legs and head and neck were all bare), and he was using a common hazel rod. He had no hatful of flies, nor had he a large basket slung over his shoulder. But there beside him on the grass lay a row of shining fish, all of which had been caught with that little hazel rod, under the sportsman's very eyes, while the latter spent his skill in vain. The boy was leaning against a little angle of rock, behind which he was partly hidden as if ashamed to be seen, but the fisherman stood boldly on the river's brink as he at any rate had nothing to be ashamed of, except that he had caught no fish. Now he was ashamed of this -so much ashamed, indeed, that he pocketed sufficient of his pride to enable him to ask the boy how it was all the fish were on his side of the river. The reply was brief and to the point, "If you want to catch fish, you must hide yourself."

What a word this is to all fishers of men! Whether it be the great evangelist of world-wide fame, or the young believer teaching in a class, or speaking of Christ at some bedside, it is all the same. "If you want to catch fish, you must hide yourself."

All your eloquence, your skill, your attractive manner, your diligence, will not catch one fish. It must be Christ. And although men (unlike fish) may be attracted by the fishers, they are both alike in this, that the sight of the man hinders their taking the bait. It is Christ alone that can captivate the heart and win the soul, and God will own and bless the labors of the one who seeks to spread the name and fame of Jesus, and not his own.

Besides, it is by the power of God that souls are saved, and not by our skill. We need more faith in God, and less in ourselves.

## Affections to the Person of Christ

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Worldliness and earthly-mindedness have blinded the minds and hardened the hearts of Christians nowadays to an extent very few have any idea of. There are, I am persuaded, very few cases touching upon the safety and well-being of the Church of God which can be left to be judged by the mass of believers. On whom can one cast one's burden of responsibility as to the spirituality of the saints walk and conduct. In cases innumerable which have occurred I have found that the affections to the Person of Christ have not been lively enough to make Christians indignant at open insults put upon Him; and they have had neither the heart nor the mind to stand apart from that which was the expression of indifferentism to Him.

## Always Confident: Perfect Assurance

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When speaking of the assurance of salvation, the Lord's servants are often met with such answers as, "It does not do to be too sure," or, "Is it not presumption?" or, "I do not think it right to be so confident." If any who are accustomed to make such replies should read these lines, we would earnestly beseech them to weigh the passage of Scripture where the words at the head of this paper occur, and we feel assuredly they will no longer speak so foolishly. Let us quote it: "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him" (or, acceptable to Him). 2 Cor. 5:5-9.

It is the Apostle Paul who thus speaks of that which is true of Christians and he shows that all the work and blessing is of God; He is the source and author of it; it is He that wrought His people for it, and He who gave and still gives them the earnest of the Spirit. "Therefore we are always confident." What a solid foundation for our confidence to be based upon! confidence because from beginning to end it is a work of God. Man has no part in the matter. He is perfectly helpless in himself; without strength he can do nothing. But God, who has the glory in view, comes in and fits the poor, weak, human vessel for it. He takes us up in pure grace, puts away our sins, justifies us in Christ, and gives us the Spirit as the earnest of the glory to follow. "Therefore we are always confident." Well may we be. Who can frustrate the purpose, power, and work of God? No one. Satan is a vanquished foe, man is set aside in the cross, and the whole work is of God - a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). How then can the Christian be too confident? Confidence in God is that which honors Him.

"But my difficulty," says one, "is in myself; I feel I am such a poor, failing creature that I fear to be too confident." Just so, and well you may, as long as you are looking at yourself. If you wait for confidence until you cease to fail, you will have to wait a long time; indeed, until you leave this scene altogether. Confidence In God displaces self-confidence. The Apostle was always confident because he had learned to rest always in God instead of himself; and that, dear reader, is a lesson you would also do well to get perfected in.

And mark next what goes along with it - knowledge. "Knowing," he continues, "that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight)." We are confident, not hoping, nor thinking, nor feeling, but knowing. "Always confident, knowing." He was longing to be with the Lord - we should also. But how can that be if we are self-occupied and full of doubt and uncertainty? Not that he desired to die, but to be glorified, as he says in the fourth verse: "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." He knew that he might fall asleep, his spirit passing out of the body into the presence of the Lord in the unclothed state; but this is not the proper and immediate Christian hope. Christ is coming, and mortality shall he

swallowed up of life, not of death. The Christian should be looking to go up, not down; to go into glory, and not into the unclothed state. We wait "for the adoption, to wit, the redemption" (not the corruption) "of our body" (Rom. 8:23) and then in the eighth verse he confirms his statement - "We are confident, I say," etc. Not a word, you see, dear reader, to bolster you up in your up-and-down state, not the slightest ground for you to have the least bit of confidence in yourself in any way whatever, and not the vestige of an "if" or a "but" to justify a moment's lack of confidence in God as to the future. God begins, carries on, and ends His work. He saves, gives the Spirit as the earnest, and fills the soul with confidence and knowledge, removing all fear, and creates a desire in the soul too to be with Christ where He is. He would have us then "always confident." Are you?

But perhaps the mind of some of our readers reverts to another passage where the same Apostle says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." 1 Cor. 9:27. Now, dear friend, we would ask you before we say a word on this, Do you really want to understand the passage, and to get clear in your soul about it? or do you turn to it, as we fear many too often do, to bolster yourself up in a certain system of theology? If the former, we may be able through grace to truly help you, which is our desire; but if the latter, we fear it will be labor in vain as far as you are concerned. Now, whatever it may mean, the Word of God can never contradict itself, so that it cannot contain anything to lessen in the slightest degree the "always confident" of 2 Cor. 5:6-8.

To understand it you must bear in mind that the writer is addressing an assembly of Christians that was allowing varied evils in its midst - an assembly where there was loud talk but low walk - and he is endeavoring to get at their consciences, and hence applies a principle to himself which he intended to reach them. Take especial note, first of all, that he is illustrating the Christian course by a race for a prize and a fight for the mastery, saying, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." 1 Cor. 9:24-26.

Now salvation is not a prize, neither do we run a race nor fight for it. Salvation is of pure grace, and every true believer starts with it before he runs the race or enters upon the combat. The prize is additional. We run and fight because we are saved, but not to be saved or to keep saved. But there is an incorruptible crown for those who are successful. Paul had started on the course and begun the fight; so had they. He was saved, and knew it before he started, and was always confident. So here he says, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." He had no uncertainty as to the issue. Mark it well, for you will never understand this passage that troubles so many without it. But he knows that he has to run a real race and to cope with real enemies, though invisible ones. He puts all his soul into it, so to speak, keeping his body under, and bringing it into subjection, "lest," as he adds finally, "that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

"Ah! there now," you say, "there's the difficult point; what do you make of that?" Why simply that he puts it thus, as we have said, to reach the consciences of the Corinthians, whose walk and ways were bad. Many of them were indulging their bodies instead of keeping them under and bringing them into subjection - preaching to others, but not practicing - and though they came behind in no

gift, they had settled down as if there were no race, no fight, no prize, no crown. It was as though he had said, "Take you care that it is a reality with you. You may preach, but what if after all it should turn out to be a mere external thing with you, and you should be a castaway? Though I am an apostle, and though I have no uncertainty, yet I cannot afford to act as many of you are doing, lest after I have preached, I myself should be a castaway." Many a preacher, thought to be a Christian, has turned out a mere castaway. Paul had no fear whatever that he might be one. To allow it for a moment would not only contradict his "always confident," which is impossible, but many other passages of his own and others' writings. No, it was a powerful, pointed way of reaching the consciences of those whose blessing he so earnestly desired.

It is one thing, dear reader, to cast in your lot with Christians and to preach, but it is quite another to be a sinner saved by grace, running with patience the race set before us, fighting the good fight of faith, looking for the glory. By grace ye are saved, not by running or fighting; and if saved, God would have you always confident. But if any profess, whose life is a denial of their profession, the Word of God is unmistakably plain, "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 2:4. Such will surely prove to be worthless castaways. May each believer in Jesus who reads these lines be found always confident till that day.

## Glory and the Excellent Glory

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In 2 Pet. 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 Matt. 3 when Christ, at His baptism, was with the poor people confessing their sins. Here 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.

## Are the Dead Communicating?

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Spiritism [falsely called, spiritualism], it would appear, is becoming popular. Scientists who formerly were most skeptical have after a searching investigation established two facts: first, that phenomena of an objective and tangible character do really take place; and second, that these are governed by certain intelligences. The whole question is, What is the nature of these intelligences? Are they human?

A writer proceeded to show that these intelligences are not what they pretend to be. That the phenomena take place is admitted; that communications are made is not denied, but that these come from the departed is absolutely false.

We have no doubt that Satanic agencies are at work in the spiritism of today, as they unquestionably will be in the coming period of antichrist's presence (see 2 Thess. 2).

There can be no question that all that is real in spiritism is an energy of Satan. It will presently sweep apostate Christendom before it like thistle-down before the wind. Meanwhile the true Christian is safe only as he cleaves close to Christ, and yields implicit obedience to the Word of God.

## The Atoning Sufferings of Christ: Very Important Truths

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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 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 (Psalm 22 and 69).

These scriptures express something of the sufferings He endured at the hand of man. Now the question is, Were these 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 an hungered, 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 us 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 Loan [Jehovah] to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering from 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 14:7. "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 Loan [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. 16:12, 13. 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. With out 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 uttermost - 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 beside 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 severed 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 His 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 own 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 and, as a consequence, I shall never suffer that death. For me to suffer that would be death eternal, because I never could 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, just 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. 2:20). 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 apprehension 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.

## Beholding ... Are Changed: From a Letter

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What a mercy it is that we are formed by what is objective; that is, outside of ourselves. And the blessedness of it is that if progress is made we know nothing of the progress (Moses wist not that his face shone) because of the immensity of that which attracts us. It is in the beholding we are changed (2 Cor. 3). It is not by climbing the ladder of self-complacency that growth is made, but by seeing Him where He is, and meditating on His perfections as seen - those glories which attach to His Person - that we grow up to Him. Progress in divine things does not occupy us when led and taught by the Spirit, but Christ. When He is everything we feel the lowest room is our true place. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." Jas. 4:6.

What a present place of favor we have - I mean all God's beloved children. What a Father, what love, unceasing care, the Comforter with us and in us, the revelation of God's will in His Word, the opened heaven and the seated One there, the hope before us, and the finished work behind us. Well may we rejoice as Paul exhorts the saints to do: "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Phil. 4:4. We can always rejoice in Him, but our state and circumstances are another thing. We are, however, privileged to be without care, to have the peace of, God guarding our hearts and thoughts. No room left for anxiety and care.

## Bethel — the House of God: Lessons From the Life of Jacob

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The ways of God toward man, however they may vary in form in succeeding dispensations, remain the same in principle. As vividly presented in the Old Testament history, they lay hold of our hearts, and command our attention; whereas the doctrines which embody them are often but little apprehended and, alas! are readily set aside as having but little application to our daily life and walk. Besides this, there is the danger of the mind being in exercise with doctrines rather than the heart and conscience.

We need to preserve the character of the "little child" who learns at first not by doctrine, but by observation of persons and facts to which his attention is drawn. Hence the importance of the Old Testament, by which we discover how truth is coordinated, and in what manner it should affect the heart....

Jacob affords an instance of the heart's workings. He was not a "profane" man, like Esau. In his own way he wanted to be right, and he coveted earnestly the promised blessing; but in-

stead of waiting God's time, he tried to obtain it for himself, with the result that he had to leave his home, and flee to Padanaram. On his journey, God sent him a wonderful dream, speaking to him from the top of the ladder upon which the angels of God were ascending and descending, affording unmistakable evidence that God would continually minister to his needs. In the morning on awakening he called the place "Bethel," the house of God. He was made conscious of God's presence, but this was more than he could bear, and he promptly left what to him was a "dreadful" place because it was "the gate of heaven," and continued his journey alone. (Gen. 28.) In his subsequent history, it is noteworthy how he avoided Bethel. Desirous though he was of obtaining blessing as an heir of promise, he was unprepared to meet God and have to do with Him in a close personal way. But God's grace pursued him. Twenty years after he had seen the vision, while still in Padan-aram, God appeared to him, saying, "I am the God of Bethel,... arise, get thee out from this land."

He set forth on his journey to the well-remembered scene of God's gracious intervention on his behalf, where he had sworn conditionally that the Lord should be his God, and that he would render unto Him a tenth of his substance. On his way southward he got tokens that God was caring for him - especially so at Peniel where he had the most signal proof and assurance that God was with him and for him. He had only to continue his journey in the same direction to reach Bethel but, instead of so doing, he deliberately turned aside and went to Shechem. (Gen. 33.) He was still afraid of God. Unwilling to await God's time and accept His way of bringing His purposes to pass, he had sought to become possessed of the blessing before the time, and had thus lost the sweetest part of it; namely, its reception direct from God's hand as the portion bestowed by Him in His rich and free grace. Quiet subjection to God, and waiting on Him in confidence, he had not known. Hence, Bethel was still for him that "dreadful" place.

Trouble met him at Shechem. Once again God appeared to him, saying, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there." Gen. 35:1. But notice now what came out. Jacob felt that the inner life

and condition of his household was unsuitable for the "house of God," and he said, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise; and go up to Bethel." vv. 2, 3. No wonder he had so studiously avoided the "house of God." But he could not prevent God having His way with him in grace so as to bring his conscience into the light.

Who would have thought that "strange gods" would be found in Jacob's household? But so it was; and we too have to learn that our hearts are not to be trusted. Unless we are walking with God, our hearts and consciences being brought into the light, and judged there, we may find ourselves going on with all kinds of evil things, while at the same time there may be a great deal of outward earnestness, a show of piety, and a seeking after blessing.

We must not trust ourselves. Our only safety is to have everything tested by the light of God's Word, and to walk in nearness to the Lord, in humility and dependence upon Him, that we may learn His mind, know more of communion with Himself, and thus, as kept by Him, escape both the perils and the seductive influences of the scene around us.

The Lord give us to take to heart the lessons we see exemplified in Jacob.

## A Better Country

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"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, for they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." Heb. 11:13-16.

Not only were those spoken of here "strangers and pilgrims" but they "confessed" it. People sometimes wish to be religious in the heart, and not to speak of it; there is no energy of faith there. To see the world to be lost and condemned, to have our hopes in heaven - such facts must of necessity produce a proportionate result, that of making us think and act as "strangers and pilgrims" here. And it will be manifested in the whole life. The heart already gone, it remains but to set out. This evidently involves open and public profession of it; and herein is a testimony for Christ.

Who would be satisfied with the friend that owned us not when circumstances were difficult? The concealed Christian is a very bad Christian. Faith fixed on Jesus, we embrace the things we have seen afar off; we are not mindful of the country from whence we have come out; we have at heart that which is before us. Where difficulties are in the path, and the affections not set on Jesus, the world rises again in the heart (Phil. 3:7-14). Paul had not acted in a moment of excitement to repent forthwith; his heart filled with Christ, he counts all but dross and dung. Perseverance of heart marks the Christian's affections to be onward, his desires heavenly. And God is not ashamed to be called his God.

It is either the flesh, or faith; impossible that at bottom there can be a stopping halfway. The aim of the Christian must be heavenly things. The appetites, the necessities, of the new man are heavenly. Christians may be used for bettering the world, but this is not God's design. The seeking to link ourselves with the world, and the using Christianity for world-mending are earthly things. God's design is to link us with heaven. You must have heaven without the world, or the world without heaven. He who prepares the city cannot wish for us anything between the two. The "desire" of a "better country" is the desire of a nature entirely from above.

## The Bible: to Whom Does It Speak?

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If there was ever a time in which it was necessary to press upon people the importance of the study of Holy Scripture for themselves, in humble dependence upon God for guidance, it is now. The Ritualists would have us take the Bible through the church, or the Bible and the church, to take the church's meaning; for, say they, if you do not you will have all sorts of new sects arising through individuals taking their own meaning from Scripture.

Even if we allowed the principle that the church teaches, we should first have to settle what church's interpretation we are to receive - is it the Roman, Greek, Anglican, or what? Or where, in this quagmire of human opinions, is the Christian to find a divine and solid foundation for faith? But Scripture itself does not allow this principle of church authority as teacher; on the contrary, it is the Church which is taught.

The Scripture was written by inspired men, vessels chosen and fitted by God for the purpose, and did not come from any church. Nearly all the New Testament writings were addressed to the

people, to the assemblies of Christians and, in some cases, it is expressly said that they were to be read "unto all the holy brethren," or that, as in Colossians, "When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."

Even in the ordinary affairs of life the principle of direct responsibility is admitted. If the father of a family goes abroad and sends letters to his children for their instruction and guidance, the persons who carry these letters would have no right to say, You must take our interpretation; you must understand these letters in the sense we give; if you do not, you • will all take different ideas of your own from them. To so act would be to interfere with the authority of the writer to speak directly to his children and in a manner suited to them, and to meddle with the right of those children to be guided by his words.

The Scripture is a revelation from God to man, and surely He has perfect wisdom; He knows how to speak in a way suited to the needs of all. To say He does not would be blasphemy. If Christians take a wrong meaning out of the Bible, who is to blame? Certainly not the Author of the Book, but themselves. If we bring our own preconceived notions to the Scripture, and then try to make it square with our ideas, we cannot expect divine guidance; but if, feeling our own need of wisdom, we humbly ask of God, we shall find that He "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." The Apostle Peter tells those to whom he wrote, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby"; and Timothy from a child had known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation, and to fully equip the man of God to all good works.

We have a perfect example in our Lord Himself; He met and overcame Satan with "It is written," quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures. The apostles themselves, when about to leave the churches they had watched over with such care, always cast the faithful over on that unfailing

safeguard in a day of departure from the faith once delivered to the saints - the Scriptures. Thus Paul, when addressing the Ephesian elders for the last time, does not commend them to a church for wisdom, or a line of successors, but to God and the word of His grace; and the Apostle John, after warning his beloved children in the faith of the evil that was coming in, says, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning." New doctrines were continually springing up, but the true foundation for faith is in what they had heard from the beginning; that is, for us, the written Word of God. So Peter says he would endeavor that, after his decease, they would have these things always in remembrance; this we have today in the inspired epistles. In Revelation, the last voice of inspiration, he who has an ear to hear is told to hear (not the Church, but) what the Spirit saith to the churches; this is contained in the Scriptures.

To look for the truth in the agreement of the various churches of Christendom, or in what people call the unanimous consent of the Fathers, would be a vain and fruitless task, for the doctrines in which the leading churches really agree are not many; and even if they were, their agreement is no guarantee of truth. As for the unanimity of the Fathers, it exists only in people's imagination. If the Bible be an inspired revelation from God - and no one can deny that it is, without taking infidel ground - then it must contain the truth pure and undiluted, adapted to those to whom it comes; and it must carry divine authority, as the voice of God to

the soul. This, no human writing can claim. That it is all that has been said, and much more, is an immense blessing; for in it the simple and upright Christian has an all-sufficient light and guide in the darkest and most difficult times, and in days when truth once held is being given up in exchange for medieval speculations.

## Boasting

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If we could be saved by the works of the law, it is manifest we should have very good reason to boast. Everyone who went to heaven on the ground of his own works would be singing, Worthy am I; and till he got there it would be clearly presumption on his part to say he was sure of being saved.

But it is not presumption for those who believe in Jesus to say they are saved. God says they are, and their salvation is due entirely to the grace of God through faith, and that, as Scripture says, excludes boasting. Yes, and more than that, God will have no discord in heaven. There will be no one there who will deserve to be there; and so all the song shall be: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Rev. 1:5, 6.

It is not presumption then to say that He has washed me from my sins in His own blood. It is the very thing that shuts out presumption, that leads our hearts away from ourselves and our own doings to Jesus and what He has done, there to make our boast in Him and in His finished work.

"Forever be the glory given

To Thee, O Lamb of God!

Our every joy on earth, in heaven,

We owe it to Thy blood."

## Certain of Nothing but Uncertainty: Infidelity

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Infidelity as a principle cannot be conquered. The infidel may through grace become a true believer; but infidelity, which is merely unbelief in a full stage of development, is ineradicable here; it will be unknown in hell. Unbelief is a weed that is indigenous to the heart, and is one of the sad fruits of an evil soil - the flesh - that cannot produce anything good.

Infidelity may assume various forms: it may be ignorant and gross, or it may be cultivated and religious, in which form its danger is multiplied tenfold; and to this we are increasingly exposed today. An unsanctified heart will find pleasure in employing the vast stores of learning that are within reach nowadays to the destruction of the truth of revelation. The Bible becomes the chief point of attack, and the clever infidel brain is unwearied in its endeavor to overthrow its authority and to question its truth. Such is the sad, though not surprising, effect of education.

But if infidelity cannot be conquered, it may be and is completely answered. It would be strange if sin of any kind could not be met and silenced.

What is infidelity? It is aberration from the truth, the denial of the truth. It is therefore negative both in origin and end; it starts with negation, and concludes with the same; it questions everything, but it supplies nothing; it takes, if possible, but it does not give; it dwells amid darkness and doubt while its unhappy admirers feel certain of nothing but their own uncertainty. How could it be otherwise? Now if infidelity be to err from the truth, it is clear that the truth meets, exposes, and answers all error, just as disease, being a derangement of bodily soundness, is perfectly answered by a healthy state. Obtain health and disease flies away; establish the truth and there is no place for error. It is answered.

I was struck lately by the statement of a young man who, in the course of his daily business, is thrown much into the company of professed infidels. He said that some years ago, while a young Christian, he found their questions difficult, and himself laid open to many intellectual perplexities that he could not meet.

Just at that time he heard a preacher say that the best answer to infidelity is uncompromising decision for Christ. This short but pregnant sentence found a deep place in his soul, and opened out to him a new line of testimony against unbelief. A life of uncompromising decision for the truth he now saw was the one grand and perfect answer to infidelity. It may not conquer the principle, but the patient, faithful, Christ like life that humbly seeks to maintain the truth is evidently of much greater value as a witness than argument, or evidences, or miracles, or any outward signs.

Argument appeals only to the brain; signs and wonders speak to the eye; but in the life of the true Christian - that beautiful life of self-denial, of holiness, of love, of kindness, and of truth - the life of Christ - there is that which speaks to the conscience, and which reaches therefore a far deeper seat of existence than anything else.

"How came you to be converted?" I once said to a young doctor.

"Just by seeing the lives of So and-so and So-and-so," he replied.

Yes, "the lives." Ah! that is the need of the day; the deep, crying need of the day. How effectually, alas! can the infidel point to many a Christian and say, If that is Christianity, none of it for me! It may be no real excuse for him, yet it is a stumbling block, and a thousand shames to him who causes offense.

Did the ways of Christ stumble anyone? Were they crooked or deceitful or worldly or grasping? Were they not pure and holy and honest and truthful? Could any point to Him and find out inconsistency? Never. "I am absolutely, altogether, what I speak also to you" ( John 13:25; W. Kelly). Himself and His ways were the same - absolute harmony - so that a reviling thief at the point of death, won by the discovery of that harmony, could raise his solitary voice in opposition to the universal roar of condemnation, and declare that "this man hath done nothing amiss." It was His life, His being what He said that, speaking after men, converted this poor dying malefactor; and it is Christ reproduced in His people, and seen over again in our ways, the fair fruit of His own grace, uncompromising decision for Him, that alone answers infidelity.

Preaching, argumentation, etc., may fill their place, but life - the life of Christ seen in us - that only avails.

## China and Communism: the Editor's Column

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Word reaching us from China confirms our fears that the enemy has been preparing to close the door to the gospel of God in that land. For a time it was thought by many that the communist revolution in China was not after the pattern of Russian atheistic communism but was merely a matter of a Chinese leader bringing about certain land reforms.

Mao Tse-tung who is now the established dictator over 460,000,000 people was formerly called a "harmless agrarian reformer," but now is a proven communist after the order of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. To all who embrace this ideology, religious beliefs are deeply resented as being "profoundly alien" to their system, therefore they must be uprooted and exterminated as quickly as possible. This program of elimination is now being implemented, as many general reports have indicated, and it is confirmed in private letters that have come to us, from which we will quote.

Writing from the interior, a native Chinese Christian says, "Conditions here are all changed. There is nothing now of the 'four freedoms.'" He commented that the comfort he and other Christians had was in the knowledge of Him who is the same yesterday, today, and to the ages to come, and that their joy was in the truth of Heb. 10:37 - "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." He has been a faithful and devoted worker preaching the gospel in the open air as he had opportunity, but now he is limited to speaking privately to souls.

From Hong Kong comes this word: "From various parts of China we get sad news... the enemy of souls is now throwing off all disguise and showing himself as a 'roaring lion.' How sweet to know that in spite of all that is happening the Lord's people are ever the objects of His love and care, and even now by faith they know that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in them."

Again quoting: "The news from has caused us sorrow as we learned that the brethren had to give up the meetings in -and have not been able to find any other place to meet. The communists also hinder the meetings by holding special gatherings on the Lord's day to which people are forced to go, with severe penalties for absenting themselves. This is an example of what they call 'liberation.' "

Word from Shanghai indicates a tightening of things there as far as the activities and Movements of Christian workers are concerned. It is only a step now until the power of the ungodly shall have closed the door of China to all outside efforts to reach the people with the gospel, and restricted the efforts of native Christians almost to the vanishing point. We need to remember, however, that "the word of God is not bound," and it is possible that in spite of restrictions and persecutions, yes, even of martyrdom, souls will be brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is able to work regardless of all the efforts of man and Satan.

There is another and a solemn side to all this. When nations or individuals deliberately refuse the light which God sends and prefer darkness, they are in danger of having the light withdrawn and of being given over to judicial blindness. China itself is a striking example of this, for this is not the

first time that China has turned its back upon the true light. The gospel reached China very early. Speaking of this, one writer says, "the nominal power of Christianity... ruled over known Africa, filled Asia, and was almost the established religion of China... in the 7th century." Is it any wonder that the blackness of pagan night settled over that populous land for well over a thousand years? China had not the gospel because she did not want it, and now after a century of efforts to reach her multitudes with it again the door is being closed.

It is sobering to reflect that so much of the world that had the gospel early in this era has given it up and been given over to a lie of the devil. Think of all Northern Africa, the Middle East, and the rest of Asia. Where the gospel and the truth of God once was at least nominally accepted there are now over 300,000,000 Followers of the false prophet Mohammed. If we consider Europe, Africa, and Asia, we must say that Christianity has receded to smaller limits than in the early centuries.

And what about Western Europe and the Americas? The march of materialism, modernism, infidelity, and outright atheism has gained momentum here also. The last days described in 2 Timothy are here - these specially favored lands are also giving up the real truth of God, the Christ of God. It is now vividly apparent that it is in general but "a form of godliness," while "denying the power thereof." Men are lovers of self, and lovers of pleasure rather (so the 4th verse of 2 Tim. 3 should read, for it is not a question of degree but rather one of choice) than lovers of God.

If China lapsed into heathen darkness after rejecting the gospel in the 7th century, and is now going into atheism while refusing the true light in the 20th century, what shall be the end of these so-called Christian nations where the real fabric of Christianity is being discarded for a sham? 2 Thess. 2 gives the answer. God in His righteous government is going to send such strong delusion that those who have rejected and despised His grace will believe Satan's lie, "that they all might be damned who believed not the truth." God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish. He has waited in patience and lingering grace almost 2000 years since they cast His beloved Son out of this world, and during that time has sent His message of pardon and peace through many messengers, but He is "not mocked." The time is coming apace when the true believers shall be taken out of this scene and then all the power and signs and lying wonders which shall deceive men shall be turned loose. Even now we see signs of these things. Who are they that are going after the false cults which deny the Person and work of our blessed Lord and Redeemer? not those who were once infidels and atheists, but generally those who once professed an orthodox creed.

Christian reader, ours is a blessed hope, soon to be realized, but let us be awake as to what is coming and warn men to flee from the wrath to come.

## Christ on the Cross

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Everything in the beginning of this psalm is letting down, and at the end there is everything lifting up, It is full of suffering and joy, but the former chiefly. The Person standing before us here is distinctly the Lord Jesus. There is a difference between this psalm and what we have in Isa. 53 and in the gospels. In Isaiah we have the blessed Lord as a Lamb set before us, but it is taken up with the special object of showing the different feelings of the persons who had to do with Him; some were cleaving to Him, others turning away from Him.

In the gospels we have the historical fact of His sufferings, and in each there is something distinctive connected with the narrative. In Matthew the Lord is connected with Israel as the seed of Abraham; and there is the quotation from this psalm, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" when He was on the cross. In Mark the Lord Jesus is set forth as the servant, and the same words are quoted. Luke takes Him up as the Son of man, and this is not quoted. There is peculiar repose in John, and there we have the Lord more in His divine character. Finding the quotation from this psalm in Matthew and in Mark, and not in the other gospels, seems to give a clue to the character of Christ's sufferings as the heir of promise, and as the faithful servant in the hour of suffering.

In the psalm it is the sufferings themselves that are shown; you see there the inward feelings, the deep tide of woe that rolled in on His soul. The heading of the psalm has a meaning - "The hind of the morning" (see margin). The hinds go forth in their timidity in the morning - the harbingers of light, but disappearing as soon as day breaks. If anywhere in the Old Testament light breaks out, we have it in this psalm.

In the gospels we have everything that was done to insult our blessed Lord; but that was not the bitterest part of His sufferings; and all that He suffered from men would only leave the question of sin untouched as regards God and one's own conscience. Sin has been committed before the infinite God; whoever has been guilty of it is obnoxious to His wrath. Wherever there has been sin there must be judgment. If I look into Scripture I find the character of God is perfect holiness. If He who is perfectly holy has to do with the sinner, what must be the consequence? Into however small a compass I bring my sin, it has been done against an infinite God.

Where do we see what sin is? Is it in the ungodly high priest who blasphemed the Son of God? Was it in the Gentile monarch who sanctioned the crucifixion? No; it was when God's judgment was poured on Him for man's sin. He stood as the sin bearer, and it is there only we get the true measure of sin. When there "made... sin for us," He had not one single ray of light from God to strengthen him. He represented sin before God, and the sustenance He had - always had - from God now ceased to flow. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"...

The word "Eloi," in the quotation is expressive of nearness - "My God." It is not Hebrew, but Syriac. This expression coming forth to Him who was always so near has deep force in it; and the moment in which He could be forsaken of God was this, when He was taking our sins upon Him. He was

always in the full sunshine of God's favor, for He was holy. Christ could have been no victim if He had not been holy and separate from sinners. Nothing shows the perfect purity and holiness of the Lord like this psalm. A Jewish rabbi has called it a psalm of repining. True indeed there was a deep agony of soul when He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? why art Thou so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?" But almost immediately afterward He vindicates God: "But Thou art holy."... He links Himself with Israel (v. 6) - "I am a worm"; that is, "I am in the place of a sin offering. I am a worm and no man - unworthy of the slightest notice or regard. Thou oughtest to turn away from Me. Thy holiness requires it." You must have some measure with regard to sin. What is your measure? From the buddings of it in the garden of Eden to the last heading of it up in the man of sin there is no divine measure of sin but on the cross. If we think of sin anywhere else but here, we get a human measure according to the circumstances...

The first Adam was no person to do with God. How could he? What was he to settle with God about sin? He could not, but Christ could; and He has settled it, and there is no fear now of God saying to a poor sinner who believes, "No; you must go and taste the sufferings which He bore on the cross." It was God's Lamb who suffered there, and it was to carry out the idea of mercy in the divine mind that He came: "Lo, I come... to do Thy will, O God."

When we look at this force of the first verse, what sort of sanction does it cast upon sin in a disciple? Do you talk of a little sin? the sin in your members little? See what Christ suffered for it. Nothing will make the disciple, the servant, so anxious to be free from sin as seeing what the judgment of it was now upon the cross. There is no such thing as little sin to the child of God who has this measure. Everything in yourselves, in your family circles, everything around you, ought to be brought into judgment, the sentence of death passed upon it: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:24.

The great thing in the present day is to learn that grand principle - "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." Not only sins in the general, but sin, has been judged in the cross of Christ; and if God is to show forth His holiness most efficiently, it is in the forgiveness of the poor sinner through this judgment which has been passed upon Christ rather than in the final condemnation of the sinner. Our hearts little understand what He bore in that hour. There is not room in our minds for more than a certain quantity of sorrow; but what another would not have felt, He gathered up and felt perfectly.

## Christ the Life: an Address

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The true God is a God of active love. Scripture allows no such thing as God not caring for what is going on. But you say, Does He not allow evil? Certainly; He let angels and men fall. but this in both was the fault of the creature only.

Have you not all known at some time or other of your life a season when you resolved to repent and to do good? How has it turned out? Did you succeed? or have you not proved that you are bad, and can do no good thing? How comes this? Did God make man so? God made the earth and the race without one evil in either; God pronounced everything to be very good; and evil would have been kept out if man had looked to God. But man fell; and since, "the world by wisdom knew not God."

The wisdom of the world does not want God. Man wants his own way and will, whereas the glory of one that knows God is to do His will.

The Bible read in faith explains not merely how evil spoiled all but how Jesus came as the way, the truth, and the life. and how He justifies God in receiving poor sinners. Grace alone can meet the need; and as He came in love to win us, so He died in the fullness of love to give us a purged conscience that, so reconciled to God, we might worship and serve Him. If He had left man in rebellion, it would have been a strange proof of love. Where would be grace in giving man food and all things necessary for this life and then letting him perish forever at last? No; He gave His Son that the believer should not perish.

The very least thing that God made bears the stamp of His hand; and not only so, but of His mind, of His beneficent goodness. From the first, God looked into man's condition and graciously met it all, unsought and unexpected, in His grace. He sent His Son, His well-beloved, His only begotten, the One who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. This is the One God gave for your salvation.

God has done what is far better than slurring over your sins; He spared not His own Son. And mark the manner of it. The Son became man, the obedient One, the only man who never sought to do His own will. Where was there ever such a sight, such a reality, before? He could say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." The very idea of such obedience was as far from every heart till Jesus came, as was God's love to lost sinners. Nor this only. Jesus, when asked "Who art Thou?" could answer, "Absolutely what also I say to you" ( John 8:25; W. Kelly Trans.). Who could ever say this but One? Jesus was always just what He also said. Blessed truth, and how suited for God and for man! He Himself was the truth, the perfect truth, sent down to poor sin-blinded man; so that he has the truth, not only detailed in a book, but embodied in a Person, and this a man in the world tried as nobody ever was. It is everywhere the same truth, and all is perfect harmony with the utmost variety. No doubt there are shades of distinction in many different books of the Bible, but it is surely our ignorance when we find them irreconcilable.

The mere handiwork of God is beyond the wisest of men, and the wisest are precisely those who are most ready to acknowledge their ignorance. The more men really know, the more deeply they feel and own how little they know. Just so with the Word of God. What are difficulties to me may not be so to someone more spiritual; and when by faith I see more clearly, the difficulties not only vanish but turn into the strongest confirmation of revealed truth. One Person puts everything into its proper place - Christ. If He were not God, He could not bring into relation with God; if not a man, He could have no point of contact with me. Both are necessary for His work. It is He who says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Man feels his weakness, his unworthiness, his unfaithfulness, when he judges himself before God. What life is this that Jesus is? what life did He manifest? Was it the life of Adam? Adam, we read, was made a living soul, but who and what is Christ? A quickening Spirit. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." Was it of angels? No; of men. It was not merely for Israel; the pride of the Jew did not like such grace.

Let us go back to a Sabbath day at Nazareth when our Lord went into the synagogue, and the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him, and He read those blessed words of chapter 61, "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon Me, because Jehovah hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor," etc. (W. Kelly Trans.). He declared that this prophecy was that day fulfilled in their ears, stopping short in the middle of our verse 2, the point then accomplishing, as distinct from the future "day of vengeance of our God"; for when He had read so far, He closed the book and sat down, with words of grace to all. Did He speak the truth? A great deal turns on this for our souls. Was He really the One foretold by the Spirit of Jehovah, the One that God the Father had sealed? If so, our salvation turns on Him.

He went down into death to bear the judgment of every one that believes on Him. Was not this infinite love? Yes; but it was more -it was righteousness. It was not by power that He met the judgment due to sinners; it was by suffering. He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. This explains the way, certainty, and fullness of salvation, which would all be a myth if He were not God as well as man. There is nothing that binds all the truth together if He be not Emmanuel, God with us.

"In this was manifested the love of God." Is it because He gave the law? No; for this brought in nothing but condemnation on guilty man. Although the law was in itself righteous, at best it made men feel their state. Love was "because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him," and this brings out the glory of His Person. He was the Son of God, above, outside, and beyond all else, both the incarnate and the Creator, the eternal Word of God; and the Father would have it known. It was necessary that the testimony should go forth if man was to live Godward and be blessed. And what was the purpose for which this only begotten Son was sent? "That we might live through Him."

Adam only transmitted his own fallen nature, but in Christ we have One who only did His Father's will, and He is a life-giving Spirit - the Head of a new family. Those who look thus to Him, live. God declares that whosoever believes in Him has

everlasting life, and shall be saved. What grace! And this is the sure but the only way. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

He, the Eternal Life, came to die atoningly; He became a man in order that He might die for our sins. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He became a man, not only that I might partake of this life, eternal life in Him, but that He might die to take away my sins. It is God's testimony about His Son; it is His declaration of Himself, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Life is given me now in this world that I may live the life of Christ, and not according to my own old life.

The moment we have life in Christ, we have a divine sense of our sins as hateful and intolerable. You know that all you have been doing has its spring in self, in nature. But if you receive the new life, you have also in Him the efficacy of His death to meet your sins, and this is salvation. It is sad shortcoming to preach only the death and not also the life of Christ, to be satisfied with merely showing how sins may be forgiven by the blood, without a word about life in Him. It looks like man taking only what man wants, the negative relief of what clears conscience, not the positive devotedness to God. But this is not enough for the saint, still less for the glory of God. We cannot have part of the blessing, but a whole Christ. God's will is that every believer should live in and of this new life; that is, the life of every soul who is born again. God is better to him than his own thoughts. The truth is that it is Christ, and not his own notions, or even conscience, that he must rest on by faith. Endued with natural life as a son of Adam, the believer has just as truly a new divine life in Christ. Is it possible to lose this new life? It is eternal life. What does "eternal" mean? But it is possible and easy to lose the joy of this life.

It is of all moment for a believer to distrust himself, but it is wrong to God and His Word, as well as weakness to self, to doubt His faithfulness, or that Christ's life does not stand forever. If the new life in any way depended on himself, he must soon fall away into irreparable ruin. People talk of "the perseverance of the saints" as if it were they who held fast, whereas it is really they who are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." It is not then my perseverance, but divine power, that keeps me through faith.

This is the word that I would leave with you. How plain it is that the whole practical walk of believers flows from life in Christ, and is based for their peace on the blessed fact that they have been brought to God. The death of Christ takes away my guilt and bonds, but what is to be the spring of new life? How am I to mortify my old life? You may tell the old man to die, but it does not wish to die. God declares that He has given me, if a believer, another nature - new life in Christ. Nicodemus had to learn that he needed to be born afresh, not only to hear what Jesus had to teach. You may be sure that when a soul really goes to God for its wants, it always receives through the Lord Jesus; whenever a soul asks in faith, God fails not to give. Grace never sends away empty.

Where is the man who looked to Christ and did not find Him? Does He not say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"? He is the only way of deliverance from all danger, evil, and sin; His blood, if you believe, brings you now to God without a stain upon you. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." If you have Him, you have life in Him. Mere nature is incapable of pleasing God. Faith is the means of life, pardon, peace, strength, everything for the needy; and faith lays hold of what God says and does and gives in Christ, and it is the Spirit of truth which produces faith by our hearing the Word. Thus we see the importance of the Spirit applying the Word to our souls. But all-important as the Word and the Spirit are, neither could avail for the soul without Christ for life, and Christ's death to take away our sins.

## Christian and His Livelihood: One Who Had Great Opportunities

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Unquestionably many a Christian is called to pass through this world, earning bread for himself and his family. And it is well that it should be so. Few of us can bear not to be occupied thus. Nor is there any reason why our blessed Lord should not be served thus with all the heart, why there should not be a true and energetic and affectionate service rendered to His name while the hands thus provide (whether for the family or for individual need) what little is required here below. But then the believer does it simply as a bread trade - nothing more. The moment you give it the dignity of a profession, and regard it as something of honor in the world, you are lost to the testimony of Christ on high. I do not deny that the grace of God may call persons actively engaged in that which is highly esteemed among men. You have known, of course, of men thus called of God, while they were entering on or engaged in that which the natural heart values. And you may have seen some under such circumstances exhibit very great simplicity there. I am not saying now that it is wrong to have what men call a profession; I am using the heavenly glory of Christ to judge the spirit in which all that is in the world is ordered; and I do warn you against the vain glory of men in these things - the desire and hankering after earthly distinction, the valuing of things for self and family - carried away in our thoughts and feelings by that which the world thinks of them.

As Christ's hour was not yet come, so neither is ours. If we are His, we have nothing to do with anything, even the pettiest shred, of this world's glory. Be assured, it is only a patch of dishonor for the child of God now. It matters little what the world's prize may be. Why should we want it? Are not all things ours? Shall we not judge the world -aye, angels? I do not dwell on the fact that these present objects so often bear the very stamp of their own insignificance and worthlessness upon them, that their sages confess that the good is in the chase, not in the game.

Who does not know that even a "ribbon" is enough reward for roe men's lifelong exertions! These otherwise are sensible men.

Suffer me then to press the importance to the Christian of watching against the world, and of looking to Christ on high in taking up whatever he does, whether for himself or for his children. I do not mean anything so preposterous as that Christianity calls on all believers to seek one dead level of occupation, or that there is any faith in one's abandoning the circumstances in which one is called, if one can abide therein with God, or in seeking an occupation that is entirely unsuitable. This I do not call faith, but folly. But giving full weight to all this, let me press, that if anything, no matter what it may be, is to be done day by day, whether it be making a shoe or making a deed, there is but one worthy motive for the Christian - doing all to the Lord. If assured that we are doing His will, we can do either the one or the other with a good conscience and a happy heart. The ruinous thing for the Christian is to forget that we are here to do God's will, and to be witnesses of a rejected Christ glorified in heaven.

But what is the world's greatest desire? Pushing forward, doing something great; and what we today achieve made a stepping-stone for something more tomorrow. All this is thoroughly a denial of the Christian's place, and proves that the heart's desire is in the current of the world. It may be

natural for a man to wish to be something easier and greater in the earth; but, beloved. where is the heart's allegiance to Christ? Is it so that after all one prefers the first Adam to Christ? This is really the question: "Do I value most the first Adam or the Last?" If my heart is given to the second Man, am I not to prove it in what I do every day? Is the honor of Christ only for the Lord's day? Surely this is not fealty to our Chief! Have you then been called by the grace of God to have His Son revealed in you while in a position which the world counts mean and dishonorable? Be it so. What more admirable opportunity for the faith which judges by Christ in glory whether you can thus abide with God? I do not ask you to follow this man or that, but to search the Word of God, and judge how far in your position you can honor Christ as He is. For are we not to be His epistle, known and read of all men? Is it not thus that the rivers of living water flow from Him out of us? Believe me, there is nothing of Christ in clutching what one has got, upholding one's rights and dignities, even if ever so, real in the world's eyes, and resenting every inroad and liberty in an age which slights authority. Quite as little of Christ is there in him of low degree who keenly seizes opportunities to urge his way steadily forward to what he values in this world. On the other hand, whether you are high or low, as men speak, you have an opportunity of approving what you think of Christ. Whatever the trial may be, it is but a little offering to show what Christ is in our eyes.

But for guidance there is no criterion but God's Word. Vain and foolish is our wisdom in such things; it is a question of the will of the Lord. Everything turns upon this. The whole matter for Christian conscience, no matter what the position of the believer may be, comes to this, that each of us has an opportunity of doing His will, of being His servant, of showing that we value Him infinitely above the world. My blessing is, no matter what the Lord gives me to do, therein to be content. Of the circumstances which are best for His glory, and for me His servant here below, He is the only good judge. Let me value them simply as an opportunity of setting forth His praise, prizing most of all what the world hates. As to any occupation, I must repeat, that high or low in men's eyes, it should be in mine nothing but a bread trade. Undoubtedly the world dislikes this. What! an honorable profession only a bread trade? Exactly so; a crucified Savior now in glory makes short work of the world and all that is in it. Take an example. I am going to work as a shoemaker. Is it my aim to be the best shoemaker in the city? Suppose me a doctor; do I covet the largest practice in the city? Is there anything of Christ in these wishes? Is this practically to own the glorified Jesus? Am I really taking up my work from Him, and doing it for Him? Our hearts know well, if the Lord actually gave us anything to do for Him, how love would express itself in doing the work well. Far be the thought that Christians should count it a virtue to be loose and negligent in the way they discharge their business! Certainly there is nothing that becomes a man, not to speak of a saint, in being a sloven. The point of faith, whatever we may have to do, is this - that, be it a little thing or the greatest, it is all done for Him.

Thus we testify, even in our daily conversation, too, that we are not living to self or the world, but to Him who died and rose; and we shall surely have the power of the Spirit with us in all. Sweet testimony, though in the otherwise perishable things which pertain to this world; but it is a testimony which shall not pass away. We are but passing through a strange land; our home is with Christ; but we are where the Lord has called and put us for the present. Here we stay as long as He bids us work for Him; we journey at the commandment of the Lord; at the commandment of the Lord we abide. And so it is we are for Him to dispose of. We are in the wilderness; but meanwhile, instead of only drinking of a rock outside, we have a well within; yea, rivers of water flow out of us.

It is the joy of Jesus reproducing itself here below - the power of the Spirit of

God giving the heart now its present delight in Him above. There is the abounding sense that we belong to Him, who is there, now. All the glory of this world is judged as the meanest trash - as only the delusive tinsel of the devil to amuse a judged and perishing world.

Beloved, I would ask how far your souls are seeking this, and this only. I would ask myself the same thing. I desire grace from God that none of the truth which He is pleased to bring before us may degenerate into words of barren knowledge. Pardon me if I feel that none have to watch against this danger so much as ourselves. The mercy of God has been awakening His children, has called, or rather recalled, them to this truth, and much more - to the faith that was once delivered to the saints. It is an immense blessing, but along with it is the responsibility and the danger. Who are most exposed to losing it and of becoming its bitter foes? Those who, having known truth like this, cease to live in it and to love it. How can it be lived in unless Christ and not self be the object of our souls? Substitute for Him any thought of our ease or reputation, and all is defiled, all becomes polluted in its very spring. The Lord only knows what might be the end of such folly, save only for the grace of God which, as it took us up when there was not one right affection toward Him, and maintained us despite all our wretchedness, so can intercept the full results of our unfaithfulness and ingratitude. That blessed God who has Christ before Him, and has now the glorifying of Him by us in hand, does at the same time allow a sufficient play of moral responsibility in proof of what unbelief does even with a saint. But He can and does restore. May we count on His grace to keep us as well as restore, while discerning His judgment of things and persons, and treating unsparingly all that which slights His Word and takes advantage of grace to deny the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord snake and keep us lowly! May He so give us to see Himself in glory that all which is of this world may be ever judged in our eyes as awaiting only the hour of the harvest and of the vintage which is yet to come. Our joy is come in His glorification meanwhile, and in the Holy Ghost given to us before that hour. Jesus we know in heavenly glory, and that He has already sent down the Holy Ghost to bring us into the present power of glory. May we be vessels of His testimony; it may be needing to be broken that the rivers may flow out the more freely, but nevertheless channels through which the rivers of living water flow, to the praise of His own grace and glory!

## Christian Civilization: an Anomaly

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Christianity exists. It is beneficial to man. It commends itself to men's consciences as divine. The legislator, the philanthropist, the moralist, alike appeal to it as owning its value and claiming its help. As a fact, that portion of the habitable world which professes Christianity is the most intelligent, the most active, the most civilized. "Christian civilization" is the compendious expression by which the leading minds of the day present the object which is before them. It is undeniable that the advantages of those who are born and brought up where Christianity is the professed religion are "much every way." If to the Jews it was a great privilege to have the "oracles of God" committed to them, what must it be to be entrusted not only with the same oracles, but with the further history of Him to whom those oracles pointed, and the very oracles He Himself uttered?

The Apostle denied not, but most strongly asserted the privileges of the Jews, but he would not allow them to plead the privilege of their "light" as a cover for their sins. "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?" The "Christian nations" may now also boast of their light, and of their true knowledge of God. They may point to themselves and their institutions as examples of the advantage of "the form of knowledge and of the truth" in the gospel. What then? Shall they turn the grace of God into lasciviousness? making the knowledge of it a cloak for their own willfulness. Shall they deny "the Lord that bought them," as if they were their own and could do as they liked? Shall they pretend to a pure spiritual worship, and present a system of ordinances?

Men derived light from the revelation of Jesus, and used their derived light to turn their backs on Him who is essentially "the Light." A result has been produced, and is being produced, from this borrowed light; and let the Scripture of truth tell us what that result is in the judgment of God. "And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God." Rev. 14:18, 19.

It is readily acknowledged that war, pestilence, famine, blasting, mildew, and the caterpillar, are the sore judgments of God. But the sorest of all judgments is unperceived, the peaceful ripening of the grapes of the vine of the earth. It is when men say, "Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them." It will be in the moment of their rejoicing in the attainment of their object that judgment will come on them.

## Christian Life: Part 1

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The epistle to the Philippians gives us very little doctrine (doctrine being just alluded to in chapter 3); but it does give us in a remarkable manner the experience of Christian life in the power of the Holy Ghost.

It is full of blessing in that character - the life above seen down here in a man through the power of the Spirit of God. So much is this the case that the very word "sin" is not found in it.

When justification and righteousness are spoken of, it is not in contrast with sin, but in contrast with human and legal righteousness. The flesh was there. At the very time Paul wrote the epistle he had got the thorn in the flesh to prevent its acting, but it shows us one rising above the flesh and all hindrances, that Christ might be magnified in him. Whether to live or die, he did not know; he would have liked to be gone but in love to the Church he says, Better for you if I remain; and so, counting on Christ and knowing that it is better, he knows he will remain. He knows how to abound and how to suffer need; he is pressing toward the mark for the prize - it is the only thing he has to do.

The graciousness of a Christian is in chapter 2, the energy in chapter 3, the absence of care in chapter 4, but it is all by the power of the Spirit of God. It is well for us to lay it to heart; we are the epistle of Christ known and read of all men - an epistle written not in stone but in the fleshy tables of the heart. We are set as Christians to be letters of recommendation of Christ before the world. Yet it gives us the fullest and most blessed confidence toward God if we take that ground, for if we are in the presence of the world for God, Christ is in the presence of God for us. His work has perfectly settled that question, and He is every moment appearing in the presence of God for us.

We are loved as He is loved; in every way in which we can look at it, all is a fixed settled thing according to the counsels of God in grace; it is in a poor earthen vessel, but our relationship is settled. All that belonged to the old man is cleared away, and all that belongs to Christ, the new Man, is our positive portion. Not only are our debts paid, but we are to be conformed to the image of His Son, and He has obtained for us the glory which is His own. "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them." He has given Himself on the cross to meet what we were, and He has obtained for us all that He has. This is the way Christ gives - not as the world. If the world gives, they have it not any longer, but Christ never gives in that way - never gives away, but brings us into all He has. If I light up one candle by another, I lose nothing of the first; and such is the way He gives. I speak of blessed principles. "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them." He became a man on purpose to bring us as men into the same glory as Himself. That relationship we are brought into already. "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." If I look at righteousness and holiness, I am as He is; if at the Son, I am before the Father as a son; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the heavenly.

The work that entitles us to that is absolutely and totally finished. The Spirit makes us first feel our need in order to our possessing it, but the work is finished.

In order to get our path clear, we must see where He has brought us. I cannot expect anyone to behave as my child if he is not my child; you must be in a place before you can have the conduct suited to that place, or be under the obligations which belong to it; and it is this last part I desire to look at a little. "You... hath He reconciled," not brought halfway - as to relationship, brought into Christ. Through the work of the cross He put away our sins and, when He had done it, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. He finished the work which His Father gave Him to do; and in Hebrews the Spirit contrasts Christ's work with the work of the priests which was never finished, so that they never sat down.

We are perfect as pertaining to the conscience. A blunder often made is confounding perfection as to our state with perfection as to our conscience. When once we have understood the work of Christ, we are perfect as regards the conscience. If I look up to God, I can have no thought of His ever imputing sin to me again, or I could not have peace with God; and this is so true that it is said if this work was not perfectly done, Christ must suffer again. But He cannot drink that dreadful cup again, the very thought of which made Him sweat great drops of blood. If there is any sin still to be put away (I speak now of believers), Christ must suffer again, and this can never be. God has set Him at His right hand as having finished the work; "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me." He will deal with His enemies, no doubt, when He rises up in judgment; but as to believers, He is sitting down because He has no more to do. I am not speaking now of course of the daily grace He ministers to them. It is settled, and settled with this double aspect, that the purpose of God being to bring us into the same glory as His Son, the work of Christ not only cleared away our guilt, but obtained that glory for us.

We are not in the glory yet, but the work which is our title to it is finished though we have not yet got the glory to which it is our title. We are anointed and sealed with the Spirit, and He is the earnest of our inheritance. We are already to the praise of the glory of His grace, but not yet to the praise of His glory, which will be when He comes the second time to bring us into the glory which His work obtained for us when He came the first time. And our life stands between the two - the cross and the glory.

We are here in this world, beloved friends, in the midst of temptations, snares, and difficulties, everything around us tending to draw us away; but the power of God is in us. We know that we are sons of God, though the world knows us not: "It Both not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." 1 John 3:2, 3. The practical effect of beholding the glory of God is to change us into the same image.

When Moses came down from the mountain, the people were afraid to look in his face because the law required that which they had not to give; but now I see the glory which excels, the glory in Christ, which is infinitely brighter. But the glory in the face of Jesus Christ is the witness that all my sins are put away.

In the face of Moses it required what man ought to have been as a child of Adam, but it came to man who was a sinner. It required righteousness, and pronounced a curse if it was not there. Now I see the glory in the face of Him who bore my sins in His own body on the tree. The Christian sees the Man who died for his sins now in the glory as man, a witness that the work is done, and a testimony to the place unto which He is bringing us; and meanwhile we have the testimony of the

Holy Ghost that our souls may be perfectly clever as to this.

That is where the believer is set, resting in entire confidence upon the efficacy of the work of Christ and, upon the other hand, waiting for God's Son from heaven, converted for this. "Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord," standing here in perfect liberty, for where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.

And here we get the proper experience of a Christian as led by the Spirit of God. We see in chapter 3 a Christian as to his walk, Christ having laid hold of him for that, as in 2 Cor. 5, "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing," etc. He has wrought us for that, not only cleared away our sins. Paul sees Christ in glory before him (he had really seen Him there), and that was what he was going to get. "This one thing I do,... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What he was seeking was to win Christ. He had not yet obtained Him, or got into the glory, but it was the only thing he was doing in the world; his whole life was that.

In chapter 2, on the other hand, Christ is looked at, not as going up to glory, but as coming down to the cross; and here we get the graciousness of His character. By this we get our hearts and affections won, and are formed into the likeness of this graciousness. And thus we have the two great things that govern the Christian - the glory that is before him, and the grace that has been shown him.

One word as to verses 12 and 13, "Not as in my presence only," etc. Often this "fear and trembling" is used to cast a doubt upon our relations with God, but it is not this we have to fear about. We are in the midst of temptations, the power of Satan distracting and turning the heart from Christ; and the Apostle presses upon them that now that he is absent, they must take care. He had worked for them when he was with them; he had met the craft of the enemy in wisdom and apostolic power, but he was in prison when he wrote this. He says, in substance, "Therefore now you must fight for yourselves," but this is in contrast with his fighting for them, and they were to do it, for it was God that worked in them. The contrast is not between God and man working, but Paul and the Philippians. God it was who did work in them, were Paul there; and if they had lost Paul, God who wrought in them was still there.

But then what a solemn thing for us, beloved friends, if we have the sense of this, that we are left down here to make good our path to glory against Satan and all the difficulties of the way. It is enough to make us serious. A false step will throw me into the snares of Satan. I have to be serious; I have the promise of being kept, but I need to be serious.

I have spoken of the finished work: but there is another thing that exercises us; how far can we look at the flesh and say we have done with it? And that is where the practical difficulty comes, if you are in earnest and desiring to walk in fellowship with the Father and the Son. I ought never to walk after the flesh. The existence of the flesh does not give me a bad conscience, but if I allow it to act it does. Whenever I let even an evil thought in, communion is interrupted. The flesh is not gone as a matter of fact, nor is there nothing in us which Satan can tempt, but there is power in us not to let it act. The flesh is not changed. The word is as plain as ever it can be as to what the flesh is. If left to itself, it becomes so bad that God had to destroy the world. Noah, saved out of the old world, gets drunk; the law is given, and the flesh is not subject to it; Christ comes in grace, and the flesh crucifies Him; the Holy Ghost is given, and the flesh lusts against Him; and we get the case

of one who had been into the third heaven, and the flesh was ready to puff him up. The flesh could not be mended, but he gets a why I should ever let it act. It thorn in it. But that is no reason never ought.

## Christian Life: Part 2

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Scripture does not speak of our being conformed to Christ here; it says we are to walk as He walked. But the place of conformity to Christ is the glory, and he "that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself"; that is to say, he is not pure, he has not attained it. The place where I shall be like Christ is the glory; He has obtained it for me: and then, my eye looking upon Him by faith, I am changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.

I find this the great truth which Scripture does give me - not only that Christ died for my sins, but that I died with Christ. In the epistle to the Romans, in the first part (chaps. 1 through 5:11), you get all the sins dealt with - the great truth of Christ being substituted for us on the cross, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree - He is delivered for our offenses. And in the subsequent part (chaps. 5:12 through 8) the question is taken up, not of sins, but of sin - not the fruit, but the tree - and we are shown not to be in the flesh if the Spirit of Christ is in us.

I do not live by the life of Adam but by the life of Christ, and that is where the total difference is for the Christian. But it is not only that I have a new life as quickened by Christ, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, nor that He has been crucified for me so that my guilt is removed; but I am crucified with Christ.

In Colossians we read, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" - dead therefore in this world. This is God's declaration of our state as Christians. In Romans, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." "In that He died, He died unto sin.... Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God [not in Adam, but] through [or in] Jesus Christ our Lord." This is faith's estimate of it, and this is where you find real deliverance and freedom from the bondage of sin. It is not "no condemnation" to them whose sins Christ bore, but "to them which are in Christ Jesus." God condemned sin in the flesh; He did not forgive it; He condemned it. If I get the law, it condemns me; but Christ? Does He condemn me? No; for He has taken the condemnation for me, and in Him God has condemned sin in the flesh, and I reckon myself dead because it was in death He did so. Christ's death is, as indeed all that He has wrought, available for me, and therefore I reckon myself dead. In 2 Corinthians we get the carrying this out in practice: "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 he speaks of the exercises which God sends for our (j)pod to test this realization in us and make it effectual: "Alway delivered unto death," etc. We all fail for want of watchfulness, but that is what our life ought to be.

Suppose I have got a man in my house who is always at mischief; I cannot turn him out but if I lock him up he can do no harm; he is not changed, but I am free in the house. If I leave the door open, he is at mischief again; but we are to keep him locked up. That is what we are called to do - what God calls us to do. The world will not have this; it will mend and improve man, cultivate the old man, as if it could produce good fruit, because it does not see how bad it is. The world would dig about the old tree and dung it. This has been tried. God cuts it down and grafts us with Christ. This

condemning and cutting down was in the cross of Christ; not of course that He had any sin, but as made sin for us; and I know not only that my sins are cleared away, but that I am crucified with Christ, and my life hid with Him in God.

And this is available for power if I carry it about in my heart. Supposing we honestly held ourselves dead - can Satan tempt a dead man? But in order for this it must not be putting one's armor on when the danger is there, but living with Christ, the heart full of Him.

Would a woman who had heard that her child was killed or hurt at the other end of the town, be thinking of what she saw in the shop windows as she ran toward him? No; she would have just enough sense to find her way. If your hearts were fixed like that on Christ, nine-tenths of the temptations that come upon you would be gone; you would be thinking of something else, and outward things would only bring out sweetness as they did with Christ, for we are never tempted above that we are able.

Saints, if in earnest, have got to realize not only the putting away of their sins, but also the having died with Christ; and this delivers from the power of sin.

I find in Phil. 3, a Christian with one object, knowing that Christ has laid hold of him for glory, and his heart running after Christ. I am to have no other object, though I may have lots of things to do. He is "in all" as the power of life, and He is "all" as the object of that life. He is in all. "Christ liveth in me" (see Col. 3:11). This is again summed up in Gal. 2:20. "Not I, but Christ liveth in me"; and then the object, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." Then there is the sense of His perfect love; "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." The heart is fixed on Him, and follows hard after Him.

Then in chapter 2 there is another thing - the spirit and character in which we walk down here; the place a Christian is called to (a wonderful thing, I grant) is to go out from God and be an epistle of Christ. I joy in God, have got the blessedness of what He is, and go on in communion with Him to show out His character in the world.

Ought I to walk as Christ walked? Every Christian will own that; "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Suppose my soul has tasted this perfect love, and it is well we should recollect it (God's love shed abroad in our hearts), and is conscious down here that we are loved as Jesus was loved, what do I believe about God? What put it into His heart to send Christ down here? He knew how He would be treated. Did the world suggest it to Him? It would not have Him when He came. It was all in His own heart! Perfect love! His heart! the unsuggested origin of every blessing. What character did it take in Christ? Was it staying up in heaven and saying, "You behave well and come up here"? No! we all know that. But He who, in the form of God, in the actual same glory, thought it riot robbery to be equal with God (mark the contrast with the first Adam), made Himself of no reputation; and what brought that about? Purest love, love coming to serve.

For Christ took the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. He emptied Himself of all the glory - the very opposite of the first Adam. Divine love came to serve; a new thing for God - the only new thing. And this is what I learn! I know this love; I know that I am made the righteousness of God in Him, so that I stand before Him, and then I come out from Him toward the world to bring out this blessed character. I have learned the love, and now I must come out and show it. "Be ye... followers of God, as dear children." You are children; that is all settled. Now you

go and give yourself as Christ did. The spirit of love is always lowliness because it makes itself a servant.

And here I find what is entirely beyond law. Law tells me to love others as myself; grace tells me to give myself up entirely for my neighbor or for anybody. Did not God forgive you? You go and forgive your enemies. Is He kind to the unthankful and the evil? You go and be the same. It tests all the fibers of our hearts, all the pride and vanity and selfishness that are in us.

We like doing our own will. "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death"; He went so low down that He could go no lower, "unto death, even the death of the cross." But then "God... hath highly exalted Him." He was the grand example of "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Blessed be His name! He will never give up His service; it is the very thing He shows us, and in which He would that our hearts should see the perfection of His grace. It is what He was doing in John 13. He had been their servant down here, but now they might think there was an end of His service. No, He says, as it were, I cannot stop with you, but I must have you with Me; "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." He does a slave's work; and that is what He does now. We pick up dirt as we go - there is no excuse for it. There is Christ up there, the Advocate with the Father. And, even in the time of glory, "He shall gird Himself,... and will come forth and serve them"; He will be there to minister the blessing Himself. Our hearts want to learn the perfection of that love in which He came always down, always down, till He could come no lower.

Are we willing to walk in that path? No one would deny we ought; but are we disposed to do it? Would our heart be glad of the power of that grace which, holding the flesh as dead, can say, Here I am in the power of that love to walk as everybody's servant? We are to esteem others better than ourselves. If my heart is full of Christ, I judge myself of everything not like Christ; I judge the evil in myself because I see the blessedness in Christ. But what do I see in my brother? I see Christ in him. The effect of being full of Christ is to make me think little of self and much of my brother; there is no real difficulty about this, if full of Christ.

"Do all things without murmurings." etc. If you take every single part of this passage you will find it a statement of what Christ was here. He was blameless and harmless, the Son of God, without rebuke in the midst of this evil world; He was the light of the world, and He was the Word of life.

If I reckon the flesh dead, only the life of Christ comes out; if only that came out, we should be a very wonderfully blessed kind of people! To him that hath shall more be given. If I yield myself to God as one alive from the dead, I have got fruit here unto holiness, as well as fullness of blessing hereafter.

What I would ask you, beloved friends, is, Do you propose to be Christians? Are you willing to yield yourselves to God as not having one bit of will of your own? There is power in Christ, not to say "I am pure," but always having my eye on Him, to purify myself.

I am going to be like Christ in glory; then I must be as like Him now as ever I can be. Of course we shall all fail, but we are to have our hearts set on this.

Remember this, that the place you are in is that of an epistle of Christ. We are set for that, that the life of Christ should be manifested in us. Christ has settled the question with God; He appears in

the presence of God for us, and we are in the presence of the world for Him. "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." If I know He is in me, I am to manifest the life of Christ in everything. If He has loved us with unutterable love which passes knowledge, I feel bound in heart to Him; my business is to glorify Him in everything I do. "Bought with a price"; that is settled: if bought, I am His. But beloved friends, I press upon you that earnestness of heart which cleaves to Him, especially in these last evil days when we wait for the Son from heaven. Oh! if Christians were more thoroughly Christians, the world would understand what it was all about! There is a great deal of profession and talk, and the activity of the Spirit of God - thank God there is - but do you think if a heathen came here to learn what Christianity meant, he would find it out?

The Lord give you to have such a sense of the love of Christ that, as bought with a price, the only object of your souls may be to live by Christ and to live for Christ; and for those who do not know Him, that they may learn how He came down in love to seek us and, because righteousness could not pass over sin, died to put it away.

## Dangers of Influence

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What a poor thing is man! And we are weak in proportion to our importance before men. We exercise, at the same time, an unfavorable influence over others in the degree in which they influence us; in which we yield to the influence which the desire of maintaining our reputation among them exercises over our hearts; and all the esteem in which we are held, even justly, becomes a means of evil. Peter, who fears those that came from Jerusalem, draws away all the Jews and even Barnabas, with him in his dissimulation.

## Dead in Sins

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Dead in sins (Eph. 2:1) - these words leave no room for the popular delusion that man has only to cultivate his own nature, attend to his inner life, and he will need no regeneration, no atoning blood. To cultivate his inner life, according to Scripture, would be to cultivate corruption and to augment its evil fruit, just as to cultivate an evil tree would only be to make it more prolific of evil. Cultivate, educate man as he is, and he is only made a greater power for evil in this present corrupt age to which he belongs. What says God of such, but that every thought and imagination of his heart is evil continually! The imagination even, which man may have apart from a work of grace, to be religious - see what it was in Cain, and in the Pharisee. The Pharisee had religion without God. The poor publican had no religion, as men count it, but laying hold of God - His mercy - he went home to his house justified.

## Dear Children: Words from God Our Father

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"Dear Children"

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and 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." Eph. 5:1, 2.

What a wonderful place the Lord sets us in here, and sets us in the consciousness of it too. To think that such a word should come out of His mouth to us, calling us "dear children"! We are familiar with the thought of being sons of God, "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"; but when we think of the nearness and intimacy of this, and His revealing Himself to us, it is wonderful.

It is not what He has done to deliver us from condemnation; but when the sin is all gone, to be remembered no more, He sets us in this relationship of "dear children," and in the consciousness of it. If He says to me, "Dear child!" what a thought I have of Him, and of the wonderful condition I am in; the expression draws out the consciousness of the love in the place. He may have done all kinds of things for me, but the very word conveys to me where I am. If we come to think of it and measure it, we have to think of Christ. He says, "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." He dwells in us to be the power and enjoyment of it, and attracts down from the Father's heart what He feels for Him and for us, and that is shed abroad in our hearts.

We have been accustomed to look at God as a judge - a solemn truth in its place. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity; but there is a complete putting away of sin. Looking at the work of Christ there is such an entire putting away of sin according to God's glory, that I get into the light, and the only thing it shows is that I am as white as snow, leaving the heart free to enjoy the present "grace wherein we stand." Being justified by faith, I have peace with God. I can say I am waiting for the glory and, besides that, I have access to this present grace. It is of all importance for our hearts and affections that we should be there with God; we cannot enjoy it if we allow evil, and even negligence dims our hearts, and prevents our apprehension of it.

We get the doctrinal part of the epistle before, and now He says, You are My dear children; it is not a mere doctrine, but the address of God to us. When He says "dear," what says it? It is His heart, what He feels about us, poor creatures as we are; but He says it because He feels it. He is expressing Himself and reaching us, and that is what is so thoroughly blessed. A child is. to be obedient and dutiful; but it is wonderful that God should say this, and He reckons on our hearts walking in it. This is the outgoing of God's good pleasure and delight, and I know I am His delight, poor unworthy creature as I am; it is not a question of worthiness; that is in Christ. The sin has been so put away in God's sight that His heart can go out. Christ's love took Him to that baptism - "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Till then His love could not go out freely, but then it could flow out in unmingled freeness - perfect love in the drinking of that terrible cup. Now the love is free to act. Grace reigns because righteousness is

accomplished. His whole love can go out through grace.

I get, through the work of Christ, God free to satisfy His love, all the purposes and delights of His own nature. The love is free to flow out in all its fullness. You never get a word about the prodigal when he comes to the father (a great deal about him when he is coming); but you hear about the father, and his joy in having him. The poor prodigal was happy enough, but it is not meet to make him happy; he had the best robe, but it is "meet" to "make merry, and be glad": for "this my son was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." He tells it to us that we should know it. It was meet that he should make merry, and have all glad around him because this poor sinner had come back. There is no hindrance to the full satisfaction of his soul, his own joy to have this one in.

We get two great truths: the work of Christ that was needed to put away sin, and open out this love - there is a new creation, and we are dead. We are to put off the old man and put on the new. Then the love is perfectly free, and I get hold of another thing - what did it all come from? what have I got into? It comes from God; the very nature is of God. "Of Him [God] are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." We are of God, and the righteousness of God; all is of God, and according to God, and we have a nature capable of understanding it, and of enjoying all God is. All is free and full, and this nature can let itself out to me in love. The thing I am brought to enjoy is of God, and all my intelligence for conduct and feeling and everything is of God. Paul could say, "Be ye followers of me"; but the Spirit here goes up to the source and says, "Be ye...followers of God"; "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him," etc.; "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," and love too.

Having the divine nature (sin put away) we are in the light as God is in the light, brought into the presence of God, and capable of enjoying it. It is not of human wisdom or knowledge, but of a pure heart; we learn more and more every day if we are walking with God, but it is not intellect. All the intellect in the world never knew what it is to be loved, never found out God; it found wills and lusts, but never found God. We learn Him by our wants. The one who learns what strength is, and knows the comfort of it, is a poor feeble person who cannot get along a rough road, and a strong one lends his arm. What a comfort strength is to him.

God has met the real need of a soul in every possible way. "When we were yet without strength,... Christ died for the ungodly." The perfection of His love came out, in that when we had no strength to get out of our state, He says, I must come down to you. It takes me up to enjoy it in God Himself. He comes down to the sinner where he is, and the sinner learns there is love enough to reach from the holy throne of God to him, and to take his poor heart up to the throne of God. Not wisdom or intellect, but God revealing Himself; and as He thus acts in love, I get the very spring of it, and the root from the beginning to the end as I know Him. The light comes into my conscience and makes everything manifest, and the love comes too. We have to learn more of the treacherousness of our hearts, of the wiles of Satan, and of the world; but I am in positive relationship with God, sin is outside (by faith, I mean), and there we have to keep it. We are in the heavenly places as to doctrine; then we get the practical power. He sends us out from Himself to the world that men may know what He is....

"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Eph. 4:32.

As brought to God I have learned what God is as to His ways of grace. Did God come and clamor against you in justice? He sent His Son to give Himself for you, and has forgiven you. You go and do so to others. You are a dear child; go and manifest what God is; He has forgiven you. There is a man who has wronged me; I go and forgive him as God forgave me, if I am near enough to God to do it, to show out that what we have been learning is the joy of our souls.

"Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us." There we see the preciousness of Him who brought it so close to us. Have you not understood what Christ's love to you as a poor creature was? Have you not learned for yourself that He gave Himself - no light thing. Then you go and give yourself. He did not give a great deal for us (everything in one sense); He gave Himself. The law requires the measure of your love to yourself to be that of your love to your neighbor. In a world like this I want something more than that. I have to do with people who wrong and insult and harass and outrage me. Christ did more than love us as He loved Himself - He gave Himself entirely. The perfection of love is measured in self-sacrifice. We may fail in it, but there is no other measure. "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Was not God manifested in Christ? Is not Christ your model? He, the blessed Son of God walking through this world, manifested God with a divine superiority over evil. It is put away between me and God, and I am to be above it between me and man - the power of good in the midst of evil. If you see unrighteousness, and your spirit boils over, that will not do; you may "be...angry and sin not" - righteous indignation at evil. Christ was the expression of unavenging righteousness - doing well, and suffering, taking it patiently.

One word on this verse - Eph. 5:2. I give myself for others, but to God. If I give myself to others, I may not go right, for they may not go right; but the lower and worse the person I give myself up for, the higher it is. The principle of Christ was - He gave Himself to God, but for the vilest.. It was a sacrifice of love - love that had its motive in itself for God, its object in God-and that kept it steady in the path.

Further in the chapter (v. 14) you get light brought in - the full light into the conscience, and the full love into the heart - and then you will go right. There our souls should be - walking in the light, 'our consciences alive, and our hearts in the undisturbed consciousness of that word of God, "Dear children," the feeling of affection going out from. His heart - so that when I go to Him there is not only the love that sought the sinner, but the love now in the relationship that finds delight in expressing itself. Wherever the world or selfishness gets in (evil too, I need not say), that is not after God, but after the world, and after the devil. That is like a man asleep. He does not hear or speak; he may dream, and the word to him is, "Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." If my heart goes with the things of the world, Christ is not shining into it. There may be glimmerings, but I cannot say "Abba" and go to Him with the sense that He will say, "Now my dear child, go and follow Me."

## Death of King George: "Not Many Noble"

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The sudden death of His Majesty King George VI is another of those changes constantly going on under the providential eye of God. Each change is working together with all the other changes to bring about His purposes among the nations. We cannot discern the workings of all the individual pieces in the great complicated machinery which is grinding out those things which God has purposed before to be done; but we have confidence in Him who knows the end from the beginning, and whose wisdom is infinite.

The death of the beloved sovereign of the British people brings to mind the strange circumstances that brought him to the throne. Perhaps the abdication of his brother altered the course of history, and we know it was God's purpose that the change should be made. "He removeth kings, and setteth up kings." Dan. 2:21.

We are reminded at this time that death is no respecter of persons; he invades the palace as well as the humblest cottage of the poor. He nether awaits an invitation to enter, nor will he be refused admittance when it is God's time that he should enter. A royal family is no more immune to the anguish of heart caused by the loss of a beloved member than are the dwellers in a city tenement. We truly sympathize with the royal family in their bereavement and trust they know the comfort of 1 Thess. 4

The British people have been much blessed by God for many years in having God-fearing sovereigns, yes, even those who we have reason to believe have been true children of God. If "not many mighty, not many noble, are called," yet there are notable exceptions.

The expressions of dependence on God made by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II when the grave responsibilities of state were thrust upon her in a moment, are very encouraging. May God graciously help and guide her in His fear for the good of His dear people, not only in the lands under her dominion, but for influence to this end in other lands.

These reflections bring another line of thought before us: the coming of the Lord draws nigh, and at that moment every ruler in every land who is sheltered by the precious blood of Christ will be taken simultaneously. Therefore, the nations most blessed by having truly Christian rulers will be the most seriously affected. What a catastrophe for a land where the leaders are without warning taken to be with the Lord in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and the ungodly and lawless are left behind to exercise their lawlessness with the devil's assistance. Such countries as Russia and China where the leaders are avowedly ungodly will scarcely suffer a shudder; their courses will not be affected, except perhaps to encourage them to more acts of international aggression.

We feel that the concussions throughout the world at the coming of the Lord for His own will set the wheels in motion that will produce all the actors required for those great and eventful years of tribulation. Governments, industry, commerce, and finance will be convulsed as a result of the sudden disappearance of all true believers in the Lord Jesus. No doubt it will produce in Christendom a great prayer meeting, a cry of "Lord, Lord, open to us," when it is too late. Such

consternation, however, will be short-lived, for the devil will be on hand with a lie to further delude those whom he has already deceived.

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While King George VI lived, there were twin thrones in the House of Lords, for the King's wife reigned with him as Queen, but as soon as their daughter Princess Elizabeth became Queen Elizabeth II, one of those thrones was removed, and in its place was substituted a chair on a lower step, for the Queen's husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, may not be seated with her. This brings to mind a verse in Rev. 3 "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." v. 21.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, could go back to the glory and sit with His Father in His throne, not in a chair on a lower step; and now the Lord promises to the overcomer (which undoubtedly will be true of all saints of this age) that they shall sit with Him in His throne, even as He sat with His Father in His throne. What great grace! Surely, "the exceeding riches of His grace"! We shall reign with Him. Current events emphasize our exalted position, for although the Duke of Edinburgh has a great place in the British realm, and was himself of royal birth, at one time in line for the Greek throne, yet he does not reign with his wife as we shall reign with Christ.

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The recent anti-British riots in Cairo, Egypt, where \$300,000,000 worth of real estate and other property was destroyed in a single day point up the seriousness of the growing self-assertion of radical nationalism in the Moslem world. If all that destruction could take place in a policed city under the eyes of an established government, what could happen in any Moslem country where the government might be overthrown? It makes one shudder to think what might happen to Western nationals and property if such violence should break out in any one of them, or against the Jews in Palestine. We know the smoldering fire is there already, and all that would be needed for a general conflagration in the Moslem world would be for a leader to capture the imagination of the populace.

The Cairo outbreak shows how quickly such movements can be executed. We live in a day when events that might have leisurely taken a hundred years for accomplishment a few centuries back can now be crowded into a single year. All the modern inventions have reduced time and space, and multiplied many times man's capacity to do great things. Perhaps God's word to Israel, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," might be appropriately paraphrased, "O mankind, thou hast destroyed thyself."

At the beginning of the Korean conflict, we commented that when a fire breaks out there is no telling how far it will spread. Now that the war has gone on over one and one half years, it seems to be no nearer a settlement or a conclusion than when it first started, and the Western nations have worked feverishly to make any face-saving settlement to prevent a more general conflagration; even an armistice will be an uneasy thing under which preparations could be made for increased warfare. Man is powerless; he is not the master of the world situation, but (while unwilling to admit it) is but a pawn where the god and prince of this world has sway. We hasten, however, to add that even so, all is still providentially controlled by God - neither man nor devil can go beyond what He permits. His Church is still here and it is precious to Him, but woe be to the

world when the Church and the Holy Spirit are removed and the lawless one is revealed (2 Thess. 2:7, 8).

Fellow-Christian, let us lift our eyes in loving expectation, for we shall behold our Lord Jesus Christ as Rebekah beheld Isaac at the end of the wilderness journey.

"In hope we lift our wishful, longing eyes,  
Waiting to see the Morning Star arise;  
How bright, how gladsome will His advent be,  
Before the Sun shines forth in majesty!  
How will our eyes to see His face delight,  
Whose love has cheered us through the darksome night!  
How will our ears drink in His well known voice,  
Whose faintest whispers make our soul rejoice!  
No stain within, no foes or snares around,  
No jarring notes shall there discordant sound;  
All pure without, all pure within the breast;  
No thorns to wound, no toil to mar our rest.  
If here on earth the thoughts of Jesus' love  
Lift our poor hearts this weary world above,  
If even here the taste of heavenly springs  
So cheers the spirit, that the pilgrim sings,  
What will the sunshine of His glory prove?  
What the unmingled fullness of His love?  
What halleluiahs will His presence raise?  
What but one loud eternal burst of praise?"

## Deceitfulness of Sin: a Lesson from Gehazi

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Among the many instances of divine grace and illustrations of the gospel contained in the Old Testament, there are few more attractive than the story of Naaman (2 Kings 5).

Where is the evangelist who has not delighted to trace the thread of redeeming mercy toward that "honorable" but afflicted man, from the voice of the "little maid" in his own household, and the expostulation of his servants when his pride was roused, to the moment when, in obedience to the word of Elisha, he dipped himself seven times in Jordan's stream, and obtained the cure so ardently desired? "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" is the golden rule for the soul in having to do with God; and in becoming the Savior of sinners, Jesus Himself has trodden this path. He humbled Himself (Phil. 2:8) when He bore the penalty of death that the sinner deserved, and now God "giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5), to those who will take their true place before Him, as having sinned and perverted that which is right. To such, the interpreter can say on God's part, "I have found a ransom" (Job 33:24); "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's" (v. 25).

But God, who fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich empty away, has placed side by side with this happy picture of deliverance and blessing, a most solemn example of divine warning and displeasure. The gospel is preached to those that are afar off, and to them that are nigh (Eph. 2:17), and the word to those that have been brought outwardly nigh, as Christendom has been, is "toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. 11:22).

Gehazi, the servant of God's prophet, had a position of privilege that was unique in that day. Associated with the man who had the divine testimony in Israel, he had a share in the giving, and raising from death, of the Shunammite's son, as well as the multiplication of the loaves and corn to the people (2 Kings 4). He also was with the prophet at the time, if he was not actually the "messenger" to bear the word of healing to Naaman. But vanity and the love of money - root of every evil (1 Tim. 6:10) - lead him to falsify the grace of the God of Israel expressed to this stranger, and the prophet has the melancholy experience of seeing the fresh springs of joy and healing corrupted in Naaman's heart as he starts away to his own land. Unless one had faith in God that He who had begun a good work in the Syrian captain would complete it, we might well feel saddened and distressed that this soul that so lately learned that blessing from God was "without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1) should have had his heart chilled by the reversal of the prophet's message. Who can tell if after all the mule's burden of earth was used on his return? (2 Kings 5:17.)

Gehazi's heart being set upon gain, he became blind to every other consideration. But there is one thing most striking about the narrative, and that is that the moment his object is achieved, he has the conscience of a thief, and bestows his silver and garments in the "house" (v. 24). The attractiveness of sin is lost as soon as it is committed. "Ye shall be as gods" seemed so fair; but the moment the sin and disobedience was committed, the first pair learned that they were "naked" in the eyes of God and of one another.

Who would envy Gehazi his success obtained by lying and deceit? Hardened by unbelief, and deceived by Satan, he comes and stands again before his master. He meets the prophet's searching question again with untruth, but he has to learn to his own confusion that neither God nor the prophet was deceived, though he had been, and that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gal. 6:7. He had desired Naaman's money and apparel; he gets also his leprosy. He is numbered with the company of the "many lepers... in Israel" (Luke 4:27), but with him is the added judgment that it should cleave to him and to his seed forever - a suggestion, we may surely say, of the endless doom that awaits those who neglect, refuse, or corrupt the grace of God as it is now expressed in the gospel. We next meet him, a sycophant in the king's presence (and such a king! - see 2 Kings 8:4) and there he passes off the scene, a hopeless leper, striving apparently to stifle the accusings of a bad conscience with the pleasures of the world.

What a warning and a lesson for us! If it be with the lips only we draw near to God, and the heart be far from Him (Matt. 15:8), after having been brought outwardly near and in a place of privilege, how shall we stand before a greater than Elisha "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ"? Rom. 2:16. It will be only to hear that awful word "Depart" (Matt. 7:21-23). To any such we would urge, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

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

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A correspondent sent me a clipping from the Salvation Army's publication, "War Cry," 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)." Now whatever we may think of the work and methods of the Salvation Army, no one would look to them for clear exposition of Scripture, or sound interpretations of the truth. But they are not the only ones who teach that a truly converted person may after all be lost. 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.

## Discontent and Its Results

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Gen. 19

The Lord has no sympathy with a worldly mind; and such a mind it was that had led Lot to settle down amid the defilement of guilty Sodom. Faith never put him there; a spiritual mind never put him there; "his righteous soul" never put him there: it was simple love for this present evil world that led him first to choose, then to pitch "his tent toward," and finally to sit "in the gate of Sodom." And oh! what a portion he chose! Truly, it was a broken cistern which could hold no water—a broken reed which pierced his hand. It is a bitter thing to seek in any wise to manage for ourselves; we are sure to make the most grievous mistakes. It is infinitely better to allow God to order all our ways for us - to commit them all, in the spirit of a little child, to Him who is so willing and so able to manage for us - to put the pen, as it were, into His blessed hand, and allow Him to sketch out our entire course according to His own unerring wisdom and infinite love.

No doubt Lot thought he was doing well for himself and his family when he moved to Sodom, but the sequel shows how entirely he erred; and it also sounds in our ears a voice of deepest solemnity - a voice telling us to beware how we yield to the incipient workings of a worldly spirit. "Be content with such things as ye have." Why? Is it because you are so well off in the world? - because you have all your poor rambling hearts would seek after? - because there is not so much as a single chink in your circumstances through which a vain desire might make its escape? Is this to be the ground of our contentment? By no means. What then? "For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Blessed portion! Had Lot been content therewith, he never would have sought the well-watered plains of Sodom.

And then, if we need any further ground of inducement to the exercise of a contented spirit, truly we have it in this chapter. What did Lot gain in the way of happiness and contentment? Little indeed. The people of Sodom surround his house, and threaten to break into it; he seeks to appease them by a most humiliating proposition, but all in vain. If a man will mingle with the world for the purpose of self-aggrandizement he must make up his mind to endure the sad consequences. We cannot profit by the world and at the same time bear effectual testimony against its wickedness. "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge." This will never do. The true way to judge is to stand apart in the moral power of grace, not in the supercilious spirit of Pharisaism. To attempt to reprove the world's ways while we profit by association with it is vanity; the world will attach very little weight to such reproof and such testimony. Thus it was too with Lot's testimony to his sons-in-law; "He seemed as one that mocked." It is vain to speak of approaching judgment while finding our place, our portion, and our enjoyment in the very scene which is to be judged.

## Early Devotedness

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In reading the account of the "singular vow" (Lev. 27) it is worthy of notice that estimation is made according to age. Thus in the case of a child being devoted to the Lord, from one month to five years of age, the value was set at five shekels of silver for a male; at twenty shekels from five to twenty; at fifty shekels from twenty to sixty; and then down to fifteen from sixty upward. The highest estimation is placed on that period of life - twenty to sixty - when the faculties and energies are most fully in play. But this is striking, that a higher value is placed on the years between five and twenty than on those sixty and older. A man who begins to devote himself to the Lord at sixty years of age is only worth fifteen shekels, while a youth under twenty is reckoned at five shekels more. This is significant. The earlier the better.

I have been struck of late by the thought that those whom God has deigned to use specially to instruct the Church have been led to surrender themselves to the Lord when young. Saving grace may reach the soul at any period, and then surrender to the claims of Christ follows; but as a rule the best servants of Christ have been early converted and early led to yield their hearts and lives to Him. The result is that such have been more signally owned in the help of His people and the unfolding of His Word. And there is a moral ground for this. If a man lives the best of his days in the gratification of his own pleasures, and sets the will of God practically aside, must he not suffer the consequences in time, even though pardoned and brought to God? Grace may work wonders, and lead an old man thus converted to accomplish great things - doubtless. Yet when, through the same grace, the young heart is won for Christ, and has thereby escaped the dulling, deadening effects of sin, it is certainly more easily trained and taught, and is therefore enabled to form a more correct judgment of truth, of things that differ, of those shades of meaning that call for a spiritual mind and a clear, undimmed eye.

Thus Saul was a "young man" when he was converted, and Timothy was a "youth"; and so in the history of the Church it will be found that the prominent teachers and distinguished leaders have been early found of the Lord. True it is that more than mere youth is needed. Our passage speaks of devotedness. But a young heart devoted to Christ, and seeking to sustain that devotedness, is the heart that is used of Him.

This may well encourage the young. Sin is a dread master. Christ is worthy of our all. He died for us; He seeks our trust, our confidence, our love. He says, as it were, "Who will go for us?" He could send angels, but He has chosen to use sinners saved by grace.

J.W.S.

## East Meets West: World Battleground

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"Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Pro. 27:1) may appropriately be written over against all men, even the great ones of the earth. In only a few days at the end of July three of the world's rulers were suddenly and adversely affected:

In a surprise coup by some of the younger officers of the Egyptian army, King Farouk of Egypt was given six hours to leave his country. With the army against him, resistance was useless, so the young king sailed away to exile.

Iran which has been seething with unrest and political turmoil for some time, was rocked by a revolution. It was climaxed by the return to power of Premier Mossadegh, and a curtailing of the power of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi. The young ruler was forced to sign over to the premier the control of the Iranian army, so at the whim of the premier the Shah might have to go the way of the King of Egypt.

Eva Peron the wife of, and co-dictator with, Juan D. Peron of Argentina, died at the age of 33. Thus terminated one of the most colorful and unusual careers in history.

What the resulting effect on the world at large will be from these happenings, remains to be seen. The whole world is like a very great and very complex puzzle which is being put together with a master hand. We now and then see one of the pieces of the puzzle being moved, or being put into place, but we know that our Father is the One who is so skillfully arranging everything. When the time comes for His beloved Son to take the reins of world government in His hand, and to put down all His enemies, the whole complicated maze of world fragments will be in the places He has decreed. And while the changes go on, we confidently wait for Him who said, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." John 14:3.

The Near East (so designated by the U. S. National Geographic; Society) where these upheavals in Egypt and Iran have taken place is where Africa, Asia, and Europe meet. Truly it is where East meets West." That area is destined to become the world battleground again, as it was for so many centuries. To that section will all the kings of the earth with their armies gravitate. They will converge on Palestine "the glory of all lands" which is at the center of the Near East, and there will they fall, when the King of kings and Lord of lords comes with the armies of heaven to execute His righteous judgment.

General Mohammed Naguib, the new strong man of Egypt, was one of the officers in the Egyptian army when it suffered to most humiliating defeat by the fledgling nation of Israel in 1948. For this defeat he blamed King Farouk and the high officers surrounding him, because the Egyptian army was ill-equipped and much of the ammunition supplied it was defective. General Naguib, still smarting under the inglorious defeat, seems destined to nurse a hatred of Israel, and to build Egypt into an antagonist of the Jewish nation.

In Old Testament times Egypt was the oppressor of the Israelites, and often invaded their land; in the future they will do the same thing. In Dan. 11:40 we read, "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south [Egypt] push at him [the apostate head of the Jews in Palestine]."

That we are approaching "the time of the end," there can be no doubt. A decade ago it would have seemed that an independent nation of Israel was impossible, but it is there today in readiness for the antichrist. Egypt has already made war against it, only to receive a stinging defeat and thus provide fuel for a' lingering hatred which will bring them against Israel at the end.

The turbulent state of affairs in Iran points up the danger. For Israel at "the time of the end" from the other side, from the north. There will be a fierce king in that general area, an implacable foe of the Jews, who will also invade Palestine, take half the city of Jerusalem, and go on down against Egypt. "And the king of the north shall come against him [the antichrist] like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown.... And the land of Egypt shall not escape," etc. Dan. 11:40-42. See also Isa. 28:18-20 where the Northern invasion is described.

Apparently the real master behind the strife and trouble in Iran is a man called Mullah Kashani. He is the leader of Moslem fanatics in the Near East countries of Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, besides Iran. He talks of organizing an army of 5,000,000 men to throw out Western influence, and to dominate the whole area. He operates much like the sinister Grand Mufti of Jerusalem who has fomented anti-Jewish and anti-Western trouble foil a long time. They may be working together.

At the time of the end a strong personage will arise among these Moslem nations of the Near East We read in Dan. 8 of this man: "And in the latter time of their kingdom, when transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce. countenance, and understanding. dark sentences [or, dealing ire mysticism], shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his land; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up; against the Prince of princes; but: he shall be broken with His hand." vv. 23-25. 4

So today we see insurgent Moslem unity and power with: fanaticism paving the way fa the kings of the north and of the south to war against the apostate nation of the Jews when it is' headed up under the antichrist. Palestine is destined to become their battleground again as it was in the days when the northern king Seleucus Nicator and his successors contended with the Ptolemies of Egypt for possession of the land. Therefore the events of recent weeks in that area take on added significance in the light of the prophetic scriptures. The pieces of the great puzzle are being moved and readied for the time of the end.

A few words might be added about the death of the young and influential wife of Dictator Peron of Argentina. Only nine years ago she was a comparatively little known actress in Buenos Aires seeking some way to climb the social ladder to fame and wealth. After meeting the then Colonel Peron her rise was rapid; soon she married him and rose to heights of political power with him. She even helped to accelerate his acquisition of unprecedented power in that country. Eva Peron became the most powerful woman of the 20th century. She was not merely the "power behind the

throne," but a power out in front with a daring that even her husband did not possess. How many persons would give their all for her power, influence, wealth, and personal charm! But, alas, it was very short-lived. She enjoyed it only a few years; now she is gone, never to return. With all her wealth, and with every human power to lengthen her life within her reach, not one thing could be done to stay the hand of death. She was taken away in the prime of life.

And the greatest calamity of all would be if she left this world without Christ, to be ushered into a lost eternity. We cannot speak positively about her, but how many great ones of the earth have passed away from it and all their honors to await the judgment of the great white throne, where the dead, both great and small, shall stand to be judged. We are reminded of the Lord's words in Mark 8:36, 37:

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

## Election and Our Father Overrules: the Editor's Column

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The election of a president of the United States is always of interest throughout the world, but the election this year takes on added significance. On its outcome may depend the lives and livelihood of millions of people on both sides of the "iron curtain." It may help to make or to prevent war.

In the providential ways of God He has allowed the United States to become involved in international affairs on all continents, while its navy operates in all oceans. Therefore the next administration in Washington will face matters of gigantic proportions. All the complex problems of how to cope with the ever-present threat of Russian expansion must be met. Decisions will have to be made on bulwarking Western Europe's defenses, and of ways and means to forestall further aggression in Asia by Russia or her satellites. In difficulties at home and abroad, in strife in any part of the world, problems of both military and economic natures will beset the government.

Who then is the proper man to lead the United States after next January? We have to answer plainly, WE DO NOT KNOW.

One thing we do know is that God has decreed that this world shall, in His own time, be ruled by the Man of His choice - the Son of man - the Lord Jesus Christ. No effort of man or Satan will frustrate this purpose of God; but the working out of His ways to bring about His purposes, He has not disclosed.

Many Christians will be very busy seeking to get the man of their choice elected, but the man God chooses will win. Therefore the Christian who is instructed in the mind of God will not be a participant in political matters; he will be nothing more than an intelligent observer who, without distraction, is just waiting to see how his God and Father orders the outcome. He will know that what God does is right and best. It may not be best for ease and tranquility, but it will serve to the DEVELOPMENT of the things He has purposed.

The words of another might be appropriate here: "God moves behind the scenes, and moves all the scenes He is behind." What perfect peace that should give to the heart of a Christian. His Father is overruling all, so he can safely leave everything in His hands, all the while just waiting for the shout that shall call the redeemed to be with Christ in the glory (1 Thess. 4).

Recently we noticed, at the changing of sovereigns in England, the words found in Dan. 2 - "He removeth kings, and setteth up kings." v. 21. This is just as true of an elected official in the United States as of any king or ruler. The will of the people may be sought, but the will of God will be done. "The powers that be are ordained of God" is true, even of Stalin in Russia. He could not be in supreme command if God did not allow it. There is little doubt but that the Soviet Dictator has set the wheels in motion that have brought the events for the time of the end onto the horizon.

May we, fellow-Christians, set our minds "on things above" - above all the strife and din - "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

"Then let us, brethren, while on earth,

With foes and strangers mixed,  
Be mindful of our heavenly birth,  
Our thoughts on glory fixed.  
"That we should glorify Him here  
Our Father's purpose is;  
Whene'er the Savior shall appear, He'll fully own us His."  
"Called from above, and heavenly men by birth,  
(Who once were but the citizens of earth)  
As pilgrims here, we seek a heavenly home,  
Our portion, in the ages yet to come.  
"We are but strangers here, we do not crave  
A home on earth, which gave Thee but a grave;  
Thy cross has severed ties which bound us here,  
Thyself our treasure in a brighter sphere."

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At the request of a servant of the Lord who has a genuine care for the saints, and an interest in how they "get on" (see Phil. 2:19; N. Trans.), we write a few lines regarding the danger and wrong of following the world's changing fashions. '

Our brother was especially concerned lest a current wave of cropping women's hair should ensnare the saints. Too often things are done by Christians without first considering whether it is according to Scripture, or pleasing to the Lord.

The very elements of the world are indicated in the latest fashion for women's hair. Its designation is undignified and unworthy of a Christian, and lacks the sobriety and discretion to which we are called while in our passage through the world (Titus 2:2-6

It is a deplorable thing when Christian men or women adopt the world's ways and follow its fleeting fancies. The Word of God is very plain:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable [intelligent] service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Rom. 12:1, 2.

It is indeed a sad commentary on a Christian's state of soul when he follows the vain and fickle fads of fashion. Surely it is conformity to the world to do so.

Some may retort that eventually the fads of the world are adopted by Christians. This is not necessarily true; often the fads die before they are well started. And there are some customs and manners of dress that are not wrong in themselves, but is it not beneath the Christian to rush to follow the vogues of the world, even when there is nothing wrong with them in themselves? We leave it to the individual conscience before God as to whether the child of God should watch every changing style and mode to be sure and keep up with the world. We are not called upon to dress unbecomingly, or to go about in the garb of a nun; such a practice would not be walking in wisdom toward them "without" (Col. 4:5), but we are called upon to seek to dress and order our lives in a manner pleasing to the Lord (Eph. 5:15-17; Col. 3:17). The realization of this would simplify many problems.

Then there are some deeper questions that often arise in the matter of the world's fashions.

If the fashion becomes stable so that one is not rushing to follow the world by using it, then one question raised by Scripture is this is it modest apparel? The Word of God is plain on that point (1 Tim. 2:9). No matter if the whole world accepts a certain vogue which is immodest, then it is always wrong for the Christian.

Take the matter of "costly array." The Scripture warns against this extravagance (1 Tim. 2:9). It is a basic principle which should guide men and women in many things. Now we do not say that because a thing is low priced it should be bought, for we need to be wise in the use of the money the Lord entrusts to us, and often cheap merchandise is costly in the end; but there surely is a point where "costly array" begins. If it is put on to improve one's station in life, then pride is the root of the desire. Each should weigh such matters before the Lord, for it is to the Lord we have to give account - not to each other.

Then take the matter of the short hair. Is not the Word of God sufficiently plain on this? "If a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her." 1 Cor. 11:15. Shall one then take the very thing that God has given for one's glory, and sacrifice it on the altar of the world's fashion?

We shall not say more on these subjects, but commend them to the reader for perusal in the fear of God. His blessed Book is not a cold guide, but a Book of principles which we too often fail to know through laxity in reading it, or which we forget through having our senses dulled by worldly contacts. May we read it more so that we shall know better how "to walk and to please God" in our pilgrimage (1 Thess. 4:1) as Enoch did (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5).

## Everlasting Punishment: Knowing the Terror of the Lord

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Everlasting punishment is indeed an awful affair, and many are trying to disbelieve it. But does that alter the fact? When Noah preached the coming flood of universal destruction, someone might have said, "What an awful affair"; and who believed him? But did that alter the fact? And when God announced the destruction of Sodom, that was an awful affair. Lot himself scarcely believed it. But it came.

Many learned men are denying eternal punishment, and maintaining that the soul is not immortal; were there not many mighty men, men of renown, all of whom rejected the preaching of Noah, or the warning of God (Gen. 6:4)? Have you weighed the alternative? If you say that the soul of man ceases to exist at death, then you must give up the whole Word of God as false, and thus be left in darkness even now. Let us see. If man was not created with a soul that is to exist forever, what was he? Simply a slightly superior beast, here a little while, and then off the scene. Now there is no sin in a beast; there is no conscience of sin in a mere animal. There is no responsibility toward God in an animal. There would be no need for, or sense in, an atonement. An animal has no nature, no capacity, to know God or the things of God.

But in contrast with the formation of all mere cattle, beasts, birds, or fishes, we read, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Here was a totally different creature from the beasts and cattle of the field. Here was a living soul, capable of conversing with God, placed as head of creation, but under responsibility. And mark, while a beast could not be so placed, man was so placed as a living soul, and one sin has involved the whole race in ruin and misery. And what we read in the Word of God, we find around us today. There is the same distinction between man and the animals around, as there was when he came out of the hands of God. Not another creature is there on earth to which you can communicate the idea of God or a future existence. Take away man's immortality, reduce him to a mere beast, though a superior beast, and then we must allow you overthrow everything revealed in the Word of God.

That man as to his bodily existence is mortal, liable to death like the beasts, is clearly revealed, but that is not our question. And that the Old Testament is chiefly occupied with the body and the things of the body, we do not dispute for a moment. That the word soul is used to denote man in the body, or persons, as we say, is frequently the case, as "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The person under the government of God would be put to death. The context will make this plain.

But now we have the complete revelation of God in the New Testament. What is the certain teaching of the complete Word of God? Is there such a thought as that at death, man, like the beast, ceases to exist? Far from it. Is there then distinct teaching that as to the wicked, rejecters of the gospel, they do not cease to exist at death? Could anything be more certain than the following? "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Heb. 9:27. Can there be judgment, after ceasing to exist? If man ceases to exist, there is nothing to judge.

You may say, They will be raised again to be judged. True, they will, for the Word says so (Rev. 20:11-15). And they shall be cast into the lake of fire; and they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Now that torment is declared to be forever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night. (See Rev. 14:10, 11.) Now honestly, is this ceasing to exist after death? Infidels may teach so, but not the Word of God. And that Word never contradicts itself.

Does the Lord Jesus teach that going into hell fire is ceasing to exist? No, over and over again He declares it is fire that never shall be quenched. (Read Mark 9:43-48.)

Did He teach that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ceased to exist? No. "For He is, not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him." Luke 20:38. It may be objected that they were saved men, and therefore existed after death. Now as to this the Lord makes no difference whatever; He teaches that both the saved and lost live after death, as to the soul, and that they are equally conscious as if they were alive in the body.

The rich man died; did he cease to exist? Not a bit more than Abraham. He lifted up his eyes, being in torments. Did he cease to exist? Oh hear his dreadful cry for a drop of water to cool his tongue. The rich man no more ceased to exist at death than Lazarus the saved beggar. The one was comforted and the other was tormented. If any say that they deny the Scripture, then we understand them. But they should not pretend to be Christian, and all the while teach doctrines that would make Christ a deceiver.

He is the truth, and could teach only the truth. In the plainest possible language He tells us, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment [or torment]: but the righteous into life eternal." Matt. 25:46. He uses the same word to denote the everlasting existence of both. Many may not be aware how Satan is leading them on into this debasing error that man is not an immortal soul and will not exist forever and ever. But it is a direct attack on all Scripture. Prove it false in one part, and all true faith is destroyed in every other part. It must lead practically to infidelity on every subject. Already its dire effects are seen. The progress of darkness and lawlessness has set in and advances with rapid strides.

No one can deny that wherever this doctrine of non-eternity of torment has got a footing, reasoning and doubt on all Scripture truths is following. Let us pause. Abundance of scripture might be brought to show that "death" is not "ceasing to exist." How could the soul of the dead child have returned into it, if it had ceased to exist? yet it was dead and was restored to life (2 Kings 4:32-36). And so of the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7). There was a dead man. Yet at the word of Jesus the dead arose, sat up, and began to speak. No, beloved reader, if we give up the immortality of the soul, we give up everything, and reduce man to a mere beast. There is no real sin, and no need of true expiation, if man, before the new birth is a mere intelligent beast or mere animal, and when he dies he ceases to exist. Is it not astonishing that man can shut his eyes to the Scriptures as the revelation of God, and become so dark?

Crafty men will pervert the Scriptures to deceive souls. Many may secretly wish it to be so, that they may indulge in sin, and see no judgment before them. But, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." "Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." "So then every one of us shall give account to himself to God." "For we must all appear

[or be made manifest] 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. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened... and they were judged every man according to their works." "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers [called now Spiritualists], and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their, part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

All this would be utterly false if the wicked ceased to exist at death. We cease to exist here in this state as to the body; but if the soul ceases to exist, what is there to be judged? How can there be a second death of that which does not exist? Let God be true, though every man be a liar. We repeat, if you give up the immortality of the soul, you give up the whole Bible. If we own the mortality of the body and the immortality of the soul, and the future resurrection, and judgment of all rejecters of the glad tidings of God, then all is clear. You and I must be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, either justified from all things through the death and resurrection of the very One before whom we are manifested, or we must stand at another time to be judged for our sins. And if thus judged, we shall be cast into the lake of fire - into torment that never ends.

Oh think of the terror of that day. Think of the wrath of God - forever and ever. And think of God now, with arms of mercy ready to receive and pardon the vilest that comes to Him - that believes on the Lord Jesus. Surely God has shown His estimate of sin by the death of Christ, His only begotten Son. Yes, "God so loved."

## Exercise of Conscience

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"When godly exercise of conscience fails to produce a path of practical separation from evil, it is sometimes undertaken in selfwill and a spirit of opposition. Such a person is liable to sink back into a worse condition than before; conscience is not set at rest, the way of truth is still despised, divine power and the anointed eye are lacking, and the man becomes an easy prey to the enemy. He does not really separate from evil in self-judgment but in self-will; and, like the house swept and garnished, his last state becomes worse than the first."

## Expression of Unbelief: How?

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It is interesting to observe that there are points of similarity as well as of contrast between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. Both meet Christ with a "How?" When "truth" fell upon the ear of the master in Israel, he said, "How can these things be?" When "grace" shone upon the woman of Sychar, she said, "How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" We are all full of "bows." The truth of God in all its majesty and authority is put before us; we meet it with a how. The grace of God in all its sweetness and tenderness is unfolded in our view; we reply with a how. It may be a theological how, or a rationalistic how; it matters not; the poor heart will reason instead of believing the truth and receiving the grace of God. The will is active, and hence, although the conscience may be ill at ease, and the heart dissatisfied with itself and all around, still the unbelieving "how?" breaks forth in one form and another. Nicodemus says, "How can a man be born when he is old?" The Samaritan says, in substance, "How canst Thou ask drink of me?"

Thus it is ever. When the Word of God declares to us the utter worthlessness of nature, the heart, instead of bowing to the holy record, sends up its unholy reasonings. When the same Word sets forth the boundless grace of God, and the free salvation which is in Christ Jesus, the heart, instead of receiving the grace, and rejoicing in the salvation, begins to reason as to how it can be. The human heart is closed against God, against the truth of His Word, and against the love of His heart. The devil may speak, and the heart will give its ready credence. Man may speak, and the heart will greedily swallow what he says. Lies from the devil, and nonsense from man will all meet a ready reception from the human heart; but the moment God speaks, whether it be in the authoritative language of truth or in the winning accents of grace, all the return the heart can make is an unbelieving, skeptical, rationalistic, infidel, "How?" Anything and everything for the natural heart save the truth and grace of God.

However, in the case of the woman at Sychar, our blessed Lord was not to be put off with her "how?" He had answered the "how?" of the man of the Pharisees, and He would now answer the "how?" of the woman of Sychar. He had replied to Nicodemus by telling him of the powerful operations of the Spirit of God, and then of the love of God who sent His Son; He replies to the Samaritan by telling her, likewise, of "the gift of God." "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

Now the little word "gift" opens a vast range of most precious truth to the soul. The Lord does not say, "If thou knewest the law, thou wouldest have asked." Indeed, had she known it, she must have seen herself as lost under it, instead of being encouraged to ask for anything. No one ever got "living water" by the law. "This do, and thou shalt live," was the language of the law. The law gave nothing save to the man that could keep it. And where was he? Assuredly the woman of Sychar had not kept it. This was plain. The Lord could talk to her of "gift," and surely requirement formed no integral or necessary part of gift. "The gift of God is eternal life," not through the law, but

"through Jesus Christ our Lord." The law never even proposed such a thing as eternal life in heaven. It spoke of long life in the land.

## 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.

## Faith in Hebrews and in Romans

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In Hebrews, faith is looked upon as an active principle of endurance and conduct; it is reliance on God's Word through grace for practice. In Romans, it is the principle on which we are justified, in virtue of Christ's work, the ground of peace. In the former it is the active, working faith of the saint; in the latter, the non-working faith of the sinner.

## The First-Born: the Unclean Redeemed by the Holy

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The righteousness of God was witnessed by the law and the prophets, although only manifested by the cross, resurrection, and glorification of our Lord. The witnessing was to the manifestation what the shadow was to the substance - a resemblance and a contrast. The outline may be simpler, but the fullness is lacking. Now the shadows, doubtless, are left by the Lord to help us to understand better the reality. One of the most interesting of these shadows is found in the relative position and fate of the first-born of the clean and unclean animals. In them we have a wonderful picture of the Savior, the sinner, and the atonement.

If I think of the relative status in nature and under the law of the clean and unclean beasts, clearly the clean have the advantage. Noah shows us this when he takes seven to one into the ark. When I remember this I am struck with the fact that the firstling of the unclean creature has great advantage over that of the clean; for it may freely enjoy life, though only on the ground of redemption; but the other is absolutely doomed to death. Thus we read, "The firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem." Numb. 18:15. But the firstling of a cow, a sheep, a goat; that is, of clean animals, "thou shalt not redeem; they are holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar," etc. These two classes of animals represent two men - the unclean or sinful man, and the holy Man. Man looked at as the race, including of course every individual save One, stands side by side with the unclean animal, and this not from any act of our own which made us guilty, but from our birth, from which, through the first man's sin, we were constituted sinners, and by nature children of wrath. So we find coupled with the redemption of the unclean firstling, "The firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem." This teaches the unholy nature of man. In a similar way we find man associated with the ass in Exod. 13, reminding us of Zophar's word, "Though man be born like a wild ass's colt," giving man the thought of the naturally insubordinate character of our hearts - they are "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." So we see man away from God, under condemnation, and needing a Savior from his birth. This corresponds with the end of Rom. 5 "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." But also we see redemption as large as the ruin - "The firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem." There stands the open door of salvation for all. "By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

Now in the midst of redemption mercy there was One for whom there was none. For the firstling of the clean beast there was no escape from death. Strange may seem the reason; it was holy. The unclean might find an escape, the holy never. What a riddle this presents to the natural mind! It seems subversive of all justice and it would be of all human and legal righteousness. But what a vivid picture it is of God's righteousness in saving the sinner! Here was the will of God - our sanctification. This must be by sacrifice; namely, by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once (Heb. 10:10). Our Lord comes to do that will. He takes the place in infinite grace of the clean animal, "that holy thing," as Luke declares. Now the absolute doom of the first-born of the sheep, etc., pictures His awful position as thus come, shut up without escape to judgment. True He looked beyond it to that right-hand place where there are pleasures for evermore; and He could say,

"Thou wilt show Me the path of life"; and "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places." But it was nevertheless true that the weight of that judgment into which He had to go was on His Spirit. His enemies, ignorant of the truth, correctly expressed it in the bitter and cruel taunt, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save."

As the end draws near we find Him fully conscious of the situation, but absolutely undeterred by it. So we read, "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?" As indeed in the garden the terror of it was upon His holy Spirit - "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." It is not possible - "Thou shalt not redeem." There is the type - "Thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar." So too the, for the time, unanswered prayers for deliverance, in Psalm 22 - "I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not." Now in all this depth of suffering, shut in to judgment, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts," we see the wonderful perfection of the Lord. He justifies God in the midst of all - "Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." The depth of His trial proved how truly He was holy. There was no answer of evil to be wrung from His heart. There was a Man in whom only good was, and only good could come forth; thus He was a sweet savor to God. All men much tested had utterly failed - Job and others - and must range themselves, as we must, side by side with the unclean beast. In Christ we find the only antitype of the clean animal, and He was the only One for whom there was no escape, so that through the grace of God there might be for the sinner who believes in Him.

If we carry on further the history of the first-born, it is full of interest and instruction. The firstborn of Israel were saved by the blood at the passover; but those so redeemed were specially and peculiarly God's. "Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb... is Mine." Exod. 13:2. Thus the first-born was not merely redeemed from death; it was bought for God - "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." The history of the firstborn was this: God had His tabernacle, with its varied and multiplied services, to perform which required an immense number of men. Now this service belonged to the first-born, but their places were taken by the tribe of Levi. Each Levite represented a firstborn man in Israel. The number of eldest children that exceeded the number of that tribe were redeemed by five shekels of silver each. (Numb. 3:46-48; and 8.) Thus the Levites were in a special way a redeemed company. Clearly they are thus typical of Christians, both in our redemption and in the claim God has upon us for service as redeemed. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God" (redemption mercies here) "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

## Five Words of Exhortation

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### 1. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind" (1 Pet. 1:13).

This is a beautiful word for the Christian pilgrim. Diligence, devotedness, and unworldliness are all implied in the girded loin. The loose flowing robes of the East would obstruct a man in labor, impede him in walking, and certainly contract injury or defilement over rough or dirty ground. Hence the necessity for a girdle, essential to secure the robe when any great work was in hand or an arduous journey taken, and more especially when the path was rugged, thorny, or defiling. How fitting then in its moral application is the exhortation to use the girdle which, be it said, is ever in Scripture expressed as righteousness, faithfulness, or truth. How could we allow our robes to flow in such a scene as this, wet, as we may say, with the blood of Christ crying from the ground? O for girded loins! Is it not a time for diligence, seeing that on the one hand the fields are white unto harvest, and on the other the sheep have but little pasture? Is it not a time for devotedness when "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's"? and Paul's doctrine and manner of life are equally an offense? Is it not a time for unworldliness when more and more palpably the world exerts its every effort to be happy without Christ, so that what is not unmitigated evil is religious worldliness, worldly religiousness, or Christless Christianity?

"Be sober," or self-restrained (v. 13).

What a truly needed word is this! How many there are who know deliverance from their sins, and deliverance from this scene, but who know not practical deliverance from dominant self. Self-allowance is closely akin to self-assertion. On the other hand, self-judgment is the parent and the power of self-restraint. Every germ of self-allowing or self-asserting is in principle disloyalty to Christ. The true heart loves to confess there is no word more true and few more comforting than this, that we are not our own, but bought with a price.

Hope to the end" (v. 13).

Hope on, perfectly or steadfastly. Diligence and sobriety are here followed with confidence. Hope unto the end signifies fully, perfectly, the full assurance of hope (Heb. 6:11) - hope which maketh not ashamed. Be it remarked that the New Testament sense of hope is never uncertainty, but immature or deferred certainty. Confidence, therefore, characterizes it as much as expectation; and thus, instead of being in doubt and uncertainty, in quietness and in confidence is our strength. The world has its hopes, but they are so steeped in uncertainty that the word hope has become almost synonymous with doubt; whereas, the believer is so confident as to that which constitutes his hope, that he can say, "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Rom. 8:25. "The grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" we surely see not. With patience then we wait for it, because our hope is steadfast and blessed. He will surely come; He will not tarry; and oh, what tides of blessing will His presence usher in! "The grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

"He who, with hands uplifted,

Went from this earth below,  
Shall come again all gifted,  
His blessing to bestow."

"As obedient children" (v. 14).

The fourth thing is obedience - "as obedient children." Not the obedience of a servant or a slave, but the obedience of a child; or, to put it more forcibly and more accurately, "as children of obedience," the opposite of "children [or sons] of disobedience," which we were in our sins. (See Eph. 2:2 and 5: 6.) Such obedience is never irksome when the heart is right with God and the will broken before Him. Could we conceive the will of the Father to have been ever irksome to Christ? Did He chafe under it? No; says He, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." If then we ever find His will irksome, let us get into His presence in confession, being convinced that there is something radically wrong which only self-judgment can correct. "Children of obedience" is a lovely term for God's saints, implying as it does that that which is characteristic of us, and which we should sedulously cultivate, is spontaneous filial obedience. Who among us has not viewed with admiration the obedience of a loving and devoted child, unhesitating, unquestioning, uncalculating, and with the ready grace that stamps it as a service of love? "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3.

5. "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (v. 15).

Finally we have holiness. That which marked us in our unconverted state was lusts and ignorance; that which is to mark us now is divine holiness. "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." 1 Thess. 4:7. And He who hath called us, being Himself holy, says, "So be ye holy in all manner of conversation," or in every bit of your deportment; for if it savor of any contravention of holiness, this is a libel upon our calling, and upon Him who has called us. That which should characterize us as saints is, on the contrary, that having got manumitted from sin and become bondsmen unto God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

The Lord grant us to have girded loins in this day of general indifference and worldliness, and give us sobriety in place of laxity, confidence instead of the doubtful mind, obedience in place of self-will, and the scrupulous observance as saints of that holiness which becometh Himself and His house forever.

## A Fool and His Folly: No God

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"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1); or rather, "No God"; in other words, it is not want of understanding, but moral corruption, the state of the affections, that leads to atheism. The impenitent sinner desires that there should be no God to bring him into judgment, and thus seeks to persuade himself that there is none. He "that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (margin, discovered). He loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil. And hence Psalm 14 goes on to describe the moral condition of the man who has succeeded in persuading himself that there is "no God." "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works." I have been led to these reflections by a remarkable incident.

A Christian woman in conversation with an atheist said, "You will find infidelity a rotten plank some day."

This man had accosted her in very offensive language interlarded with oaths and curses. He had formerly been a religious professor, and was well acquainted with the "letter" of Scripture. The woman whom he had addressed, having seriously expostulated with him on his profanity, added a solemn reference to the name of God. He replied, first by a denial of His existence, and then with an impious challenge to his Creator to prove His existence by "smashing him to pieces." These words were deliberately repeated, and in louder tones, as the woman whom he addressed fled in terror from his presence, while the blasphemer called upon her to take his message to "her God."

On the very next morning, which was Sunday, this wicked man was with some of his infidel companions, on his way to a neighboring town, in his usual health and spirits, when he suddenly fell to the ground with a shriek. The poor stricken blasphemer was carried home and, on reaching there, immediately requested that an evangelical clergyman, whom he had formerly known, might be sent for. On the arrival of the minister, his first words were, "O there is a God - there is a God - the Lord be merciful to me a sinner." The Christian minister spoke to him of the grace of the Lord Jesus, and before he left his bedside the poor penitent found peace. The passages of Scripture especially used by the Spirit of God for blessing to his soul, were 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," and John 6:37, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." He died in a few days, constantly rejoicing in the Lord, but none of his infidel friends came near him.

May the Lord graciously grant that the striking exemplification of the truth which this narrative affords, that His all-seeing eye marks the footsteps of the transgressor, and that "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves" ( Job 34:22), may not be without fruit for His glory, and the conviction and conversion of sinners.

## For Whose Ear? Music and Singing

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Music and fine singing in our day are likely to become a great snare against which he who would walk with God should be on his guard. We are no admirers of slovenly singing, nor do we regard it as evidence of high spirituality for hymns to be sung so slowly that few can join in them without being utterly exhausted; at the same time, we believe the singing of a poor old saint, whose voice has no melody at all but whose heart is right with God, is infinitely more acceptable in His sight than the singing of the ungodly, even if it be altogether perfect. Much of the music and singing which forms so large a part of what is called the public worship of God suggests the question, For whom is this "worship" intended? and whose ear is sought to be pleased? Alas! there can be but one answer.

## Notes on Galatians 6:2: Bear Ye One Another's Burdens

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The only question to be considered in this passage is as to the meaning of the law of Christ. It is generally said to be the law of love, and this is true; but is it not possible to be more precise? The preceding verse enjoins the spiritual to restore a fallen brother in the spirit of meekness, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." That is, as we understand, the spiritual man, remembering his own liability to fall, is to go in all gentleness to him who has been "overtaken in a fault" or offense, and in grace so identify himself with his condition as to take his burden of sin and sorrow upon himself, with a view to his succor and restoration.

Now this is exactly what Christ Himself has done - only perfectly - both in life and in death. Thus the Evangelist says, "He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matt. 8:16, 17. This was in His life, and concerning His death Peter says, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." 1 Pet. 2:24. He was thus, in life and death, the great burden-bearer; in life taking our infirmities and sicknesses in grace on His heart; in death bearing our sins in substitution, as made sin for us by God, when He endured for the glory of God all that was due to us on account of our sins, that He might take them away forever.

There is a great difference between His burden-bearing in life and in death; but still He was in both, the burden-bearer. And this is the law of Christ: "Bear ye one another's burdens," and so fulfill the law of Him who was the pattern burden-bearer. Love was undoubtedly the motive of all; for, as the Apostle says, He "loved me, and gave Himself for me"; and it is certain that we shall never go and take the burdens of our brethren on ourselves, unless we are under the constraint of the love of Christ.

## Gentleness

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"The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." 2 Tim. 2:24, 25. There should be nothing in the preacher to prejudice the sinner's judgment, or harden his heart against the offer of God's grace! If the servant be proud and hasty, how shall they know that the Master is meek and patient?

## Gilgal

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The power of resurrection life takes all strength from Satan: "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." 1 John 5:18. In our earthly life, the flesh being in us, we are exposed to the power of the enemy, and the creature has no strength against him, even though it should not be drawn into actual sin. But if death is become our shelter, causing us to die unto all that would give Satan an advantage over us, what can he do? Can he tempt one who is dead, or overcome one who, having died, is alive again? But, if this be true, it is also necessary to realize it practically. "Ye are dead,... Mortify therefore." This is what Gilgal means.

## God Is Not Mocked: the Editor's Column

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A letter telling us of the shocking and brazen display of contempt for God and His Christ on the campus of Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, strongly reminded us "that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts." 2 Pet. 3:3. The students of the very college that a century ago was headed by the God-fearing and faithful preacher Charles G. Finney, and which was then a great center of orthodox Christianity, dared the wrath of God by enacting a mock crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shrink from even recording their audacious and blasphemous act of nailing an effigy of our blessed Savior to a tree. Can so called Christian people go further? If the Jews who professed Christianity and then relapsed into the old religion of outward forms and ceremonies were guilty of putting "the Son of God... to an open shame" (Heb. 6:6), is the crime of these students one whit less? Is it not rather greater? Is it not despising the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering (Rom. 2:4)? Surely they are "ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Jude 4. They make use of the very long-suffering of God, who has not executed His righteous wrath against the world that murdered His Son, to insult Him. Pharaoh who said, I know not the Lord and will not obey Him, and Antiochus Epiphanes who profaned the Jewish temple by offering swine's flesh on the altar, were less culpable than the guilty students of Oberlin College, for their effrontery was carried out in the full light of Christianity.

But "God is not mocked" was the title of another bit of news that came to our notice about the same time. There had been a train wreck caused by an open switch, and some of the passengers had been killed, and many others were injured. The man who wrote the account was a passenger on the ill-fated train. We shall give briefly his story:

He was called to the side of one fatally injured man, and after a few remarks between them, the dying man asked him to listen to his story. He wished that it might be a warning to others. He was a traveling salesman, and about ten years before had spent an evening drinking with a group in a certain hotel. Their conversation that night turned to some gospel meetings that were being conducted in the town. A number had evidently been saved and turned from their evil ways; this was the occasion for much ridicule. One of the party asked how the meetings were conducted and what was happening in them, so a young man offered to make a demonstration if the others would join 'him. We shall quote the words of the dying man:

"Six of us knelt on the floor and started the mockery. We prayed for the forgiveness of our sins, and even tried to imitate the tears of repentance. We closed with that song we learned in childhood, Rock of Ages, cleft for sin!... What I am about to tell you, happened in the last ten years. There were six of us. Before the end of the first year, the hotel owner fell, burst a blood vessel, and died.... Two years later the young man who started the demonstration was with a hunting party in the country. During the night he got up to get a drink of water, fell down the steps, broke his neck, and died two days later..... The third, called Tom, a droll fellow, who by that mockery cried the loudest, fell down his own cellar and died.... Now I became anxious to know what would happen to

my other two companions. One of them went west, hoping to escape his expected doom, but shortly after that the local newspaper reported that he was caught between the bumpers of two cars, and died a horrible death.... Last year I met my only surviving companion. He had sunk into poverty, and lost both wife and children. Then one evening he fell six feet and broke his neck. Since that time I have waited for my end, and now it has come."

What a sorrowful list of tragedies! Six mockers cut off in violent deaths within ten years. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gal. 6:7.

It took years to see the truth of this scripture in the case of the six mockers. What shall be the end of the participants in that sacrilegious and blasphemous mockery at Oberlin College? Time will tell, but "God is not mocked."

Within the last few days we also received in the mail an article entitled "The Finger of God," which gives an account of the destructive eruption on the Island of Martinique, May 8, 1902. This article tells that the inhabitants of the city of St. Pierre, at the foot of the volcano Mount Pelee, "In order to mock the crucifixion of Christ, crucified publicly on (what is generally called) Good Friday;

a swine." They also had plans laid to repeat the infamy in a few days, but suddenly the volcano that had been quiet for a long time erupted a cloud of burning poisonous gas and glowing lava which transformed the city into a sea of fire. History records the estimated deaths at 40,000.

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb. 10:31. But as we approach the end, we see more and more of the rashness of infidelity, until at the end the head of the revived Roman Empire will open his mouth to blaspheme God in open defiance. He, however, shall meet swift destruction when the Lord comes out of heaven to make His enemies His footstool. Well did Job say, "Who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?" Job 9:4.

A verse from Ecclesiastes is also to the point - "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Chapter 8:11. But a day of just retribution is coming apace, and all the ingenuity of man will not prevent or mitigate it.

## God Manifest in the Flesh: Reverence and Not for Reasoning

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Christ came to do God's will; in Him was no sin. It was humanity, in Christ, where God was, and not humanity separate from God in itself... It was not man where no evil was, like Adam innocent, but man in the midst of evil; it was not man bad in the midst of evil, like Adam fallen, but man perfect - perfect according to God - in the midst of evil, God manifest in flesh; real, proper humanity, but His soul always having the thoughts that God produces in man, and in absolute communion with God, save when He suffered on the cross here He must, as to the suffering of His soul, be forsaken of God; more perfect then, as to the extent of the perfection and ----the degree of obedience, than anywhere else, because He accomplished the will of God in the face of His wrath, instead of doing it in the joy of His communion; and therefore He asked that this cup should pass, which He never did elsewhere. He could not find His meat in the wrath of God...

I recommend to avoid discussing and defining the Person of our blessed Savior. You will lose the savor of Christ in your thoughts, and you will only find in their room the barrenness of man's spirit in the things of God and in the affections which pertain to them. It is a labyrinth for man, because he labors there at his own charge. It is as if one dissected the body of his friend, instead of nourishing himself with his affections and character.

## God's Mighty Man of Valor: Gideon

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Judg. 6:8

The history of Gideon is of much practical importance. It is the history of one of those revivals in Judges so peculiarly applicable to the present circumstances and need of the Church.

Every now and again Israel had been sold into the hands of their enemies. Groaning under the consequences of their sin, they had cried unto the Lord; and the Lord, ever faithful, had raised up someone as a deliverer out of the hands of those that spoiled them. He was grieved for the afflictions of His people. He judged their sin and evil, yet, at the same time, pitied and saved. But then the persons by whom He wrought were always in themselves insignificant.

"The children of Israel," we read, "did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years." Chapter 6: 1.

The Midianites knew not that it was the Lord who had delivered Israel into their hands, yet in reality they were but the rod with which it pleased Him to punish His people.

"And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel." "And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord." vv. 2,6.

The Lord first sent a prophet who testified of their sin, and then raised up the instrument for their deliverance.

"And there came an angel of the LORD, who sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites." v. 11.

Not anything could have been more abject than the condition of Gideon as described here - stealthily threshing wheat (for fear of the Midianites) to feed his family! But here is one whom the Spirit of God delights to make mention of; whose name, unrecorded of man, is thought worthy to be recorded by Him (Heb. 11:32-34). The Spirit of God writes to magnify the grace of God, not to exalt man. He would have us bear in mind such little incidents as that noticed

here, in the history of the soldiers of faith, in order that we may see by what weak and insignificant instruments God works. His mightiest victories have ever been won by such, and not by those who had resources in themselves.

"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." v.12. What a remarkable salutation! Stealthily threshing wheat to hide it from the enemy, looked not like valor. But God's "mighty men" have ever been such as were arrant cowards in themselves, men distrustful of their own strength and wisdom in coping with the enemy - "Out of weakness were made strong." None are "mighty" men "of valor" but those to whom it has been said, "The LORD is with thee." When God calls a person by a name, He makes that person what the name imports; but He takes the most abject man of an abject tribe to make him His

"mighty man of valor." "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1 Cor. 1:25-29). God works not ordinarily by such; the credit would then be given to our wisdom, our influence, and the like; and it is written, "No flesh" shall glory in His presence. He takes "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" and "the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised,... yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are." If Timothy is exhorted to "fight the good fight of faith," it is as one "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

"And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" v. 13.

His heart has been touched and prepared of the Lord for the work to which he is called. He has a deep sense of the condition of Israel upon his soul, though he is without the power to help them; and he has been comparing that condition with the title and power of the Lord. This is the way of faith.

"And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have I not sent thee?" v. 14.

The Lord looked upon him.

That is the first thing. The man who is really strong and mighty is he who has thus got into the secret of Israel's impoverishment. The Lord has looked upon him. The Lord has identified Himself with him, and shown His heart to be toward him. There is no limit to His might.

But does Gideon feel himself to be a strong man? No! never before had he so known his own weakness and insignificance; never had he so felt the poverty of his father's house as now.

"And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." v. 15.

Thus it is always with the soldiers of faith. They have never so felt their own weakness as when called to be God's mighty men of valor. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." We need to feel that we are weak; that brings in Omnipotence. We shall have a life of feeling by-and-by, in the glory; now we are called upon to lead a life of faith. What saint but knows, from the experience of the deceitfulness of his own heart, that had we power in ourselves instead of in Christ we should be something? This is what God does not intend.

"Wherewith shall I save Israel?" His threshing instrument would have been a poor thing indeed to look to as that "wherewith" to go against the host of Midian. Never, we repeat, had he felt the poverty of his father's house as now. When God is about to use a man, He makes that man feel most consciously nothing in himself. If He delivers by Gideon's hand, He must have the glory, not Gideon; His must be the strength, not Gideon's. It is always as it should be when we drop down into our nothingness. Strong in the Lord, we are weakest in ourselves. Can we not, almost invariably, trace our failures to self-confidence? When a believer thinks that he is going to do a feat, his failure often becomes ridiculous. God must abase that which is proud and lifted up.

As with David, in another fight of faith, there was no sword in the hand of Gideon - not anything "wherewith" to go against the Midianites. But what matter of that? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He does not go forth unarmed. "Surely I will be with thee, and [as a consequence of that] thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Here then is the mighty man of valor, and here is his armor:

Gideon asks a sign: "And he said unto Him, If now I have found grace in Thy sight, then show me a sign that Thou talkest with me."

There is feebleness, doubtless, here; he ought to have had simple confidence, and not have needed a sign; still, all he really cares for is having the Lord with him.

When Gideon's heart is reassured, he builds an altar there unto the Lord, and calls it "Jehovah-shalom" (v. 24).

And now he is prepared for service. He has been under God's tutorage. He has learned where his strength is; he no longer says, "wherewith shall I save Israel?" And the Lord has given him confidence to stand before Him. But where does He set him to work? -with the Midianites? No, not in the least. He has to begin the Lord's work at home with that which is nearest to himself.

"And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: and build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down." vv. 25, 26.

There judgment commences. We must "cease to do evil" before we "learn to do well." Obedience to God is the saint's rule and liberty. Not all the powers in the world have a title to interfere with this. And, moreover, if God says, Pull down the altar of Baal, He will give strength to do it.

"Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night." v. 27.

He acts unhesitatingly. And what is the consequence? Immediate opposition.

The action of faith always excites the flesh. Israel knew not where their strength was; they thought it in Baal. Gideon had learned it to be in God.

When we are mixed up with the world, Satan has no occasion to disturb us; let him be alarmed, and up come Midianites, Amalekites, etc. "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel." v. 33.

Here is Gideon with his own people against him, and the enemies of Israel gathered together and pitching in Jezreel. But he has peace with God, and the Lord is (so to speak) bound to appear on his side. How does he act? "The Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him." v. 34. Had Gideon been serving Baal, he could not have

blown the trumpet thus. But Baal is down, and the altar of God is set up in the ordered place. He sends messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also are gathered unto him, and to Ashur, Zebulun, and Naphtali.

But Gideon has a still further lesson to learn (one painfully our own). He has known the acceptance of his offering. The youngest of an idolatrous household, he has built an altar to the Lord, and begun to destroy idolatry. But he has yet to be taught that there is not a bit more courage or prowess really in the men that had gathered after him than in himself.

"And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me." Chap. 7:2.

At once he has to get rid of a great number of them. This is done, first of all, by means of an ancient ordinance of Moses. The Lord tells him, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand." v. 3.

To all appearance Gideon was weakening his own hands. At the first proclamation twenty-two thousand left him; but in reality, instead of losing strength, he was gainer by their departure. These fearful and fainthearted ones would have discouraged the rest had they remained among them. "Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart." Deut. 20:8. The flesh is very bold in

word; but when it comes to the point of trial, with Peter it curses and swears that it knows not Jesus. "The flesh profiteth nothing." John 6:63.

"And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go." v. 4.

There is such a thing as the trial of our faith; and while we would be quite unable to test one another, God knows the best way of testing each.

"So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the THREE HUNDRED men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place." vv. 5-7. God's ways are strange to sense. The infidel scoffs at them. These who were sent home were really not afraid (as those who departed before) to go to the battle; they were all of them soldiers girded for war. The test was this whether in that thirsty day they would lap the water, putting the hand to the mouth, or bow down and drink at their ease. The three hundred chosen ones (those by whom the Lord was about to work) had not time for halting; their hearts were in their work and they merely took a draft as they went on their way.

The Apostle speaks of being entangled "with the affairs of this life" (2 Tim. 2:4); all that we can safely take, if we would "please Him who hath chosen" us to be soldiers, is just a draft by the way. There is a very great difference between being in the circumstances of this life, and being entangled with them. When tested by the Lord, those who bowed down were not fit for His use any more than the fainthearted. They must go to their homes.

Gideon (instructed that the battle is the Lord's, and that he must get rid of all encumbrances) is next shown his enemies. "And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand." v. 9. It is a blessed thing to be shown our enemies, and to be told with Gideon that the Lord has delivered them into our hands. Our old man is "crucified" (Rom. 6:6), the world "overcome" ( John 16:33), and its prince -judged" ( John 16:11). If we are walking by faith, as risen with Christ, Satan, the world, and the flesh are under our feet.

And mark further how graciously the Lord anticipated the need of His servant, in adding: "But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host." vv. 10, 11.

Let us follow Gideon. "Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came into a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host." vv. 11-14. Divine encouragement is never to the puffing up of the flesh. Anything of pride and self-importance must have been sorely wounded. When God will show His favored servant the things that are coming to pass, and that he shall smite the Midianites as one man, He makes him feel that (in himself) he is but as a "cake of barley bread." And is there not instruction for ourselves in this? Were Christians stripped of their worldliness, more really like the "cake of barley bread" (the most homely thing possible), the world would stand more in fear of them.

"And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped." Before he goes to battle, he worships in the full confidence of victory. The worship of faith is always the worship of confidence. Were we more really in our own eyes the "cake of barley bread" there would be more abounding praise. "He... returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian." v. 15.

What is this "host of Israel"? Three hundred men! The Midianites are as "grasshoppers for multitude"; the Lord's "host" but a handful of men! It is most important to see the dignity attached to the three hundred. And now comes the conflict: "And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said,...When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon." vv. 16-18. The weapons of their warfare were the most foolish things imaginable- trumpets, pitchers, and lamps in the pitchers! Faith's weapons must be mighty through God alone.

"So Gideon. and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp,...and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands...and held the lamps in their left hands,...and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon...and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host." vv. 19-22. Our power is in giving testimony to Jesus, and never getting out of the place of being but "earthen vessels." We must remember that the vessel only contains the light; let us not pretend that it is the light. The excellency of the power must be of God, not of us.

"And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them." Chap. 8:4. What three little words could be more blessedly descriptive of the Christian than these? not "faint, and sitting down"; not "faint, and giving up," but "faint, yet pursuing." We have to do with Him who "giveth power to the faint" (Isa. 40:29). "To them that have no might He increaseth strength." It is a blessed use to make of our faintness and weariness, that of drawing out of the fullness of the supply of grace and strength in Christ. It is said, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might"; but to whom? To the one who has no strength in himself, who would give up his course if strength were not supplied to him.

We do not like this trial of faith. It is very painful, doubtless, to feel day after day our own weakness. We want to feel that the battle is over; but let us remember that now is our time of war. We are called on to fight as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and that in a daily round of conflicts. Today there has been sufficient grace and sufficient evil, and tomorrow there will be sufficient grace and sufficient evil. What we need is to live day by day on God. He is faithful, and will supply strength according to the occasion and need. The Church will not be at rest till the Lord comes. But weakness ought to be no hindrance to our going forward - "faint, yet pursuing."

## 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 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 may grow careless, not remembering that "if ye live according to the flesh ye are about to die" (Rom. 8:13), 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 horn among idolaters 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 Deut. 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." 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 Gen. 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 that 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 Abrams 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 bondwoman 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 Sam. 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."

## Have You Tried It? the Foolishness of Infidelity

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The other day I was telling a man that the gospel is just what sinful man needs; death stares him in the face and all the science of man cannot deliver him. The man, a professed infidel, replied, "But I do not believe in the gospel." "Well," I asked, "have you anything to put in its place? Have you any other remedy?" "No," he said, "I have no other remedy." This gave me an opportunity to say, "You have no other remedy, and yet you will not believe the only remedy that has been provided."

The gospel is the only remedy; that is the great thing to arrive at. People may split up Christianity into different sects, but there is no other thing offered by men to meet man's ruin, but the gospel. It 'has no rival.

A little later I asked him another question - "Suppose for a moment that the gospel is true, would it suit you to have a triumphant Savior out of all the ruin and misery into which man has fallen?" "Admirably," he replied, "admirably." "Well," I said, "see where you are. You have no rival scheme in place of this one, and it is one, you admit yourself, that would suit you admirably; but you meet my appeal by saying you do not believe it! I have a third question to put to you - did you ever try it? If you heard of a certain cure for a headache or a toothache, do you think it would be a wire thing for you to say, 'I do not believe in it,' if you had not some other cure, or if you had never tried it?"

You see man treats the proposal God has made - the most wonderful thing that ever came into the world - in a way that shows you what a set of people cavilers are, and how true Scripture is when it says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Man would not treat a common remedy for a common pain in the way he treats the gospel that relates to his immortal soul. If he said, "I did try the cure but it was no good," or if he said, "I have a better one," it would be something; but here he does not say, "I have a better," but "I have not one at all. It would suit me admirably if it were true."

I further said, "You admit you never tried it; how dare you then say you do not believe it? If you had tried it and found it would not do, then you might say something about not believing in it; but until then, you have no right to say you do not believe it."

Take the case of the children of Israel when bitten by the fiery serpents. There they were suffering, and an evangelist of the day goes up to one of his friends or neighbors who has been struck down, and he says to him, "Do you see that serpent up there?" "Yes." "Well, God says if you look at that you will be healed." The man says, "I do not see any sense in that; it is unreasonable." The evangelist replies, "I have two reasons why you should try it. The one is that God says it; the other is that I have looked at it, and I have proved the benefit of it." That is what makes an evangelist. He always has two reasons - the Word - God says so - that is the first witness. The second is, I know it experimentally. Here is a man in the agony of the serpent's bite, and he looks up at the brazen serpent, and he is well in a moment! Would all the world convince that man that looking at the serpent had not cured him? Would the man not go to his neighbor and say, "Now, neighbor, there is a cure for you. I have two reasons why you should try it; and 'In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established': God has said it! and I have tried it myself, and I am

well." It was a most instantaneous cure. He that looked lived.

May the Lord make us better evangelists of this sort - those who say, "God says it, and I have proved it."

## He Oft Refreshed Me

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Have you ever noticed the service of a brother named Onesiphorus? I believe it has a word for us in these days when many are isolated and often are unable to meet with the Lord's people for fellowship.

The Apostle said of him in 2 Tim. 1:16-18, "He oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain:... he sought me out very diligently, and found me.... In... many things he ministered unto me."

What a lovely list of things are mentioned here, and how suggestive surely to any whose heart is filled with the love of Christ! "He oft refreshed me" - like a morning breeze, full of freshness and vitality, this dear man had often refreshed the heart of the great Apostle. Although Paul may at times have been cast down, here was one who had ministered to him, who had encouraged his heart, who had cheered his spirit, and sympathized with the Lord's prisoner in his bonds. Are there not some whom we could refresh, some drooping spirits whom we could water, some whom we might be able to cheer and encourage? And then having done it once, do it often!

Of Onesiphorus it is also said, "He sought me out very diligently, and found me." And there are some lonely ones who will only be found in this way. They will need seeking out and finding, and such service is noticed by Him who could seek out the poor outcast woman of Sychar's well. They are known to the Lord, and never forgotten by Him, yet He would have us search them out and by so doing remind them of that link which binds us together and to Christ in glory.

Both in Rome and Ephesus, Onesiphorus ministered to the Apostle, in what way we do not know, but it was known to the Lord and was precious to Him because done to one of His own, as He says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Oh that we too may be ready thus to serve Him as we serve those that are His own!

## Hebrews 10:26-31: a Reader Inquires

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ANSWER: Before making any comments on these verses we shall quote them, so as to have them before us.

"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye; shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

It would be well to keep before us that the Apostle, by the Spirit, was writing to the professed believers from among the Jews. Large numbers of them turned to the Lord from the rituals of Judaism (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7; 21: \_ 20), but some of them, because there was no reality in their profession, were in constant danger of apostatizing. The Apostle treated them all as real, but supposed that some might turn back, and consequently gave solemn words of warning. He had painstakingly set forth the immense superiority of the realities of Christianity over the old system of types and shadows. A word frequently found in the epistle is "better"; they had been brought into the better things.

In the 9th and 10th chapters the Apostle had shown the infinite worth and unchangeableness of the one sacrifice of Christ, in contrast with the often repeated and never satisfactory sacrifices of the Mosaic economy. This one "better" sacrifice had forever perfected the true believer. It would never be repeated, and never would need to be.

If a professor of faith in Christ would, after coming to that objective knowledge, turn back, there would be no more sacrifice for sins. His case would then be hopeless; he would have forsaken what he had learned (intellectually at least, we do not say in reality) was the only suitable sacrifice before God.

Such a one turning back would prove that he was never saved at all, and in turning back he would be going on willfully in sin. It would be an entirely different case from one who was saved and fell into some sin or grievous fault. The latter would feel the sin and the dishonor to the Lord, and judge himself for the allowance of the flesh's acting. For such cases there is provision: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." 1 John 2:1. The advocacy of Christ would be needed for such sin, but relationship would not change; it is still with the Father. And the one who thus falls into sin confesses it - "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The case supposed in Heb. 10 is that of apostasy; that is, forsaking Christ and His one perfect offering. If you speak to a true saint who has failed, and you ask him, Would you give up Christ?

he would instinctively say, Oh, no, I could never do that; He is all to me. Herein lies the vast difference between a saint's falling, and a mere professor giving up his profession and turning back to his sins.

The being sanctified by blood mentioned in verse 29 is an outward separation which may or may not be real. When the first covenant was instituted with Israel, Moses sprinkled "both the book and all the people" (Heb. 9:19). They were all marked then, and that by blood; and all who came within the pale of Christian profession were outwardly set apart by blood - the blood upon which the new covenant will yet be established with Israel.

For any who apostatize and forsake Christ, there is nothing left but looking for judgment and fiery indignation. This is reserved for the adversaries, and an apostate places himself among such; in fact, he is apt to become one of the worst. Some of the most bitter enemies of Christ and the gospel were once professors, yes, even preachers of the gospel. Judgment much worse than that which befell the despisers of the law given by Moses awaits all such. It is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

There is another solemn reflection in this connection: verse 25 is directly connected with this apostasy. Perhaps their turning back first became apparent when they neglected the public testimony to His name, for it brought shame and reproach that they were not willing to suffer. Therefore we get the solemn exhortation:

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

The Lord has placed His approval on the gathering together of His saints, and it is in the assembly that He ministers by the Spirit. The Lord never intended that His saints should walk as isolated entities. If one were unavoidably hindered from such assembly the Lord would sympathize with him, but to carelessly neglect such opportunities can only accrue loss to oneself.

We might add one word as to Hebrews 6 where a similar truth is given. In that chapter the apostasy is turning back from the circle where the demonstration of the power of the Spirit of God was witnessed.

We get apostasy today in those who turn back from the profession of an orthodox creed, either to willful sin as the washed sow returns to the mire (note, it was never a sheep, but only a sow all the while), or to the embrace of that which denies the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ; such as atheism, modernism, Unitarianism, Russellism ( Jehovah's Witnesses), Christian Science, Seventh Day Adventism, and the like.

There is hope that a mere lifeless professor of Christ may at some time turn to God in true repentance, and with living faith accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, but if he abandons that outward profession and denies either His Person or the value of His atoning work it is apostasy. Therefore let all professors take heed to the words of warning. It is indeed solemn to trample under foot the Son of God and to do despite (to insult) to the Spirit of grace - and all the worse because it is the Spirit of GRACE.

## Brief Thoughts on Hebrews: Jesus Christ, 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 in to 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" (N. 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; N. 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 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. 7:24)

## **I Know Something Better Than That!**

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"You know," said a Christian lady to a girl whom she found one day ill in bed, "that Jesus died for us." "Yes," replied the feeble voice, "but I know something better than that; I know He died for me." A chord was struck in the visitor's heart which instantly vibrated to the touch of these telling words. They were friends in a moment and forever. The dear uniting name was precious to both. They were one in Christ Jesus. It was a moment of real joy.

## The Importance of Regular Prayer: a Few Words to Young Christians

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Young people, when they come to a certain age, are often disposed gradually to leave off private prayer. They find the old adage true, "Praying will make thee leave sinning, and sinning will make thee leave praying."

It is a sad period in the history of a young person when the early habit of prayer is given up. Then the heart becomes like the garden of the slothful described by Solomon: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns." Pro. 24:30, 31.

There are no good plants thriving in the prayerless soul, but weeds and briars and thorns grow rank and thick, occupying every vacant spot. The stone wall is broken down; there is no defense against the beasts of the field. Every vagrant thought, every vicious passion, finds free admittance. The heart grows hard, and the spirit careless. Sin is not dreaded as it once was. The fear of God and the desire of His favor are gone. That youth stands on the edge of a precipice.

I would not have you think, however, that there is any merit in prayer, or that the prayers of one whose "heart is not right in the sight of God" are acceptable to Him. But what I say is that everyone ought to pray to God with a right heart. If your heart is not right with God, then it is wrong, and you are to blame for having it wrong.

I will suppose a case to illustrate what I mean. You see a child rise up in the morning and go about the house, and though its mother is with it all the time, yet the child neither speaks to her nor seems to notice her at all. After a while the mother asks what is the matter, and why her dear child does not speak to her. The child says, "I have no heart to speak to you, Mother. I do not love you; and so I think it would be wrong for me to speak to you." What would you think of such conduct? You would say, "The child ought to love its mother, and it is only an aggravation of its offense, to carry out the feelings of its heart in its conduct." Would you then have it act the hypocrite, and speak with its lips what it does not feel in its heart? No; but I would have it love its mother, and then act out in its speech and behavior what it feels in its heart. But I would never have it excuse itself from right actions because its heart is wrong. Now, apply this to the subject of prayer, and you will see the character of all such excuses.

If possible, have a particular time and place for prayer where you can be secure from all interruption. At the appointed hours, retire alone and put away all thoughts about your studies, your work, or anything of a worldly nature, and try to realize that God is as truly present as if you saw Him with your bodily eyes. Then read His Word as though you heard Him speak to you in the sacred page; and when your mind has become serious and collected, kneel down and pray to God. Thank Him for every mercy you have received, never forget to confess your sins, and ask for such blessings as you see and feel that you need. Pray also for your friends (and for your enemies, if you have any).

Let me earnestly entreat you to have set times for prayer, at least as often as morning and evening, and never suffer yourself to neglect them. And especially, do not adopt the unseemly practice of praying in bed, but give to God the brightest and best hours of the day, and offer not to Him the blind and the lame for sacrifice. You will find the regular and stated habit of prayer thus formed in early life of great value to you as long as you live.

But let me once more caution you not to trust in your prayers, for they cannot save you; and never think because you are regular and punctual in praying that you must be a Christian.

Prayer, if sincere and true, will prepare you for engaging in the duties of the day, or for enjoying calm repose at night. You need that calm, tranquil, humble spirit which prayer promotes, to prepare you to encounter those things which are constantly trying your feelings, and to enable you to do anything well. Therefore, never engage in anything of importance without first seeking direction of God; and never do anything on which you would be unwilling to ask His blessing.

## The Importance of the Written Word: One of Lessons of the Trip to Emmaus

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Luke brings before us in chapter 24 a scene peculiar in its details, at least to himself - the journey to Emmaus, where Jesus joins Himself to the two downcast disciples who discoursed, as they went, on the irreparable loss they had sustained. Jesus hears this tale of sorrow from their lips, brings out the state of their hearts, and then opens the Scriptures instead of merely appealing to the facts in the way of evidence.

This employment of the Scriptures by our Lord is very significant. It is the Word of God which is the truest, deepest, weightiest Testimony, even though the risen Jesus Himself were there and its living demonstration in Person. But it is the written Word which, as the Apostle Paul shows, is the sole adequate safeguard for the perilous times of the last days. Here too the loved companion of Paul proves in the history of the resurrection the value of the Scriptures. The Word of God - here the Old Testament interpreted by Jesus - is the most valuable means for ascertaining the mind of God. Every scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable - yes, able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Hence, our Lord expounds to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. What a sample that day was of the walk of faith! Henceforth, it was not a question of a living Messiah on the earth, but of Him that was dead and risen, now seen by faith in the Word of God. On the face of the account, this was the great living lesson that our Lord was teaching us through the two disciples. (Luke 24:13-29.)

But there was more. How is He to be known? There is but one way that can be trusted in which we can know Jesus. There are those in Christendom that descant upon Jesus who are as ignorant of His glory as a Jew or a Mahometan. Our own day has seen how men can speak and write eloquently of Jesus as a man here below, all the while serving Satan - denying His name, His Person, His work, when they flatter themselves that they are honoring Him, like the weeping women (chap. 23:27), without a grain of faith in His glory or His grace. Hence, it was of all importance that we should learn wherein He is to be known. Thus Jesus sets forth the only way in which He can be rightly known, or that can be confided in. On this alone, God can put His seal. The seal of the Holy Ghost is unknown until there is the submission of faith to the death of Jesus. And so our Lord breaks bread with the disciples. It was not the Lord's supper; but Jesus made use of that act of breaking the bread significantly, which the Lord's supper brings before us continually. In it, as we know, bread is broken - the sign of His death. Thus Jesus was pleased, Himself with them, that the truth of His death should flash upon the two souls at Emmaus. He was made known to them in the breaking of bread - in that most simple but striking action which symbolizes His death. He had blessed, broken, and was giving the bread to them, when their eyes were opened and they recognized their risen Lord (v. 31).

There is a third supplemental point which I only touch on - His instant disappearance after He was made known to them in the sign of His death. This is also characteristic of Christians. We walk by faith, not by sight.

Thus the great Evangelist, who exhibits what is most real for man's heart now, and what most of all maintains the glory of God in Christ, binds these things together for our instruction. Though Scripture was perfectly expounded by Jesus, and though hearts burned as they heard of these wondrous things, still it must be shown in concentrated form that the knowledge which alone can be commended by God or trusted by man is this - Jesus known in that which brings His death before the soul. The death of Jesus is the sole foundation of safety• for a sinful man. For a Christian, this is the true way of knowing Jesus. Anything short of this, anything other than this, whatever supplants it as fundamental truth, is false. Jesus is dead and risen, and must be known so, if He is to be known aright. "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." 2 Cor. 5:16.

And so, that same hour, we see the disciples returning to Jerusalem and finding the eleven there, who say, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." (vv. 32-34.) There is another truth necessary to be known and proved - His real resurrection, who stood in the midst of them with a "Peace be unto you," not without His death, but founded on it, and thus declared. So in the scene at Jerusalem, this finds its full display; for the Lord Jesus comes into their midst and partakes of food before their eyes. There was His body; it was risen. Who could longer doubt that it was really the same Jesus who died and will yet come in glory? "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself." They identify Jesus risen with Him they had known as their Master, and withal as still man, not a spirit, but having flesh and bones, and capable of eating with them. (vv. 36-43.)

After this our Lord speaks once more of what was written in Moses and prophets and psalms concerning Him (v. 44). It is the Word of God again brought out, not merely to two of them, but its unspeakable value for them all.

## Is the Heart Full?

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I don't know that if anyone wanted to be to the praise of God he could do it better than by being full of Christ. I meet some aged saints full of Christ, saying, "I've done with this world, but I have Christ. The only thing I have got to speak of is what this Christ of God is - He is ALL." I don't believe anything is better than that. If I look around me I see in saints - not want of intelligence, not lack of knowledge, not want of activity - that what they need is the affections full of Christ. There's plenty of oil in the machine that's full of Christ. If the heart is full of Christ, and full of joy in the Holy Ghost, then we have got our other portion, our real portion. The early Christians were so full of Christ that all their trials, all their difficulties, sank down into nothing. Why is it not so with us?

## Israel and Egypt, the Church and the World: Divine and Human Principles Contrasted

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The nations of the world were the witnesses of the power and policy of man, and they exhibited the ways and principles of man; but Israel should have been a witness before the nations of the character and principles of God. "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee." Deut. 33:29.

It is on this ground that Israel and Egypt are found, in their national character, so frequently presented in contrast in the Old Testament, just as the Church and the world are set in constant opposition in the New. The principles of God had their place in the one, and the principles of man were working in the other, which necessarily placed them in opposition.

But Israel had another character besides that which was stamped on them by their connection with God. They were men and they had, naturally, all the feelings and propensities of men. Hence, whenever their faith failed, and they were left to their own unrestrained action, they invariably displayed nothing but human tendencies, and sought for help in the natural resources of men.

It required the knowledge of God, and the recognition of the special relations He sustained toward them, and an active trust in His power and protection - in a word, faith in Him as God, and their God - to enable Israel to walk on God's principles, and to act in character before the nations. In like manner now, it requires faith on the part of the Church of God, in all God's blessed relations toward it, and the sense of His presence, in order to walk with Him, and to exhibit a heavenly character before the world. "They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee." Psalm 9:10.

But saints are men, as well as Israel of old, and in that character have been schooled and trained in the world, as Israel was trained in Egypt; and in either case the effect is seen, for

the certain result of acting on the principles of the world, is to lose the principles of God. The world is a definite sphere where the principles of man under the influence of Satan, "the god of this world," are paramount and in action; while the Church is the only sphere in which the principles of God are working. "Egypt" had its wisdom, and policy, and power; but Egypt could be only the oppressor or the corrupter of the people of God. Indeed, there is nothing more affecting in Israel's history than their constant hankering after Egypt, after all that they had suffered there, and after all that God had done to deliver them from it. It is only exceeded by that infatuation which has been manifested in the history of the Church, in its turning from the grace and presence of a divine Comforter and Guide to the miserable shifts and appliances of "this present evil world."

The earliest mention of Egypt, except in Gen. 10 in the division of nations, is as the place whence Abram, the child of faith, sought help from the famine which pressed upon him when a sojourner in the land of promise. And indeed, Egypt was the land of earthly plenty. The comforts of this life were there in abundance; but we learn in Abram's sojourn there what a price must be paid by the

believer for its cattle and silver and gold, and for the favor of its prince! The faith of the patriarch and his altar belonged not to Egypt but to the land of Canaan which he had now left behind.

Egypt was the land of plenty. It was well watered, and the fruitfulness of its river was proverbial. But it did not drink of the "rain of heaven"; it is coupled with Lot's portion in the plain of Jordan, of which it is said, "It was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." Gen. 13:10. Still its river bore only "the fatness of the earth"; and in this respect it is contrasted with Israel's portion as chosen by the Lord. "The land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: but the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and "drinketh water of the rain of heaven." Deut. 11:10, 11.

It required the plagues of Egypt, and the blood of the Pas3over, to put God's captive people and their oppressors into their true relative position toward each other. And accordingly, God's relation to Israel in redemption is thus expressed, "I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt"; while the confession that was connected with the offering of the basket of firstfruits was designed to be the constant memorial of this. "Thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father; and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: and when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labor, and our oppression: and the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: and He hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey." Deut. 26:5-9. Still, almost as soon as ever they had reached the wilderness (the place of earthly destitution, and of heavenly supply), Egypt assumes another character in their eyes than the land of their oppression and the place of God's judgment. "The children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full." Exod. 16:3. And they were not ashamed to say, "It was well with us in Egypt"! The reason of all this is obvious and instructive. To walk with God in a wilderness requires faith and that spirit of dependence which nothing but faith can give. But to be satisfied with the supplies of Egypt is a thing which is perfectly understood by sense. Thus, whenever the necessities of their condition demanded the exercise of faith - and faith was not there - they, "in their hearts turned back again into Egypt." And on one occasion they said, "Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." Numb. 14:3, 4.

But after their settlement in the land, Egypt still was Israel's snare. Outward weakness was the designed characteristic of Israel's polity by Jehovah, that the people might know that "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm [at any time] save them: but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favor unto them." Psalm 44:3. And the song should have been ever heard in their midst, "Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. Through Thee will we push down our enemies: through Thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But Thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame

that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise Thy name forever." Psalm 44:4-8.

It was for this intent that they were forbidden to multiply horses, and that three times a year their coasts were to be left entirely unguarded while all their males were brought together in solemn assembly to Jerusalem before the Lord. But Egypt was celebrated for its horses and chariots; and this is noticed in the Lord's prohibition to the king, "He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way." Deut. 17:16. Their redemption from Egypt and all its power should have been final, nor should anything have tempted them to return.

But in the reign of Solomon we find that horses were one chief article of commerce with Egypt. In 1 Kings 10:28, 29, it is recorded that Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt - "And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty." While in the days of Isaiah the Lord complains, among other tokens of departure from Himself, that "Their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots" (Isa. 2:7). But in the following chapter of the book of Kings, there is opened a still further effect of Solomon's affinity with Egypt. The wisest of men was corrupted by it. "King Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh.... For it came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods." How near is the neighborhood, and how subtle the connection of "the flesh," the world, and the devil!

It is an instructive lesson that the first enemy that invaded Israel's land after the death of Solomon was Shishak king of Egypt! "It came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem: and he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made." 1 Kings 14:25, 26. What force does this give to the divine instruction for their king! "He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses:... Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold" Deut. 17:16, 17

There may be the silver and the gold, and the tapestry, and carved work, and fine linen of Egypt (Pro. 7:16) - but it is Egypt still! There may be its wisdom, and policy, and power, its horses and chariots - but still the word of the Lord remains in all its force, "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong;... Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit." Isa. 31:1-3. And as a ground of trust to Israel, Egypt's character is most accurately given by a heathen man - Rabshakeh. "Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him." 2 Kings 18:21. And this judgment is entirely confirmed by the Lord through Ezekiel who says, "And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand." Eze. 29:6, 7. Nor should this instructive warning to Israel be allowed to lapse while the saint has this significant note of divine wisdom concerning the world through which he is passing, which spiritually is Sodom and Egypt, where

also our Lord was crucified. Heaven-bestowed names and titles are more unchanging, and more significant, than our careless hearts are wont to conceive.

But finally, as to Egypt, when God speaks of it in all its glory, He speaks of it only as the "tabernacles of Ham." "He... smote... the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham." Psalm 78:51. And it may be said that the example of Moses gives the only proper action of faith toward it. "By faith he [Moses] forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." Heb. 11:27. He esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

All this recorded testimony to Israel about Egypt gives especial pungency to the denunciation of the prophet:

"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses. and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD! Yet He also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back His words: but will arise against the house of the evildoers, and against the help of them that work iniquity. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out His hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is helped shall fall down. and they all shall fail together." Isa. 31:1-3.

The special and instructive contrasts here are "men" and "God"; and "flesh" and "spirit." Man with his horses, and chariots, and horsemen presents an array of strength, resistless in the estimation of the natural mind; but "When the LORD shall stretch out His hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is helped shall fall down, and they all shall fail together." How deep is this infatuation of a people whose privilege and strength is thus presented to the eye of faith, that they should look to Egypt or horses and chariots as their strength!

This was Israel's folly, to turn from God and His Spirit to trust in Egypt and in an arm of flesh, because they walked as men. But what is this to the Church's folly the Church that is associated with her Head in heaven, and is blessed with the ever-abiding presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, and has God for her, and the infinite treasures of His grace as her resource, and eternal glory before her - when she is found turning to seek the world's friendship, and practically trusts in the flesh and in carnal wisdom for her guidance and help. Let us beware of following the course of "Demas," of whom the Apostle says, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." 2 Tim. 4:10. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8:31. There is nothing more certain than this, that every degree of confidence that is reposed in man by a saint, or in himself, is so much of his trust withdrawn from "the living God." "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God." 2 Cor. 10:4. But faith alone can use those weapons; and when faith fails, there is always the practical turning to the world and its strength and wisdom for help. Again let it be said, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

## Israel's Idolatry: "Written for Our Learning"

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"But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto Him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day." Deut. 4:20.

Could anything be more affecting than this? Jehovah, in His rich and sovereign grace and by His mighty hand, brought them forth from the land of death and darkness, a redeemed and delivered people. He had brought them to Himself that they might be to Him a peculiar treasure above all the people upon the earth. How then could they turn away from Him, from His holy covenant, and from His precious commandments?

Alas! alas! they could and did. "They made a calf" (Acts 7:41) "and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. 32:4). Think of this! A calf made by their own hands, an image graven by art and man's device had brought them up out of Egypt! A thing made out of the women's earrings had redeemed and delivered them! And this has been written for our admonition. But why should it be written for us if we are not capable of, and liable to, the very same sin? We must either admit that God the Holy Ghost has penned an unnecessary sentence, or admit our need of an admonition against the sin of idolatry; and assuredly our needing the admonition proves our tendency to the sin.

Are we better than Israel? In no wise. We have brighter light and higher privileges; but, so far as we are concerned, we are made of the same material, have the same capabilities, and the same tendencies as they. Our idolatry may take a different shape from theirs; but idolatry is idolatry, be the shape what it may; and the higher our privileges, the greater our sin. We may, perhaps, be disposed to wonder how a rational people could be guilty of such egregious folly as to make a calf and bow down to it, and this too after having had such a display of the majesty, power, and glory of God. Let us remember that their folly is recorded for our admonition; and that we, with all our light, all our knowledge, all our privileges, are warned to "flee from idolatry."

Let us deeply ponder all this, and seek to profit by it. May every chamber of our hearts be filled with Christ, and then we shall have no room for idols. This is our only safeguard. If we slip away the breadth of a hair from our precious Savior and Shepherd, we are capable of plunging into the darkest forms of error and moral evil. Light, knowledge, spiritual privileges, church position are no security for the soul. They are very good in their right places, and if rightly used; but in themselves, they only increase our moral danger.

Nothing can keep us safe, right, and happy, but having Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. Abiding in Him, and He in us, that wicked one touches us not. But if personal communion be not diligently maintained, the higher our position, the greater our danger, and the more disastrous our fall. There was not a nation beneath the canopy of heaven more favored and exalted than Israel when they gathered round Mount Horeb to hear the word of God. There was not a nation on the face of the earth more degraded or more guilty than they when they bowed before the golden calf, an image of their own formation.

## John and Peter: Comparison of Conversion, Walk, Ministry

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The two most prominent of the disciples at the last Passover supper, whose courses are thrown together in the whole Gospel of John (Peter and John), were converted in different ways. John heard the word of John the Baptist. "Looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" John 1:36. He is ravished by the beauty of Jesus, and attracted to His Person. A little word is let out from John Baptist's heart, and John follows Jesus. John Baptist began his ministry (and rightly so) with the terrible denunciations of coming judgment; but the last two notes in John 1:36, as to the Person of Christ, attracted their hearts, and God allows one of those men to tell you "it was about the tenth hour." Do you think God is indifferent to the day and the hour when a soul was brought to Him? No; of one it is written here in the eternal Word of God.

Now when Peter was converted, it was different. Andrew went to Peter, and brought him to Jesus, and he said, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." The results were very different in their paths. You never find that the Lord had to tell John to follow Him, though He had to say to Peter, "Follow thou Me." There are the same distinctive marks in the character of their ministry. John was a true Kohathite, bearing the golden vessels of the tabernacle, the Person of Christ. Peter never went beyond the Messiah made Lord and Christ. It is remarkable how his conversion gives a character to his ministry in his epistle and service, as John's so markedly did so in his; though on the other hand, the call of God does all. Still, the character may be much altered afterward, which is encouragement to us. The men who gathered to David to the Cave of Adullam had but sorry characters, yet they had fine characters when the kingdom was set up. Why? Because they remained with David. So the power of the Lord keeps us in His presence and that will mend our characters.

"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto Him, Lord, who is it?" John 13:23-25. John then, drawing more closely, gets the mind of Christ, and this because he was leaning on His bosom. He did not draw near to get the mind; but because he was near he got the mind of the Lord. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." John 14:21. No matter how ignorant we may be, if we love Christ, we will get the intelligence of His mind, and He will manifest Himself unto us. Like Mary in John 20 - she had no intelligence but she had a heart that could well nigh break itself for Christ, and she got the manifestation of Himself as well as His commandments. To such hearts as these He manifests Himself. Is your heart resting on His bosom? Is your ear open to hear His word? And are you so near that He communicates to you His mind?

Why do we go to another to solve a question? Because we feel that he is nearer to the Lord than we are.

In Judas there was the habitual allowance of sin, and this was the groundwork of his fall; it hardened his conscience. The Lord could not reveal His mind to the others until Judas had gone out. The presence of the traitor hindered the manifestation of His glory.

"A new commandment give I unto you" (v. 34). There are in other languages two words for "new"; but in English we have only one. Suppose you see a man with a coat of an entirely new fashion and cut, that never was seen before; we say, This is a new coat; that is, of an entirely new kind. But suppose you see an ordinary coat, but of new cloth; there is many a coat like it, still in that sense it is new. It is in the first sense that this word in verse 34 is used: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you." And this love is that which rose beyond and above every littleness and stupidity and failure of His disciples.

Do you seek to love each other as He did, in such a way that it will rise above every pettiness, every bitterness, every hindrance, as Christ loved you? Divine love is never thrown back, and never changed by the unworthiness of its object; it is superior to everything. Like a stream whose banks may for some distance be smooth, but when they become crooked and rocky, the same stream flows on and on, unchanged in its course and its quality; such is His love.

In Peter's case we find a solemn yet blessed lesson - that a fall never happens to a Christian without a previous warning, and without some dealings from the Lord. If Peter had taken the warning, he might not have fallen. May we be of those who know His voice, and bow to the washing of the Word, knowing the blessed object He has in this action of His love.

## Keeping First Things First: Unto Christ — by Him — for Him

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Two Christians were speaking together about their privileges and responsibilities, when one of them said, "I think the first thing for a Christian is to do all the good he can."

"I do not," replied the other, "for God's Word shows that to be the third thing."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, turn to Hebrews 13: 12-16 and you will see: 'Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.'

Now we learn here that Jesus suffered without the gate; that is, outside the Jewish order of things, which was defiled and coming unto judgment, that He might sanctify (or set apart) the people with His own blood; and then three exhortations follow for the Christian, and the order in which they are presented is most important. Doing good, you will find, comes third.

First, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach"; that is, get into the right company, in a right position. Christ is outside the Jewish order of things revived in Christendom under other names; and the Christian is first of all to be found in His company. He is not exhorted to go forth without the camp unto Him, but unto Him without the camp. His Person is the attraction. He suffered outside, and He takes His place outside, and He would have us with Him. What heart that beats true to Him will not desire to be found there? That is where His presence is known and enjoyed. Could we be in better company? May every Christian reader of these lines be found there.

Second, "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." This is sure to be the spontaneous result if the soul is in communion with Him. Get into His company, and the joy of His presence and the glories of His Person, revealed to the soul by the Holy Ghost, will surely cause the heart to overflow in worship, praise, and thanksgiving; and the lips will be found expressing the heart's joy in the ear of God. One continual stream of praise will ascend to God by Him. In the company of Christ, in a right position, with the soul in communion, God, and what is due to Him, will be before us ere we think of man.

Third, "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." The activity of the love of God in the Christian toward his fellow men comes third and last. To do good, etc., is perfectly right, but the glory of Christ stands first; and the worship of God stands before service toward men. The order is most instructive. And how are we to do good? To express Christ morally in our ways, He went about doing good. And if we are walking in the power

of the Spirit, who dwells in us, goodness will manifest itself in innumerable ways in ministering for Him, both to the souls and bodies of those around us. And the heart being happy and confident in God as to temporal resources, liberality will characterize us in communicating of our substance for the benefit of others. Selfishness will depart, self being displaced by Christ.

The divine order then is to go forth to Christ first, to praise God by Him second, and to do good for Him (that is, in His name) third.

Fellow-Christian, do you answer to this?

## Later Times and Last Days

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ANSWER: There are at least three differences between the "latter times" and the "last days." 1. Different periods of time are contemplated. 2. The number of people involved is not the same in both. 3. The features that mark the periods are vastly different. We shall consider the differences in this order.

The "latter times" means merely some point of time later than the time of writing the epistle. The full development of these times came about the fourth century, although an evil was showing itself in the Apostle's day, which led to the "latter times" error. We shall notice this more fully in considering the features that mark the "latter times."

The "last days" are what the words imply - the last days of the Christian profession. It does not necessarily mean only a few days, but whatever period of time at the end of this era which shall be marked by its distinctive characters.

In the "latter times" some would depart from the faith. It would not be a general departure, but be limited in scope.

There would be false teachers who would propagate lies, which indeed would have their origin in "doctrines of demons," and some would be led astray.

The "last days" are not marked by partial declension but by a general spiritual and moral breakdown - the whole period would bear the impress of giving up the vital elements of Christianity. Indeed, the word "men" at the beginning of the description of the "last days" is indicative of carnality. The Corinthians had been charged with being carnal and walking as men (1 Cor. 3:3). The general state of the whole profession shall have sunk to that of mere nature - "men" - where the conduct of the natural man might be expected.

We shall now consider the distinctive features of the two periods of time.

In the "latter times" false teachers, with seared consciences, would come teaching doctrines of demons. These teachers despised the Creator and rejected His provisions under the pretext of thereby obtaining a greater degree of sanctity. This form of evil was even then in the Apostle's day beginning to show itself. It had its roots in the Gnostic system of error which was imported from Oriental mysticism. Gnosticism was known in the East before Christianity began; it was an airy philosophy derived from various Eastern cults. It was named from the Greek word for knowledge and made great pretensions to wisdom and knowledge.

Shortly after the establishment of Christianity the adherents of this metaphysical error began to infiltrate the ranks of Christians. As might be expected, they denied the deity and humanity of the Lord Jesus. The Apostle John warned the saints of those who confess not "Jesus Christ come in flesh" (1 John 4:3; N. Trans.).

The proponents of this mystic adulteration of the gospel taught that the Christians needed to add something to their faith in Christ - that they needed to follow certain human rules for purification of the flesh. It was against this false doctrine that the Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians when he said, "Ye are complete in Him." What did they need to add to their fitness in Christ; they were already complete in Him.

When the Apostle asked the Colossians, "Why... are ye subject to ordinances" (chap. 2:20), he was referring to the Gnostic rules for human improvement; such as, "Touch not; taste not; handle not." These things indeed made "a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body;... to the satisfying of the flesh." Man naturally likes a system that makes something of him and his flesh, even though it causes him to neglect his body, and treat it harshly. It was "science falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20).

With this background it became easy to introduce a teaching that the body was evil, marriage defiling, and animals eaten as food to be abhorred. So in the "latter times" wicked teachers forbade the saints to marry on the false premise that they would thereby attain greater sanctity. This evil system (known as Manicheism after a Persian magician) treated the body as evil and vile, but the Word of God does not speak of the body as such. The only time that the word "vile" is used of the body is a mistranslation (Phil. 3:21); our bodies are bodies of humiliation at present, for they are not yet glorified. "The body is... for the Lord."

To forbid or despise marriage was to despise God who made the body and instituted the relationship. Fornication or any immoral use of the body is wrong, but marriage is to be held in every way in honor (see Heb. 13:4; N. Trans.). God will judge those who indulge in unlawful lusts, for He is the "avenger of all these things.... For God has not called us to uncleanness, but in sanctification" (see 1 Thess. 4:3-8; N. Trans.), but legitimate marriage is of God who said, "It is not good that the man should be alone," and who "from the beginning... made them male and female."

The command to "abstain from meats" was also a thrust at God Himself, for He it was who gave man flesh to eat (Gen. 9:3).

God is wiser than men, and, what He gave and sanctified by His Word does not defile. We might mention, however, that to the children of Israel, who were in a special relationship with Him, there were special instructions given describing "clean and unclean," and which may be eaten and which may not. These regulations have a special spiritual significance for us (for this we refer the reader to Notes on Leviticus by C.H.M.), but the Gentiles never were placed under such restrictions, and in Acts 15 an attempt to introduce Jewish rules for the Christians at Antioch was promptly stopped by the Spirit of God.

Doubtless the celibacy of the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, and the prohibition of meat eating in the Seventh Day Adventist cult stem from the same root. They are both from the errors of the "latter times" against which Paul by the Spirit of God wrote.

We would add a word of caution, however. A servant of the Lord may forego marriage because he deems that he cannot fulfill the work the Lord has given him to do and at the same time rightly carry out his responsibilities of marriage. This was the case with Paul, but he did not do it to attain special holiness, nor did he speak disparagingly of marriage; rather, he upheld its divine sanction and admonished that its obligations be not neglected or despised. In seeking elders or overseers

in the Church, married men who had not neglected their responsibilities were the only ones who qualified.

In the same way, a saint may go without food for a time because of earnestness of prayer before God in some exercise of soul, but this is special fasting and not for the purpose of attaining holiness. Or one may because of ill health have to forego the use of meat, but that is not despising meat "which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." It is well to note the word here regarding thanksgiving. While partaking of the Creator's bountiful provision we are not to forget Him; all is to be received with thankfulness to Him. It has all been sanctified by His Word and will not defile us; we are brought into a position of knowing His will and freely speaking to Him.

The "last days" are described as being difficult or trying times, not because "some shall depart from the faith" but because the whole tone and state of the Christian profession would have fallen. That which named the name of Christ would be largely an empty profession, while the deeds of the heathen world as described in Rom. 1 would be reproduced in Christendom. The empty form of Christianity would be retained to cloak all the unlovely works of the flesh. Each particular vice or evil may have been found at any time to some degree, but all of them together are to be so prevalent as to give a distinct character to the time.

Let us review the list and ask ourselves if we are not actually living in the "last days." "Men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, evil speakers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, profane, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, of unsubdued passions, savage, having no love for what is good, traitors, headlong, of vain pretensions, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; having a form of piety but denying the power of it." 2 Tim. 3:2-5; N. Trans. Are not these things true now? Is not our day marked by men being lovers of self, money, and pleasure? And remember, this is not the heathen world; it is not China, or Russia, where the outward form is thrown off, but the Western nations where we live.

We are living in times of great stress. We rub shoulders with those who claim to be Christians, but who are living to themselves. When we seek to walk as Christians should, as the grace of God

has taught us -"soberly, righteously, and godly" - we are laughed at and despised. More and more situations develop which make it hard to stand aloof from the ungodly in school, in the office, in the shop, or elsewhere. Pressures of all kinds increase to have the saints of God join associations for the advancement of various causes: labor, industry, education, etc. Problems multiply with our children forced to attend institutions of public education, and there pressures are applied to have them join this and join that, to attend this and attend that. Parents are urged to open their homes to the literature of the day, much of which is diametrically opposed to the heavenly calling of the Christian. How is the Christian to stand out against all the current of a world headed for destruction in the mask of Christianity? By unswerving obedience to the Word of God, and by asking for wisdom from Him who gives liberally and upbraids not.

We would say to our inquirer, and to all our readers, WE ARE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS. These are times of stress for those who would walk with God. Many dear Christians have succumbed to the baneful influence; many more are weakening under constant and increasing pressure; bit the word of God for us; in the same chapter that tells of the trials, is "Continue THOU." No matter what

happens or who falls in line with the trend, there is never an excuse for us to give up. "Continue" means to go on, and on, and "thou" is so limited that we cannot pass it off. For all this we need "grace to help in time of need," and we know where it may be found - at the "throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16).

## Leah's Sons: Examination of Names

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Israel, who was the betrothed of Jehovah ("Thy Maker is thine husband"), fair through the cornliness 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 bare 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 bare 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. 2:7), 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."

## Lessons in Jacob: Grace and Glory

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Jacob had offended the Lord, having taken the way of nature, listening to the counsels of unbelief, and thus departing from his path and his call as a saint of God. He is therefore put under discipline, for he has to learn the bitterness of his own way.

His place, on that very night on which he left his father's house, witnessed therefore the hand of the Lord who still loved him. It was, no doubt, the fruit and wages of his own transgression, but it told also that God was his God, for He was visiting him in fatherly chastening. It is, accordingly, such a place as God may own. It was not sin, but discipline, which marked it. Had it been the tent where he and his mother had dressed the kids for Isaac's feast, God could not have owned it, for deceit and fraud were practiced there. But at Luz, where Jacob is under chastening, the Lord can be, and He does come and manifest Himself there.

He comes to make glory a great reality to this poor, solitary, disciplined saint. He does not come to soften his pillow, or to change his condition, or to send him back care of his mother. He leaves the present fruit of Jacob's naughtiness just as bitter as He found it. But He does come to make glory and heaven a great reality to him.

Onward, therefore, Jacob goes and, as the story tells us, he served twenty years under a certain hard taskmaster in Padanaram. But the Lord blesses him there, and he conducts himself in the fear of the Lord there, and all is well.

In due time he is on his way back to Canaan. But indeed it is a different Jacob as well as a different journey. He was an empty Jacob at Bethel; he is now a full Jacob at Peniel. He has become two bands. Flocks and herds, servants, wives and children tell of his prosperity. He had been on that road twenty years before, unprovided and alone, with a staff in his hand; but now we see him thus accompanied and surrounded. He has become a rich man. He has a stake in the world. He has something to lose, and may be a prey to others, as he surely must be an object with them.

He hears of Esau coming, and trembles; he fears for his cattle, his people, and his life. He manages as well as he can, and religiously commits all to the Lord; but unbelief has mastered his heart, and he is in fear of Esau.

The Lord comes to him therefore this second time, now on his journey homeward, as He had been with him on his journey out. But it is in a new character. He was only under discipline then; he is in the power of unbelief now: and the Lord comes not to comfort, but to rebuke and restore him.

"There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." This was the Lord in controversy with Jacob. His unbelieving fears touching Esau and his four hundred men had provoked the Lord to jealousy, and He withstands him.

But what is the issue of all this? Grace is made a great reality to Jacob here, as glory had been at Bethel. The wrestling Stranger, in abounding grace, allows Himself to be prevailed on by the weak

and timid Jacob, and the Spirit works revival of faith in his soul. "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me," says he. He comes "boldly unto the throne of grace." Faith is decided, and a blessing must be imparted, and Jacob becomes Israel. Grace is now made a great reality to him, as before glory had been. It is now the unbelieving Jacob restored, as then it had been the chastised Jacob comforted. The gospel is pressed on his soul here; heaven had been opened to his eyes there. There he walked as at the gate of heaven, and in the house of God; here he walks under the shinings of the presence of God.

Such was "Bethel" on his way out. Such is "Peniel" on his way home. Such is God to him according to his need and condition. Heaven in its bright enriching glory was shown to him in the day of his sorrow. Christ, in His precious restoring grace, is given to him in the day of his failure. And these things are what we want - to have both grace and glory realized in our souls - to walk by Bethel and by Peniel. They sweetly vary the journey; but it is the one unchanging God that opens His house to us,. and sheds the light of His face upon us.

## Life for Christ or for the World: the Editor's Column

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A little book recently republished - "The Mirage of Life" carries an important lesson, especially for young Christians. To them the world may seem very attractive and alluring; it may appear to offer something of real value that is within their reach. This book points out that the votaries of the world are often disappointed, for that which at first seemed very promising has either eluded them altogether, or brought with it sorrow and trouble. And the ones who have seemed to acquire most in the world must one day lie down and die, leaving it all behind.

Even the world has a philosophy that the pleasure is in the chase, and not in the prize. How often has it been proved that the world's favors have vanished just as easily and as disappointingly as the wayfarer's mirage in the desert has fled from him when he was faint and famished. The alluring oasis with its promise of water and shade proved to be only a deception to mock him when the reality was most needed.

The world's history is strewn with examples of those who vainly sought for happiness only to find it vanish as quickly as a broken bubble. That this world has its glory is not to be denied; that it is a vain and fleeting glory which will not satisfy the heart of man, is likewise a weighty fact. Solomon was allowed to taste most of the glories and pleasures here, but he wrote after each and all of them, "vanity and vexation of spirit." Oh, why should anyone have to learn the disappointing lesson for himself?

"The Mirage of Life" cites just a few examples to show the character of all here - "the man of fashion, the man of wealth, the hero, the statesman, the orator, the artist, the poet, the monarch," etc. Another book, one too large to be bound in one volume, could be compiled of such cases in the last fifty years. Hitler, Mussolini, the great generals and admirals, kings, rulers, statesmen, captains of industry, financial experts, and countless others including the Kaiser and the Czar of Russia, would find a place in its pages. Perhaps one of our readers may have the thought that all such cases are found in the records of other countries, and not here. Let us see what a large commercial enterprise in the United States wrote to some of its employees; we quote:

"FOOD FOR THOUGHT"

"In 1923 a very important meeting was held at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Attending this meeting were ten of the world's most successful financiers. They were:

"The president of the largest independent steel company.

The president of the National City Bank..

The president of the largest..utility company.

The president of the largest gas company

The greatest wheat speculator.

The president of the New York Stock Exchange.

A member of the President's Cabinet.

The greatest 'Bear' in Wall Street.

Head of the world's greatest monopoly.

President of the Bank of the International Settlements.

"We must admit that here was gathered a group of the world's most successful men; at least, men who found the secret of 'making' money. Twenty-five years later, let's see what became of them!

"The president of the largest independent steel company, Charles Schwab, died a bankrupt. He lived on borrowed money for five years before his death.

"The president of the greatest utility company, Samuel Insull, died a fugitive from justice, and penniless in a foreign land.

"The president of the greatest gas company, Howard Hopson, is now insane.

"The greatest wheat speculator, Arthur Cotten, died abroad, insolvent.

"The president of the New York Stock Exchange, Richard Whitney, was released recently from Sing Sing Prison.

"The member of the President's Cabinet, Albert Fall, was pardoned from prison so that he could die at home.

"The greatest 'Bear' in Wall Street, Jesse Livermore, died a suicide.

"The head of the greatest monopoly, Ivar Krueger, died a suicide.

"The president of the Bank of the International Settlements, Leon Fraser, died a suicide.

"Life is tragic when one has plenty to live on, and nothing to live for. These men learned well the art of making money; but not one of them learned how to live! The effort to improve man's material conditions of life, without improving man himself, only hastens the hour of his destruction!"

Truly there is in this "food for thought" for anyone, saved or unsaved. This corporation sought to draw a moral lesson from the list of tragedies, but how, we ask, are you going to improve man himself? The world cast out

God's Son and is heading for certain doom; Satan is its god and prince who deceives people with its attractive veneer; and man is lost, has a fallen nature, is an enemy of God, is a sinner on the road to hell, unless and until, through the grace of God, he turns to God in repentance and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. What man needs is a new nature - "ye must be born again" - and a new Object for his heart entirely outside of this scene altogether.

To our young Christian readers we would say, You need never be disappointed by this world. Do you ask, How? never expect anything from it. Always remember that it is the same world - even the polite and amiable part of it - that crucified your Savior. The Apostle Paul was never disappointed by it. He said, "God forbid 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.

To Paul, the world was as something fully rejected - crucified - and to the world, Paul was despised and rejected, for he was well known to have identified himself with the interests of the One they hated. He neither sought nor wanted its glories. His one object was to press on through it to reach Christ in glory: "This one thing I do... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:13, 14.

Moses at an earlier date forsook Egypt - the world in its glory at that time. What enabled him to do that? He looked forward to another day and had respect unto the recompense of the reward (Heb. 11:24-26).

And you, dear young Christian,  
will be able to say from the heart,

"O worldly pomp and glory,

Your charms are spread in vain;

I've heard a sweeter story;

I've found a truer gain,"

when you have the Lord Jesus Christ as your great attraction on the one hand, and have God's estimate of the world on the other.

In closing we quote a verse from Isa. 23, "The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth." v. 9. The world has many glories - political, military, commercial, educational, banking, manufacturing, professional, scientific, and many others - and has its great ones in the earth, but all is going to come down. All the pride of man is to be brought low. The child of God, however, belongs to another scene and cannot afford to indulge in seeking a place here where Christ had none - the day of his exaltation is coming. The same is true with the world's pleasures, and it has many; they are only "for a season" (Heb. 11:25), but for the Christian there are pleasures at His right hand that are "for evermore" (Psalm 16:11). When we walk with God, enjoy communion with Him, have the interests of Christ on our hearts, and have fellowship one with another in these things, then we can taste such lasting pleasures even now. There are pleasures - known only to the obedient child of God - that shall continue right on and be enjoyed more fully in a scene of perfect glory.

## Malchus and His Kinsman: the Servant's Name Was Malchus

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It was he whose ear Peter, in a spirit of wild and reckless enthusiasm that ill became the moment, had cut off. Peter, always energetic, had recourse to the sword in order to defend his Master from His foes. But the sword - the weapon of vengeance - was out of place in such a defense. The Lord was about to surrender Himself into the hands of sinful men for the fulfillment of His mission here below; and self-defense was therefore no part of His gracious plan. He abandoned it in order to accomplish the Scriptures. He had already, while the disciples slept, passed in spirit through the dread ordeal, and was now prepared for all that was to happen.

But such an act of surrender was scouted by the rash and impulsive disciple. His sleep had ill prepared him for such a trial. He awoke unconscious of the nature of the temptation and of his own moral inability to face it. He, like Samson, was shorn of his locks. yet he flew to the sword; he appealed, in his weakest moment, to the verdict of the weapon of natural strife. His intention was no doubt good, but his conduct was sadly at fault.

He strikes and cuts off the ear of Malchus. Now who was Malchus? He was the servant of the high priest. Is this fact not remarkable? Was not the sound of his master's feet behind him? It was, though at some distance. The high priest could hardly, with the propriety becoming his dignified office, sally forth at night in the company of the bloodthirsty crowd that made its way with torches and weapons to dark Gethsemane. No, he remained behind in his palace, but he sent Malchus to fill his place; and he it was who suffered under the stroke of Peter's sword. Had the high priest gone in person, the blow received by his servant would have fallen on him. But, as it was, the servant of the high priest and the disciple of Jesus met in conflict, and the former was wounded.

Thus Peter does exploits, but they are out of keeping with the times. David had his "mighty men," the records of whose prowess are placed on the page of history. They fought and won by the use of carnal means; but they acted in keeping with their times. Jesus came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. His disciple understood not.

Alas, how slow we are to learn grace, or to apprehend the unworldly, the heavenly nature of Christianity! How slow to learn the differences that God has made in the dispensation of His ways! The law and the sword agreed well; but grace and the sword are absolutely incongruous. Nature understands the former and readily acts upon it; but the Christian should seek to know the latter, and act thereon too. The disciple acted in law, and used the sword; the blessed Master acted in grace, and healed the ear of Malchus. How bright the contrast!

And for the rest of his days did the servant of the high priest carry the healing touch of the Lord. How fully he might have described the difference between the hasty, rough disciple and the calm and gentle Master. Was his heart affected? Did he return to his master and declare the tender grace of Jesus to him? We are not informed. It is not Malchus, either wounded or healed, grateful or otherwise, who fills the eye at this crisis. It is the infinite grace of the blessed Lord, whose forgiving and healing hand lays itself gently on the servant of His chief enemy. Such touches of His

grace captivate the heart, as they speak so unmistakably of what He was. Yes, the Scriptures present to us Jesus in His own perfection, not as compared, but as contrasted with men, and the best of men. Men come before us, indeed, in many different characters but, in the best estate, are shown to be only "lighter than vanity"; whereas Jesus - Son of man, Son of God - holds His own peculiar place, "full of grace and truth," just in order that we might discover what that God is against whom we have sinned. For Jesus was of a truth God "manifest in the flesh" - a most wonderful fact, and worthy of deep and reverent contemplation.

Think of it, dear reader: God in flesh, God assuming that condition (all sinless and perfect) in order that we who are in it, fallen and guilty, and blinded by sin to all that God is, might get to know Him.

Creation with its innumerable wonders and beauties, could not make Him known. It may tell of His power and skill. Jesus made Him known. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." He was God manifest in the flesh.

And if in the flesh, a perfect Man, tempted in all points as we are, sin apart and in perfect grace, as well as in perfect truth, so that the healed ear of Malchus, healed at such a moment, is but in lovely keeping with all His ways from the manger downward. What winsome grace!

But Peter's hasty conduct bore fruit to his sorrow. That fruit did not end with the sword stroke. Following his Master, now captive, into the palace of the high priest, he takes his place beside the other servants, in which evil company his identity is soon established. He is charged with being a disciple of Jesus, but alas! stoutly denies the charge.

Yet one of the company said, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?" What a home thrust, and how deeply it must have cut! And by whom was it made? Strange to say, by "his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off" (v. 26). His kinsman had seen the blow given, and now recognized the man who gave it. Here we have an eyewitness to Peter's mistaken zeal and murderous conduct.

Malchus and his kinsman had apparently led the band that followed the traitor, Judas Iscariot, only too eager to carry out the wishes of their high-priestly master; and being thus in the van, they were the more readily exposed to any opposition that might arise.

Malchus suffered from, and his kinsman bore witness to, the foolhardiness of Peter. And Peter, at fault in the garden, is still more at fault in the palace. There he strikes a foe; here he denies his Lord.

But did the kinsman, while quickly incriminating Peter, as quickly relate the healing touch of Jesus? Did he tell how speedily and thoroughly and gently the fault of the disciple was more than rectified by the very Master whom Peter now so heartlessly denied? We are not informed.

Little injuries are remembered when large acts of kindness are forgotten; for such alas! is human nature, tainted as it is by sin; and hence this exquisite proof of the forgiving grace of the blessed Lord may have passed out of mind as a thing of no account.

Thank God that it is written on the page of inspiration, "He touched his ear, and healed him" (Luke 22:51). And so Malchus may have presented himself for years before his master, bearing the visible mark of the healing touch of Jesus - an ever-present witness to His love and pity -

who, "when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." 1 Pet. 2:23. Such exhibitions of His grace win the heart, and endear Him to it.

## Man's Faculties Lead Him Astray

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"As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him; rooted and built up in Him, and confirmed in the faith, even as ye have been taught." Col. 2:6, 7.

When we have received Christ, all the rest is but a development of that which He is, and of the glory which the counsels of God have connected with His Person. Knowledge, or pretended knowledge, outside this, does but turn us away from Him, withdraw our hearts from the influence of His glory, throw us into that which is false, and lead our souls into connection with the creation apart from God, and without possessing the key to His purposes. Thus, since man is incapable of fathoming that which exists, and of explaining it to himself, his efforts to do so cause him to invent a mass of ideas that have no foundation, and to endeavor to fill up the void that is found in his knowledge through his ignorance of God by speculations, in which (because he is at a distance from God) Satan plays the chief part without man's suspecting it.

Man, as a child of Adam, is not at the center of the immense system of God's ways. Out of Christ and without Christ, he does not know the center; he speculates, without foundation and without end, only to lose himself more and more. His knowledge of good and evil, and the energy of his moral faculties, do but lead him astray the more, because he employs them on higher questions than those which simply relate to physical things; and they produce in him the need of reconciling apparently inconsistent principles which cannot be reconciled without Christ. Moreover the tendency of man is always to make himself, as he is, the, center of everything; and this renders everything false.

Christians then ought to walk with simplicity in the ways of the Lord, even as they have received Him; and their progress ought to

## The Meaning of the Cross

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It is the cross which stains the pride of man, and puts all his glory in the dust. Hence the Apostle brings Christ crucified before the Corinthians. This to the Jew was a stumbling block, and to the Greek foolishness. These Corinthians were deeply affected by the judgment of both Jews and Greeks. They were under the influence of man. They had not realized the total ruin of nature. They valued those that were wise, scribes, or disputers of this world. They were accustomed to the schools of their age and country. They conceived that if Christianity did such great things when those who possessed it were poor and simple, what might it not do if it could only be backed by the ability, and the learning, and the philosophy of men! How it must ride triumphantly to victory! How the great must bow, and the wise be brought in! What a glorious change would result, when not the unlettered poor only, but the great and the noble, the wise and the prudent, were all joined in the confession of Jesus!

Their thoughts were fleshly, not of God. The cross writes judgment on man, and folly on his wisdom, as it is itself rejected by man as folly; for what could seem more egregiously unreasonable to a Greek than the God that made heaven and earth becoming a man and, as such, being crucified by the wicked hands of His creatures here below? That God should use His power to bless man was natural; and the Gentile could coalesce as to it with the Jew. Hence too, in the cross, the Jew found his stumbling block, for he expected a Messiah in power and glory. Though the Jew and the Greek seemed opposite as the poles, from different points they agreed thoroughly in slighting the cross, and in desiring the exaltation of man as he is. They both, therefore (whatever their occasional oppositions, and whatever their permanent variety of form) preferred the flesh, and were ignorant of God - the one demanding signs, the other wisdom. It was the pride of nature, whether self-confident or founded on religious claims.

Hence the Apostle Paul, in the latter part of chapter 1, brings in the cross of Christ in contrast with fleshly wisdom, as well as religious pride, urging also God's sovereignty in calling souls as He will. He alludes to the mystery (chap. 2), but does not develop here the blessed privileges that flowed to us from a union with Christ, dead, risen, and ascended, but demonstrates that man has no place whatever, that it is God who chooses and calls, and that He makes nothing of flesh. There is glorying, but it is exclusively in the Lord. "No flesh should glory in His presence."

This is confirmed in chapter 2, where the Apostle reminds them of the manner in which the gospel had entered Corinth. He had come there setting his face against all things that would commend himself. No doubt, to one of such eminent ability and such varied gifts as the Apostle Paul, it was hard, to speak after the manner of men, to be nothing. How much it must have called for self-denial utterly to decline that which he could have handled so well, and which people at Corinth would have hailed with loud acclamation. Just think of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, on the immortality of the soul, giving free rein to the mighty spirit that was in him! But not so. What absorbed his soul, in entering the intellectual and dissolute capital of Achaia, was the cross of Christ. He determined therefore, as he says, to know nothing else - not exactly to know the cross

alone, but "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." It was emphatically, though not exclusively, the cross. It was not simply redemption, but along with this another line of truth. Redemption supposes, undoubtedly, a suffering Savior, and the shedding of that precious blood which ransoms the captives. It is Jesus who in grace has undergone the judgment of God, and brought in the full delivering power of God for the souls that believe. But the cross is more than this. It is the death of shame pre-eminently. It is utter opposition to the thoughts, feelings, judgments, and ways of men, religious or profane. This is the part accordingly that he was led in the wisdom of God to put forward. Hence the feelings of the Apostle were distrust of self, and dependence on God according to that cross. As he says, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."

Thus, as Christ Himself is said in 2 Cor. 13 to be crucified in weakness, such was also the servant here. His speech and his preaching was "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Accordingly, in this chapter he proceeds to supplement the application of the doctrine of the cross to the state of the Corinthians by bringing in the Holy Ghost; for this again supposes the incapacity of man in divine things.

All is opened out in a manner full of comfort, but at the same time unsparing to human pride. Weigh from the prophecy of Isaiah the remarkable quotation - "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." There is first the great standing fact before our eyes. Such is the Savior to the saved. Christ crucified is the death knell on all man's wisdom, and power, and righteousness. The cross writes total condemnation on the world. It was here the world had to say to Jesus. All that it gave Him was the cross. On the other hand, to the believer, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God because he humbly but willingly reads in the cross the truth of the judgment of his own nature as a thing to be delivered from, and finds Him that was crucified, the Lord Himself, undertaking a deliverance just, present, and complete; as he says, "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Flesh is absolutely put down.

Man cannot go lower for weakness and ignominy than the cross on which hangs all the blessedness God gives the believer. And therein God is glorified as He is nowhere else. This in both its parts is exactly as it should be; and faith sees and receives it in Christ's cross. The state of the Corinthians did not admit of Christ risen being brought in - at least here. It might have drawn a halo, as it were; round human nature - this presenting the risen Man in the first instance. But he points to God as the source, and Christ as the channel and means, of all the blessing. "Of Him," says he, "are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." But then, as he shows, there is not only this great source of blessing in Christ, but there is the power that works in us. Never is it the spirit of man that lays hold of this infinite good which God vouchsafes him. Man requires a divine power to work within him, just as he needs the Savior outside himself...

Man is no more capable of fathoming the depths of divine things than a brute can comprehend the works of human wit or science. This doctrine was utterly repulsive to the pride of the Greeks. They might admit man to have need of pardon and of moral improvement. They fully admitted his want of instruction, and refinement, and, so to speak, of spiritualization, if it only might be. Christianity deepens our estimate of every want. Man not only wants a new life or nature, but the Holy Ghost.

It is not merely His grace in a general sense, but the power of the Holy Ghost personally dwelling in him. It is this alone which can lead us into the deep things of God. And this, he lets us see, affects not merely this particular or that, but the whole working of divine grace and power in man. The whole and sole means of communicating blessing to us must be the Holy Ghost. Hence he insists that as it is the Spirit of God in the first place who reveals the truth to us, so it is the same Spirit who furnishes suitable words, as, finally, it is through the Holy Ghost that one receives the truth revealed in the words He Himself has given. Thus, from first to last, it is a process begun, carried on, and completed, by the Holy Ghost. How little this makes of man!

This introduces the third chapter, and gives point to his rebukes. He taxes them with walking as men. How remarkable is such a reproach! Walking as men! Why, one might ask, how else could they walk? And this very difficulty - as no doubt it would be to many a Christian now (that walking as men should be a reproach) - was no doubt a clap of thunder to the proud but poor spirits at Corinth. Yes, walking as men is a departure from Christianity. It is to give up the distinctive power and place that belongs to us; for does not Christianity show us man judged, condemned, and set aside? On the faith of this, living in Christ, we have to walk. The Holy Ghost, besides, is brought in as working in the believer, and this, of course, in virtue of redemption by our Lord Jesus. And this is what is meant by being not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, which is proved by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us.

Here the Apostle does not explain all this, and he gives a very withering reason for his reticence. These Corinthians had an uncommonly good opinion of themselves, and so they must be told plainly the reason why he does not open out these deep things. They themselves were not fit; they were but babes. What! the polished Greek believers no more than babes! This was rather what they would have said of the Apostle or of his teaching. They thought themselves far in advance. The Apostle had dwelt on the elementary truths of the gospel. They yearned after the fire of Peter and the rhetoric of Apollos. No doubt they might easily flatter themselves it was to carry on the work of God. How little many a young convert knows what will best lead him on! How little the Corinthians dreamed of depreciating the second Man, or of exalting the first. Hence the Apostle tells them that he could not speak unto them as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat." Far from denying, he owns that their insinuation was true - he had only brought before them elementary truths. They were not in a condition to bear more. Now this is full of meaning and importance practically at all times. We may damage souls greatly by presenting high truths to those that want the simplest rudiments of divine truth.

The Apostle, as a wise master builder, laid the foundation. The state of the Corinthians was such that he could not build on the foundation as he would have desired. His absence had given occasion for the breaking out of their carnal wishes after the world's wisdom. They were making even the ardor of a Peter and the eloquence of an Apollos to be a reason for dissatisfaction with one that, I need not say, was superior to both of them. But the Apostle meets them in a way most unexpected to their self-satisfaction and pride, and lets them know that their carnality was the real reason why he could not go on with them into deeper things.

Their party spirit, their feeling of narrowness, the disposition to set up this servant of Christ or that, was not only a dishonor to the Master, but a real loss to themselves. Not that there is any ground

to suppose it was the fault of Peter or Apollos any more than of Paul. The evil was in the saints themselves, who indulged in their old zeal of the schools, and allowed their natural partiality to work. In point of fact, this never can be without the most grievous impoverishment to the soul, as well as a hindrance to the Holy Ghost. What faith must learn is that "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas;... all things are yours." Thus the subject enlarges, as is his wont, taking in an immense breadth of the Christian's possessions - life, death, things present, and things to come. "All are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

## A Meditation on John 4

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I have just been reading again that lovely fourth chapter of John. What a little heaven it is to sit in spirit there, and be in company with Him that is the eternal life, in full grace dispensing Himself to one of the degraded captives of pollution and death!

The satisfying water springs from that grace in the Son of God which reaches and quiets the conscience; and it was such that Jesus here dispenses to her. Till our need as sinners is met and answered, we must be thirsting again, though we get what we may, because the soul is not at rest with God. But Jesus came to repair the breach in the conscience - to give rest before God, and in God - and thus to impart the satisfying water of life through the Holy Ghost.

And when this is done, in a great divine sense, the end is reached - God is glorified - the sinner made happy, and the entrance into the places of glory becomes a necessary result.

This end is beautifully shown in this same exquisite and marvelous chapter; for the woman goes away with a spirit in deep refreshment because of conscious acceptance and life, and the Son of God Himself is so satisfied in the fruit of His own way, that He has had that which sets Him above the thirst He had been feeling and the food He had wanted. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." It was as manna to Him. What a thought! the Son of God comes down to our degraded earth to find His manna, His strange mysterious food and satisfaction of heart - bread which He could never have known in heaven - a joy that He could never have tasted amid the glories of His unfallen creatures. But here on earth, among sinners, He finds in the dispensing of the Father's grace, the deepest and fullest answer of all the longings of His divine love.

When a sinner is happy in Him, His end is reached, and so is ours, and all that remains is to spend eternity in the glory that becomes such an end as this - His joy in us, and ours in Him.

"O Lord, Thy love's unbounded!

So full, so vast, so free;

Our thoughts are all confounded.

Whene'er we think of Thee.

For us Thou camst from heaven,

For us to bleed and die,

That purchased and forgiven,

We might ascend on high."

## **Milk and Vinegar Is Like Law and Grace: the Effect of Both Is Lost in Mixing**

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Confounding the gospel of the grace of God that brings salvation, with the law, hinders the proper effect of both in the soul. If I take a gallon of milk and a gallon of vinegar, and mix them together, I destroy or nullify the peculiar properties of both. Just so it is when the law and the gospel are confounded together. The sharp, searching, convicting power of the law is blunted while the saving, peace-giving character of the gospel is not known. It will help much to a better understanding of the difference to see from the Word of God the different ways in which He has dealt with man from the beginning.

There was first the trial of innocence in the garden of Eden - and how soon failure came in there we all know. Driven out from that garden of delights, man, left to his conscience, soon became so bad that "The earth... was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11), and the deluge came. Then after the confusion of speech at Babel, and the dispersion of the different branches of Noah's descendants, all lapsed into idolatry ( Josh. 24:14). God now called out Abraham, and out of his loins raised up a nation, the nation of Israel, with whom He was pleased to identify Himself, and to whom He made Himself known while allowing the rest of the nations to take their own way, though not leaving them without a witness (Acts 14:15-17). But it was in Israel - that favored portion of the human family - that the trial of man was carried on. Now in order that man might have the opportunity of showing whether he could stand before God in his own righteousness or not, the law - a perfect rule or standard of conduct toward God and toward his neighbor - was given him.

A farmer, wishing to test a certain kind of seed, does not sow his whole farm with it, but chooses a portion, the very best part; and after having cultivated it, he sows the seed, and waits patiently for the harvest. If in result he finds nothing but weeds, he pronounces the seed worthless. Just so with God. He selected a portion of the human family, and to them He gave the law. It is most important to remember that the law was never given by God to mankind in general. The opening words of the Decalogue itself show that it was not: "I am the LORD thy God; which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt." Exod. 20:2. Did He bring the Egyptians out of Egypt, or the Philistines, or the Moabites? Let us bear this in mind.

Now what was the outcome of man's being placed under this perfect rule of conduct? No sooner was it given than it was broken. While Moses was on the fiery mount receiving that law which said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," the people on the plain were dancing round the calf which their own hands had made (Exod. 32). But more, God sent His well-beloved Son into the world, and to that very people to whom the law said, Love your neighbor as yourself (was there ever a neighbor like Jesus?), and what was the result? They spat in His face and cried, "Away with Him, crucify Him."

Such are the results of the different ways in which God has dealt with man while on his probation. Each test only brought out more fully the state of the heart toward God, until it was written "Now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father" ( John 15:24).

But I desire to turn to the New Testament to learn there the effect of the law in the conscience of the sinner. In Rom. 3:20 we read, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Now here we have two very plain, positive statements, both of which are in direct opposition to much current teaching of the present day. In the first we are told what the law cannot do - it cannot justify. In the second we learn what it does do - it gives the knowledge of sin. Very plain and simple that. So also in chapter 7:7, "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law." Again we read, in Gal. 3:24, "So that the law has been our tutor [schoolmaster] up to Christ." N. Trans. What is the function of a schoolmaster or tutor? It is to impart knowledge. What then is the knowledge which the law imparts? Is it the knowledge of God and His salvation? No; verily; but on the contrary it gives the knowledge of sin in the very springs of our moral being, as those two passages in Romans tell us.

But further we read, in 1 Cor. 15:56, "And the strength of sin is the law." Now what are we to understand by that? Simply this - no sooner is a prohibition made than the desire to do what was forbidden is awakened in each person. Such is poor, fallen human nature. The application of even the holy, just, and good law of God only calls sin into activity. (See Rom. 7:5, 8, 9.) So in 2 Cor. 3:7, 9 the law is called "the ministration of death" and "the ministration of condemnation." The experiences of a soul learning this experimentally are given us in Rom. 7:7-24, which I would earnestly recommend to the prayerful study of my readers.

Such scriptures as have already been referred to, show the effect of the law in the conscience; it writes the sentence of death there. But I would also refer to one portion where the law is put in contrast with the gospel.

One has but to turn to the epistle to the Galatians to see how energetically the Holy Spirit, by the Apostle, refuses to allow the law to be mixed up with the gospel. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (See vv. 1-4.) The two systems - law and grace -are perfectly distinct, and indeed so far opposed to each other that to mingle them is to destroy the distinctive features of each. In chapter 3:10 we read, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Note, it does not say, "as many as break the law," but "as many as are of the works of the law." No child of Adam can be on that ground with God without being under the curse.

"But," says the Apostle, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." v. 13. "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." Chap. 4:4, 5. Now if the law was perfectly suited to meet the need of the sinner, why the necessity that Christ should redeem them that were under it - the Jews?

But it may be asked, Of what use then was the law? To answer that question one has but to call attention to Gal. 3:19-26 where the Apostle, in the wisdom of God, takes it up and answers it in the most beautiful detail.

He then shows that it had its place ere Christ or faith, as a principle of relationship with God, came; but now that Christ is come, we who believe are no longer under law. "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. 6:14. We can no more have Christ as our Savior, and be at the same time under law, than a woman can have two husbands without being an adulteress. Those that were under the law, having believed the gospel, are set free from the law in order to be to Christ. His death on the cross is the severance of the tie that bound them to the law. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Rom. 7:4. (See Rom. 7:16; Gal. 2:19, 20.)

Thus we see that as a principle of relationship with God the law is superseded by the gospel. Christ takes the place of Moses. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17. And instead of the law being the Christian's rule, we read, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." 1 John 2:6.

## My Spikenard: House Was Filled With the Odor

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If there be one thing more than another that one desires for oneself first of all, and for all the beloved children of God, it is that constancy of affection toward the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, our precious Savior, that is implied in the word "devotedness."

In accomplishing the mighty work of redemption that has glorified God and saved our souls, the blessed Lord has acquired a quite peculiar claim over His ransomed people; and we may say in truth that He has endured the untold sufferings of Calvary, not merely that we might be delivered from going down to the pit, but that He Himself might become the commanding and supreme object of our renewed affections. This blessed and happy response will be rendered assuredly without hindrance in the eternal day that awaits us beyond this valley of the shadow of death; indeed in the Apocalypse, when the door of heaven is opened (Chap. 4) and the whole scene is expanded before the gaze of the beloved disciple, it is to present the fact that in spite of the outside place afforded Him in the closing epoch of Christendom (Rev. 3:20), the Lamb is the supreme object of heavenly worship and delight.

But that which is specially grateful to His heart today, is that in the time of His "kingdom and patience" He should be to us the governing motive of our lives; and when our souls have learned somewhat of His worthiness and His glory, if our eyes but rest upon that face whence there shines the light of the knowledge of the glory of God (2 Cor. 4), it is not difficult to count all things but loss. "The glory of that light" fills the vision of our souls, the eyes of our hearts, as it did that of Paul the Apostle. May God disclose this face more clearly to each one of us.

The voice of the King's beloved in the "Song of Songs" expresses this attachment to His Person, and joy in His presence when, as brought into His chamber (S. of Sol. 1:4), and beholding Him at His table, her spikenard breathes forth her thanks and worship in grateful perfume (v. 12). She may have much to discover of her own dullness and unworthiness, but His faithful love triumphs in the end, and He becomes the chiefest among ten thousand (chap. 5:10) while she learns the wondrous secret, "I am my beloved's, and His desire is toward me." chap. 7:10. The love that "many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown it," has overcome every obstacle.

John 12 contains the well known scene in the house of Bethany where that heavenly Stranger, soon to depart out of this world and go to the Father, reclines at table in the circle dearly loved of His heart. It was six days before the Passover, when the blood of that Lamb whom God had provided (Gen. 22:8; John 1:29) - that "precious blood" - should be shed, and the grave that had opened for Lazarus should close upon the Son of God. With what joy had those two devoted sisters received again their brother from the dead, and what feelings of thankfulness and gratitude would animate the reunited household as their Lord and Master, who had borne and dissipated their sorrow, came into their midst to share their joy! It is not now the King at His own table, but the King in lowly guise, a stranger in the creation of His own hands, come down to be the Man of Sorrows and to take a place in perfect grace at the table of those who had been in sorrow, that He might win the confidence of their hearts.

How blessedly fruitful, in at least one case, had been His stoop, the sequel proved; for there in the presence of the joy of Lazarus, the service of Martha, the interest of the disciples, and the covetousness of Judas, one heart is moved in its deepest depths. To Mary, the thought that overpowered all else within her was that the One she had learned to love and reverence was going to death. Of what value was even the tenderest tie of earth, or its most precious objects, if He, the Lord of all, the Resurrection and the Life, should find hut a tomb. For her the hopes of earth closed forever in the death of Jesus, and she dedicates to Him, to those blessed feet, her very costly spikenard; for all lost its worth in the estimation of the heart that knew that Christ was to be numbered with the dead. To see how very far distant from her apprehension of the moment was the discernment of the others, one has only to read the selfish objection of Judas (into which, alas! the eleven fell also - compare Matt. 26:8), and the divine approbation and vindication of the Lord Himself. "Against the day of My burying hath she kept this," is the proof that if all should misinterpret the deed, Jesus understood it. No wonder that the whole house was filled with the spikenard's odor, for Mary had chosen "that good part," the self-effacement that could be willing that all she held as of value here below might descend with Him to the tomb.

Such is the beauteous fruit in its season that the love of Jesus produces in this barren world from hearts like our own. So is manifested that "first love" of the saint, which would go even to death ( John 13:37) for the sake of his Lord and Master. Yet how we need to be sustained by His power in such a path of devotedness, else we lose our first love as did Ephesus (Rev. 2:4); or like Peter learn by sad and bitter experience that except we are energized by a force more powerful than natural affection our love will quickly cool, and we shall deeply dishonor Christ. But, thank God, He keeps the feet of His saints (1 Sam. 2:9; Pro. 2:8), and is able to keep us from falling ( Jude 24). By His intercession on high, and the washing of our feet by the way, our gracious High Priest is able to sustain our renewed affections for His Person, and maintain the freshness and bloom of "first love."

In none of His saints is this power more manifested than in Paul the Apostle when from his Roman dungeon he writes to his beloved Philippians, being now "such a one as Paul the aged." Well-nigh thirty years had come and gone since the "glory of that light" revealed a Savior to his soul, years of unremitting toil and suffering, and "besides those things that are without... the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:23-28). Yet now, arrived at the end of his course, he is separated from those individuals and assemblies so dearly loved, and the devoted servant learns about this season that all Asia had turned away from him, and even among those who had been a joy and refreshment to him, some were ashamed of his chain as "the prisoner of the Lord" (2 Tim. 1:15, 16; Eph. 4:1). Yet in his letter to the Philippians we find no vain repinings, no regrets. He has counted the cost, and in chapter 3 the aged man says, while recalling what he had done so long before (v. 7), "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." He goes over the list of what he took pride in -not bad things, but things that the flesh could glory in, made more attractive by this, that though they belonged to an economy that had passed away, they came from God Himself. Paul knew their value, he had felt their power, yet so had he learned Christ that there is no flinching now in his soul. "Yea doubtless," he says, "and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things." v. 8. I seem to see him there, his box of spikenard (as it were) in his hands, devoting to that glorified Lord all that he held precious. All had descended with Him to the grave, and the desire of his soul now is that he may "if

any way... arrive at the resurrection from among the dead" (v. 11; N. Trans.), a place with Christ in a deathless scene of glory. And if that prisoner could find in the offering sent through Epaphroditus "an odor of a sweet smell," we may say that for the heart of Christ that prison cell was "filled with the odor of the ointment."

May the Lord teach us what this devotedness is that dedicates all to Him as an intelligent service (Rom. 12:1).

## Mystic Symbolism: the Editor's Column

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Two months ago we considered the progress being made by the Roman Catholic system throughout the Western world. There is, however, in the minds of many people, the notion that there is one great institution which stands in the way of the march of ecclesiastical Rome; that is, FREEMASONRY. Let us then consider what Freemasonry is.

At the outset we will say that Freemasonry is the worse evil of the two. While it pretends to be Christian and to honor God and the Bible, it is basically in all its fibers anti-Christian, and its pretended use of the Bible is sheer mockery.

We are told that a man must believe in God to be a Mason, but the god of Freemasonry is not the God of the Bible; it is a composite god of the many heathen deities, with the God of Christianity supposedly added. Freemasonry is a veritable pantheon where all the deities are arrayed under mystic symbolism, while the language of the Bible is added to give a Christian flavor to suit professors of Christianity; but of course that is care fully guarded to please the taste of Jews, Mohammedans, and pagans.

Before going further, we wish to make it plain that we are not speaking against any individual Mason, but seeking in the fear of God to warn Christians of the true nature and character of "that which [as a system] is highly esteemed among men," but is "abomination in the sight of God."

The one living and true God is "a jealous God," and One who will have no other god before His people. It was the first commandment to Israel to have no other gods. Their great sin of old was turning to other gods, and consequently they reaped God's governmental dealings. He sent prophet after prophet to recall them to Himself from the pagan deities adopted from their neighbors. But today in so-called Christian lands Freemasonry is flourishing, and their god is a mystic symbol whose initials are "J.B.O." "J" stands for Jehovah of the Old Testament; "B" represents Baal (against whom the prophets cried out again and again and again), also known as Bel to the Babylonians; and "O" is "an Egyptian word" and stands for the god of the Egyptians, Osiris - a horrible, indecent god. In fact all the gods of the heathen were gods of lust, passion, and cruelty; and many of the same myths concerning a certain deity among one nation were found connected with the deities of other peoples. There is one common background for all idolatry, and that is Satan himself, for we learn from the Word of God that behind the idol were demons. It is true that many candidates for Freemasonry do not know this before initiation, but they are led on step by step into a not-too subtle web and then, after they are caught, they are told that they cannot extricate themselves. These candidates are led blindfolded (and truly blindfolded they are), professing to be seeking the true light which Masonry pretends to give. What a travesty on true Christianity where one is really brought into the light. But God never leads one blindfolded into His light. The Apostle Paul was sent to "open their eyes" (not to blind them - that is the devil's work [2 Cor. 4:4]) - and to turn them from darkness to light. All God's ways are open and true, and nothing of Christianity was "done in a corner," as Paul says.

Some Masons have daringly said that the Lord Jesus was a Mason, but according to their own rules He could not have been, for He Himself said, "In secret have I said nothing." O the effrontery of seeking to link the Christ of God with the idolatry of Masonry!

God is referred to in Masonry as the "Divine Architect of the Universe," but who is he? Masonry claims that the true name of God was lost by the murder of a figure they call Hiram Abiff at the building of Solomon's temple. They then claim to have found this lost name when Ezra went back to rebuild the temple. This secret is revealed when they take the degree of the Royal Arch. It is all shrouded in mystery and it takes three people to pronounce the name - the composite name of Jehovah, Baal, and Osiris.

Read what the Spirit of God reveals in Eze. 8 of the shocking idolatry committed in the house of God at Jerusalem, where the ancient men of Israel engaged in these abominations, and the women wept for Tammuz (a Phoenician idol), who according to their mythology had been slain. For this sin and many of like kind they were given over as a prey to the Babylonians; yet there are not wanting Masons who seek to trace their system back to these idolaters, and that approvingly, and then condemn the Hebrew prophets for berating such sins, saying that toleration was not a virtue of those prophets. O that Christians likewise had less toleration in such matters!

Some may claim that Masonry is not a religion, but according to their own claims it "is Religion." They acclaim it as a universal religion where all good men may unite. (Did Elijah propose a common meeting place for Jehovah and Baal? Did he not rather slay the prophets of Baal?) According to this pantheistic system all people seek the same ends, only under other names; therefore, Masonry has a platform where all people may agree (that is, provided they leave the God of the Bible outside).

Nor do they have a false god only; they dishonor Christ, the Son of God. He is treated as a "great exemplar," along with Osiris of Egypt, Bacchus of Greece, Buddha, Vishnu, Adonis, and a host of others. Surely a Christian should be righteously angry at such blasphemy! One of their number blandly says that it matters not whether such example be an actual historical person or just a legend, a myth.

What does God say about the Lord Jesus Christ? - just this: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]"; and again, "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him"; and again, "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." But the Christ of God is sedulously excluded from Masonry. Pray they may, but to whom? and NEVER in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian who enters Masonry must leave his Lord and Savior outside, as purely sectarian, along with Mohammed, Zoroaster, Confucius, et al. According to Freemasonry Solomon is the Grand Master Mason, but alas what says the Scripture about Solomon? He built altars at Jerusalem for Ashtoreth the god of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites. Yes, the great man they look to first took the house of David and kingdom of Israel down the road of idolatry and departure from God. In this he is a fitting symbol of Freemasonry. The system of Masonry is filled with Biblical quotations as though it accepted the Bible, but one of their number has said that the Bible is a symbol - yes friends, just a symbol (the same as the Koran and the Vedas), and so it is used. Everything pertaining to the building and rebuilding of the temple has been appropriated for their use, and even New Testament figures are used to conceal basic idolatrous symbols.

Some Masonic Bibles state in a preface that Masonry "encourages each man to be steadfast in the faith his heart loves best" - surely the devil's opiate: the Bible, and each man taking his own way as it pleases him. God says there is a way that seems right to a man but the end is death - yes, the second death, the lake of fire.

And what kind of religion is Freemasonry? A religion of works, not of faith; they claim that by it, and it alone, a man may reach immortality and bliss. It is really nothing new; it is the religion of fallen Adam when he tried to hide behind an apron of fig leaves (how strangely fitting that aprons have such a prominent place in this system of works). It is also the religion of Cain, and God says of his works, they were evil - yes, his best works were evil, and he was of that wicked one. "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain!"

Their mockery and buffoonery is shocking; they pretend in their rituals to regenerate a man, give him new life - put him in death, and bring him to life again - surely a parody on the vital elements of Christianity. One of their number states that the three degrees "exhibit the entire process of regeneration." Perhaps we may justly say that more souls are led down the slippery road to hell through the false religion of Freemasonry than through all the atheism now current in Christendom. Again we say, Masonry is "anti-Christian."

And then to think that otherwise sane, sensible men will bind themselves by an oath under the most terrible of curses not to reveal the great secrets of Masonry! (but anyone who wishes to spend some money and time in a secondhand book store can find out many things). Does God put a man under oath? Isaiah that the gospel? The only curse connected with the gospel is on anyone who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ - Mason, or any other. They boast of a common brotherhood, but a slave cannot be a Mason. How good that God did not limit the gospel to free and good men! or to men with enough money to pay their way, or to men only, excluding women and children! And what brotherhood is there really, but that of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? Yes, all they are brethren. And the Spirit of God is the uniting bond between them; they need no special hand shake or grip. Speaking of this reminds us that in the day that is coming apace, the beast - the head of the revived Roman Empire - will have his mark on all men under his power, either in their forehead or in their hands. Perhaps Masonry is a foreshadowing of this, for one may wear his emblem out in full sight or conceal it in his hand shake. Coming events do cast their shadows, and things of today prepare men for the things of tomorrow.

Now, fellow-Christian, in the face of all this, can you go and link yourself with such an idolatrous, anti-Christian system, and become one with haters of Christ - Jews and Mohammedans? You may be told that there are some degrees and some ways that you can go that are Christian, but this is not true. There are some Masonic ways that seem to honor Christ, but is it the Christ of God? Judge for yourself. Furthermore, basic Freemasonry is the first three degrees, and all must pass that way. Can you go that way and become a brother craftsman to haters of your Lord and Savior?

And should these lines fall into the hands of one who is a true child of God who has linked himself with this blasphemous system, we implore you, for Christ's sake, "Wherefore come out from among them,... and touch not the unclean thing." Can light and darkness mix, or Christ and Belial go in harmony? Can you, a child of light, mix with such heathen darkness? The Lord who died for you is outside of all this and calls to you, "Come out," "come out." Maybe you say it will be hard to do, but He has every claim on you, and He is worthy. He has also promised to do a Father's part

and take care of you if you heed His call. (Read 2 Cor. 6.) Dare you continue in that Christ-refusing, Christ-dishonoring travesty where heathen deities, pagan rites, Greek mythology, and Eastern mysticism are paraded about in the disguise of Biblical names, phrases, and symbols?

Perhaps you feel the pressure of such statements as "once a Mason always a Mason," and think you cannot come out. Moses came out of Pharaoh's house and the honor of Egypt, regardless of the pressure. "The Craft" may still lay claim to you, but you can renounce it, and if you are faithful to Christ, you will. Let them know why you are withdrawing; witness for the Christ that is banned by their order. You need not reveal their so-called secrets that you are under oath to keep, but come out with boldness and decision. "No man can serve two masters." Will it be Christ or Belial? Listen to

- "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?" 1 Cor. 10:22. If the early Corinthian Christians dare not link the Lord's table to idols, can any now with less impunity link it with Freemasonry? Not in the light of God's immutable Word. Let Freemasonry go on in its course - as it will - but true followers of Christ, "touch not the unclean thing."

Note - Much of the above may be applied in varying degrees to the lesser secret societies.

## Nebuchadnezzar: Head of Gold

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Dan. 1-4

There is much interest attaching to the person of this great Gentile. The place he occupies in the progress of the divine dispensations, the circumstances which connect him with the saints of God, and his own personal history - all contribute to give him a place in our recollections, and to teach us some holy and important lessons.

He was the man in whom God set up the Gentiles. The house of David, the throne of Judah, had corrupted itself; the measure of the people's iniquity was full, and the term of the divine long-suffering was spent in Nebuchadnezzar's day; and he is used by the Lord to be the rod of His indignation against Jerusalem, and the hand to take from Him the sword of rule and judgment in the earth.

The glory had departed. It had left the earth. The prophet Ezekiel had seen it in its gradual and reluctant, but sure and judicial, flight on the cherubim and the wheels, as far as the mountains on its way to heaven. But though "the glory is departed" might have been written on Jerusalem, "the glory is here" could not have been correspondingly written on any seat or city of the nations.

This Chaldean, however, this Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, is set up by the Lord, and the sword is committed to him. Power in the earth for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well, is put into his hand - formally put there - by God, on the glory forsaking the earth, or the Lord for the present refusing to take His place as King of Israel.

This is Nebuchadnezzar's connection with the dispensational purposes of God. He was glad, of course, to extend his dominions, and to let his conquests be known far and wide, and Jerusalem is welcome plunder to him; but all the while he was filling out the purposes of God. At length his sword is in its sheath, and we see him, not in connection with the purposes, but with the saints, of God, and then we get a more personal sight of him, and a subject of still holier interest and meaning. For then we see the man under divine operation, and not merely the power under divine commission and appointment. And it is this sight which Daniel gives of him in these chapters.

The tumult of war being over, and the sword, as I said, in its sheath again, the king is seen in his place at Babylon. His royal estate he purposes to set off to all advantage. Elegancies and accomplishments, and provisions of all sorts, shall fill his court. Both his greatness and his pleasures shall be served by all that conquered lands can furnish, and the ancient land of the glory is now only one of them. Babylon, famed for its wisdom in its astrologers and soothsayers, shall be set off by some of the captive youths of Judah, distinguished for their understanding science, and skillfulness in knowledge. This is the first chapter.

As it often happens, the Lord comes to disturb him. His heart is moved, if not his estate and condition in the world. Ere he went to sleep one much-to-be-remembered night, he is thinking on what was to be thereafter. He then sleeps and dreams and, the dream being all about what was to

be thereafter, shows that the hand of God was in the whole scene. The king, however, does not understand anything of all this. Even the dream itself goes from him. He has no remembrance of it. It leaves uneasiness behind it, but that is all. Often it is thus with the soul. There is a disturbance, but no intelligence. A restlessness has been awakened; but whence it came is not known, or whither it goes (what is its purpose) is not conjectured. And it is too high for man. It is the hand of God, and mere man cannot reach it. All the wisdom of Babylon is at fault. The dream, the departed dream, which had left only its shadow to scare the heart of the king, is beyond all Chaldean art. This is beautifully significant. We live amid these wonderful shakings, these hidden operations of God with the hearts of the children of men. The man of God, however, gets into the secret. The saint is made to know the mind of God in this great operation of His hand. Daniel tells it all to the king.

Nebuchadnezzar is, naturally, moved to wondering admiration. The knowledge of the prophet is marvelous in his eyes, and all that he can do for him he is ready to do. The wisdom of the God of Daniel, he also religiously acknowledges and, under the excitement, even delights in it. This is the second chapter.

But with all this he is but Nebuchadnezzar still, a mere child of nature, the sport of human passions, and of the devil's wiles. Vanity seems to feed on the communications which the prophet of God had delivered. Wonderful, but natural! These communications had dealt with solemn truths - that an image was to be broken in pieces, and made like the chaff of the summer threshing floor. But this is all passed by the heart of the king, and that he himself is the head of this image, the golden head of it, is all that practically works on him. His pride can get food out of that; but the rest may remain for a future day, however awful it may be.

Accordingly, he sets up a golden image for all to worship. All orders and estates of men are summoned by musical instruments of all sorts to own the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Strange that our hearts can so deal with God's revelations! God had spoken of an image being broken to pieces and scattered like the chaff before the wind. Nebuchadnezzar can set up an image to be honored with divine honors by all the world! How falsely the heart traffics with divine truth! Admiration of God's wisdom will not do; Nebuchadnezzar had that. But with that he was a self-worshiper, and to himself he can sacrifice everything. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the very instruments or vessels for awakening that admiration, shall burn in the fiery furnace if they consent not to fall down before this image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Wonderful infatuation!

God, however, is but again displayed. If wisdom belongs to Him, so does power. If He can reveal secrets and make known the thoughts of the head upon the bed of the children of men, He can quench the violence of fire and save every hair of the head from perishing, though in a burning fiery furnace. The king is again moved, and he does more than before. He had honored the servants of the God of wisdom already; now he is for honoring the God of power Himself, establishing His name in the land, and making reverence of Him a part of the business of the state, a standing ordinance of the realm. This is the third chapter.

Bur what of this? He is, as before, Nebuchadnezzar still - the haughty child of the dust - man who, like Adam of old, would be as God. For, after these witnesses of divine wisdom and power, and after the motions which his heart and conscience had passed through, he was, as in earlier days,

at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace (Dan. 4:4). He was the same self-pleased, self-pleasing, important King of Babylon.

Nature outlives a thousand checks and improvements. The new wine poured into the old bottle is but spilled. "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." Matt. 11:17. The various melodies of the dispensations of God are lost on the dull ear of man. But the Lord is not weary. He can still sit at the well and talk with the sinner. He shakes the heart of this king with another dream, and Daniel again interprets it. It is still, however, the new wine in the old bottle, and it is spilled as ever. Twelve months after this solemn visitation, the king walks in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and his poor proud heart, after all this, can say, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Dan. 4:30.

Here surely is old Nebuchadnezzar still, the "old man" of nature. The divine revelations are spent on him in vain. All the goodly emotions are but as the morning cloud and early dew. The new wine, to be preserved, must be put into new bottles. And so, at last, it is. Nebuchadnezzar is made a new bottle. Deeply and solemnly is this process conducted, or this work accomplished. The sentence of death is lawfully laid on him. The case is one of great character; and it might well be so, because, as we have seen, the light of the wisdom of God, and the hand of the power of God, had already addressed this man; and the further care and diligence of the Lord had been in the recent dream, also bestowed upon him, but all to no real purpose. The new wine had been spilled again and again. Nebuchadnezzar is the same man still, and the old bottle is now to be cast away. The former vessel having been marred on the wheel, the lump is now taken into the potter's hand, to fashion it another vessel, a new vessel, as it pleases Him. The story of this operation, as I said, is solemn beyond expression. "Man that is in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." Indeed Nebuchadnezzar had been in honor, but he had not understood, and now he becomes as a beast.

"He was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." Thus is he made to know himself, and to learn the lesson that he was, in all his honor, as brutish as the cattle of the field, having no understanding.

The occasion was special, and the display of the operation of God signal almost without a parallel. But if he learns that he has destroyed himself, he shall learn also that there is One that lifts up even from dunghills; and, under the further working of His gracious as well as mighty hand, Nebuchadnezzar revives; he becomes a risen man in due season. The field and the oxen are left, his understanding returns to him, his kingdom and its glory, his honor and its brightness, his nobles and his counselors, all return to him, and even excellent majesty is added to him. And then, as one of understanding indeed, who had come to the knowledge of God and himself, he no longer thinks of honoring God by state decrees only, ordinances of his realm, but bows before Him as sovereign Lord in heaven and on earth, and publishes His doings. He is no longer the king, but the dependent.

## The Need of Instructing Children: Parents, Awaken

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We cannot but feel deeply for our children growing up in the atmosphere which at present surrounds us, and which will become yet darker and darker. We long to see more earnestness on the part of Christians in seeking to store the minds of the young with the precious and soul-saving knowledge of the Word of God.

The child Josiah and the child Timothy ( see 2 Chron. 33; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15-17) should incite us to greater diligence in the instruction of the young, whether in the bosom of the family, in the Sunday school, or in any way we can reach them. It will not do for us to fold our arms and say, "When God's time comes, our children will be converted; and till then, our efforts are useless." This is a fatal mistake - God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11). He blesses our prayerful efforts in the instruction of our children.

And further, who can estimate the blessing of being early led in the right way, of having the character formed amid holy influences, and the mind stored with what is true, and pure, and lovely? On the other hand, who will undertake to set forth the evil consequences of allowing our children to grow up in ignorance of divine things? Who can portray the evils of a polluted imagination, of a mind stored with vanity, folly, and falsehood, of a heart familiarized from infancy with scenes of moral degradation? We do not hesitate to say that Christians incur very heavy and awful responsibility in allowing the enemy to preoccupy the minds of their children at the very period when they are most plastic and susceptible.\*

True, there must be the quickening power of the Holy Ghost. It is as true of the children of Christians as of any other, that they "must be born again." We all understand this. But does this fact touch the question of our responsibility in reference to our children? Is it to cripple our energies or hinder our earnest efforts? Assuredly not. We are called upon by every argument, divine and human, to shield our precious little ones from every evil influence, and to train them in that which is holy and good. And not only should we so act in respect to our own children, but also in respect to the thousands around us who are like sheep having no shepherd, and who may each say, alas! with too much truth, "No man cared for my soul."

May there be a real awakening to a sense of our high and holy responsibilities to the souls around, and a shaking off of that terrible deadness and coldness over which we have all to mourn.

## A Neighbor Unto Me: the Certain Samaritan

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Some have hastily concluded in reading of the certain Samaritan (Luke 10:33) that the Lord answered the question, "Who is my neighbor?" by pointing out that wherever there is need we should do our duty toward our neighbor. But it should be observed that the man who fell among thieves is not mentioned as a neighbor toward whom the other acts, but the Samaritan was neighbor unto him. This is another principle of acting altogether to what was in the lawyer's mind when he said, "Who is my neighbor?" and stands out in contrast with it, because the lawyer merely wished to justify himself; that is, to have clearly defined those who had any claim upon him, that he might have no outstanding debts. We know for ourselves the satisfaction in being able to say, "I owe nothing." Thus what prompted that question was really love to himself, and not love to his neighbor. Where love is in exercise, it asks not, Who? but has its own delight in acting apart from the question of who deserves it. And this is the principle of grace which is here shown out in contrast to the principle of law, which was the fulfilling of duty toward one's neighbor. The one is meeting claim; the other is meeting need apart from the question of claim altogether.

And this is why the term "Samaritan" is employed, to present one on whom there was no claim - "for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" - so that the Samaritan acts from himself, and not from any claim the other had on him. And this brings out what the gospel of the grace of God is. It is not the fulfilling of claim or promise, but the acting out of God's love to the lost. There were no promises to Adam, and a sinner has no claims upon God. Forgetfulness of this often keeps souls from having the blessing of the gospel; they will not have it for nothing. If they can establish some claim, whether by their prayers or religious observances, they would like it better. Why? Because this would be to give them some importance; but to be of no importance at all is humbling to the pride of man.

It was this that kept the Syrophenician woman from the blessing at first. She pleaded the promises in saying, "Thou Son of David," and was thus putting in a claim on Him when, as a woman of Canaan, she had none. She was taking the children's ( Jews') place when she was only a dog, and so the Lord says, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Then she says, "Truth, Lord." She relinquishes all claim upon Him, and takes the place of deserving nothing; but there she gets everything. "Yet," she says, "the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." The "yet" shows she had resources, though not now in the promises or in herself in anywise, but in Him and the love that brought Him down to meet the need of the lost. This was faith in Him, which He at once owns; for although He must deny her false claim, "He cannot deny Himself."

The Lord would willingly have been a neighbor unto the lawyer, and uses the law to produce a knowledge of his need; for the law is not a way of getting righteousness, as the lawyer was using it, but "by" it "is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20), and this is how God uses the law. The Lord still further says, "Go, and do thou likewise," that the man might know his deceitful heart, that such a principle of acting, that is in mercy, was foreign to his nature altogether, and that thus he might

learn his need. We find the Lord always deals with souls according to their state; to a soul with felt need He would never say, "Go, and do thou likewise," or, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," as He says to another who was merely inquisitive, and not needy.

The point of the teaching of this portion may be summed up in these words: It is the principle of grace in dealing as a neighbor, instead of the claim of God toward a neighbor.

## Not Amelioration but Salvation

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Many people assume that the Son of man came into this world to better the condition of man, instead of coming into this world to save sinners, which is a far higher end. The salvation of a sinner is so wonderful a work that Christ must necessarily appear as the prominent object; but the amelioration of man's condition as the object and end of Christ's coming into the world, displaces Him from His proper place of Savior, and lowers Him to the standard of a human benefactor. Where man's convenience or exaltation is the object proposed, we may reasonably expect that such a system will widely spread.

The object of the Christianity of the nations is not to make known the savor of the name of Christ, but to exalt themselves by the very light which they have borrowed from Christ. It is by this means they hope to promote a comity of nations while the object of God is to take out from the nations a people for His name. (See Acts 15:14.)

## Not One Stroke Too Little: Allegory of a Vase

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Someone once told a story something like this: A beautiful gold vase had been placed on a shelf in a goldsmith's workshop. It was just fresh from the hands of the engraver, and very chaste and lovely it looked. In the same room there was a nugget of gold which was being beaten into shape. It was complaining of all it had borne and still had to go through. "Oh," it said to the vase, "how I wish I were like you! When will these dreadful blows be over?"

"You wish to be like me?" asked the vase. "Then hush! for were it not for the fire and the beating, though you would still be gold, there would be no shape and very little beauty to be seen in you. The master knows what he is about, and he loves us too much to give us one stroke too little."

"One stroke too little." There is the bright side though we do not, as a rule, think so. We far oftener take comfort in thinking that our Lord and Master loves us too well to give us "one stroke too many." But there is as much comfort to be found in knowing that "the LORD will perfect that which concerneth me" (Psalm 138:8; Phil. 1:6), as there is in believing that "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." Psalm 103:14. We need to take them both together and, whatever the trial, to hear Him say, "He doth not afflict willingly" (Lam. 3:33); and though (like the gold in the story) we feel the fire and the chastening, yet let us rejoice in the knowledge that "nevertheless [in spite of all], afterward IT [that very chastening which we felt so keenly, produces what was lacking; for it] yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Heb. 12:11.

## O Death, Where Is Thy Sting? Experience with a Dying Neighbor

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The following derives all its interest from the remarkable leading of God's Spirit in bringing the writer and subject of this paper together a few days before the Lord took the latter home to Himself. She was a child of sorrow and suffering indeed - the mother of a family, all of whom had fallen under death's hand, leaving herself and her partner a solitary couple. The weight of her sorrow pressed her down, and disease of a trying nature began to develop itself.

As I was living next door to her, and saw the frequent visits of the physician, and occasionally the clergyman of the parish, I felt a deep interest and a yearning anxiety, which they only know who have had it, as to her true state and condition. Did she know a Savior's love? Was she looking to Him? Was the prospect before her dark or bright? were often-weighed questions in my mind; and many a time did I speak to the Lord about her, and find my only solace and comfort there, for I should say this pressure on my spirit about one of whom I had known nothing personally, and whom I had never seen, was new to me, for I am not an evangelist in the true sense of the word, but greatly desire to have a deeper interest in, and concern for, immortal souls.

Thus matters went on for weeks, until at last, on my return home one afternoon, I heard she was much worse, and that death was evidently very near. After looking to the Lord, I sat down and wrote a very few lines to her husband, asking after her, expressing my deep sympathy with him, and also the earnest hope that she knew the Savior whose blood cleanses from all sin; adding that I myself, as a needy one, had known what it was to trust Him.

I had occasion to make a call a little way from the house, and on my return found that she had meanwhile sent a message to me, requesting me to call and see her. I hastened to her bedside and, as I took her hand, she said with great earnestness, "Ah, I have been longing for some weeks to see you, and now I feel so thankful the Lord has sent you to help me on my way." As it was advanced in the evening, and she was very weak, I did not remain long with her. When leaving, she requested me to see her again the next morning. I did so, and again the same evening, and so on, almost each day until she fell asleep.

From the first evening I saw her I found out that she was a soul awakened to a sense of her need of Christ and His sufficiency for the deepest need. I have since found out that the gracious Lord wrought this in her in various ways, mostly, perhaps, through sorrow and family bereavement, of which she had no small share. I was in no wise instrumental in this; but I had the joy of seeing in her the power of God's delivering grace in many ways, and the blessedness of His Word in quieting her natural fear of death. One little circumstance of this kind I may record. She expressed on one occasion to me her fear in prospect of death - not, she said most decidedly, as to her acceptance in any way, but she had a shrinking from death and the suffering of it. The nature of her disease too was very likely to lead to such suffering. I read her part of Josh. 3, calling her attention to the fact that when the children of Israel were crossing Jordan, it was on the ark, not on the waters of the river, their eyes and thoughts were to be fixed. "When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from

your place, and go after it." As soon as I had finished, she said with great earnestness, "That ark is Christ."

I said, "Thank God, it is so." She never lost sight of that, and it comforted her many a time afterward. The last time I was with her she had all her relatives around her bedside. It was the last time they saw her. She herself wished and arranged it so. Her simple acknowledgment of perfect confidence in Christ, and rest in Him, was very sweet. And then she asked for the hymn -

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

In a believer's ear;

It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,

And drives away his fear."

And the earnest way in which she sang it, weak though she was, and exhausted, was very touching. This was my last visit to her. I called as usual next day but she was unable to see me; and that evening, without the struggle she at first dreaded, peacefully and calmly she fell asleep, so quietly, so gently, that they said they "thought her dying when she slept, and sleeping when she died."

It is the living power of the Word of God in quieting fear, and fixing, through the Holy Ghost, the eye of the soul on Jesus, that is so blessedly set forth in this case; and it is recorded to

His praise and glory who went before His beloved people through the dark waters of death, measured them all Himself, taking every sting out of them, and leaving nothing behind save gain for them, thus enabling them to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

## One Day at a Time

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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 with 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 1952 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?  
O let us in His footsteps haste,  
Counting for Him all else but loss!  
For how will recompense His smile,  
The sufferings of this "little while."

We do not look forward 300 years; our Lord may very likely come in 1952. 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.

## One Thing the Lord Ever Did and Never Did

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One day as a dear servant of the Lord was walking beside the sea in Nova Scotia he saw a Christian sitting on the beach reading his Bible and smoking a pipe. Going over to the Christian, he said, "I see you are doing one thing the Lord ever did, and one thing the Lord never did." Needless to say this servant of the Lord was referring to the fact that the Lord Jesus as a man down here lived by every word of God; it was His delight; and by it He kept Himself from the paths of the destroyer; but never did He use tobacco.

The Christian who had been addressed quickly seized the import of the remark; after weighing it he took the pipe from his mouth and threw it into the sea. He did not want to do that which the Lord did not do.

## 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 Ghost.

With the Christian, that body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. 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.

## Pardon Mine Iniquity; for It Is Great

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In Psalm 25, the godly Jews in that coming day own their sins; and what is the great word that they use about themselves? "Pardon mine iniquity" - why? "for it is great." What a wonderful thing to say to God! They could not say it to man. If a criminal were to ask the judge who was trying him to pardon his iniquity because it was great, I need not say that the whole court would stare with amazement at the man's presumption. But what would be presumption to the world and before men, is exactly the confidence of faith. And that is precisely what God works in a soul that is converted - integrity of heart in owning, and in confessing, its sins. And so there is not merely a cleansing of the sins, but a cleansing from all unrighteousness. That is a different thing.

There is clearly a work which is wrought in the soul. Guile is taken away from the soul. There is not the hiding of sin. There is integrity, but it is integrity produced by confidence in God's mercy.

And what is it in the 25th Psalm which had given confidence in this mercy? Ah! think of it! What had preceded? The 22nd Psalm.

There is an order in these things. We must not suppose that the Psalm are just tumbled into their places. They are put in their places by God just as much as they were written by God's inspiration. They might be written at ever so distant a time, and I do not at all suppose that they were written in the order in which they appear; but they are arranged - they are disposed - in an order which is as divine as the words that compose them. You could not change the order of a single Psalm without spoiling the truth. It would be like tearing a leaf out of a most beautiful plant which would leave a gap most sensible to anyone who knew what the plant ought to be, or what it really was according to God's constitution of it.

Here then, we see this very thing. The grace of God in giving Christ to suffer on the cross opens their hearts to tell out their sins; and they can say, "For Thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." That is indeed the reason. The greatness of it, no doubt, requires such a sacrifice; but in the presence of such a sacrifice there is no asking for consideration because the sin was little but, on the contrary, to pardon it because it was so great.

## Paul Himself: Paul's Doctrine

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The fact that Paul was led of the Holy Ghost in the pages of inspiration to put his own example before the saints of Corinth, Philippi, and Thessalonica respectively, for their observance, gives a divine value to the exercises of his soul which has no parallel in the Word of God. His conversion, we read, was a delineation of the ways of Christ to others (1 Tim. 1:16); his service for Christ was for imitation of the Lord's laborers (1 Cor. 4:16); in his giving offense to none, but seeking to please all for their profit that they might be saved, he imitated Christ, and was a pattern for all saints in their intercourse with those around (1 Cor. 10:32, 33; 11:1); in his own personal walk he was their model (Phil. 3:17); and his sufferings put him into blessed companionship with his Lord and Master, as yet another example to any who were enduring fierce persecution for His name's sake (1 Thess. 1:6).

This being seen, it will at once be admitted that we have not only to accept Paul's teaching, but we have sedulously to observe Paul himself. Nor will any who are spiritually minded either repudiate the obligation or weaken its force because God has been pleased to put upon record what indicates that Paul was not always in the direct current of the Holy Ghost; for none can deny that in the same Scriptures He has furnished a sufficient safeguard for every exercised heart against the danger of following blindly in the path of His servant.

We thankfully reflect too that the defects seen in so wonderfully distinguished a witness for God, only bring into more striking relief and beauty, by the enforced comparison we make, the precious and divine perfections of the peerless One whose steps he followed - "the faithful witness."

Nor must we omit to recognize that what we term Paul's failures, far from being lapses from rectitude in doctrine or practice, consisted in the pursuit of some divine but subsidiary object, or the pursuing a normal object in another way, rather than that which the Spirit of God had in view at the time in accordance with the call of Christ; in a word, a lower line of action and of testimony

than he was entitled to pursue, but which nevertheless, was so far sanctioned of God as to be overruled for the accomplishment of blessed issues for His glory.

## Paul's Voyage: Trusting the Promises

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Acts 27 is a very long chapter that occupies itself about a matter which, in human calculation, we might have said and thought could have well afforded to give place to other things in Paul's testimony. But "wisdom is justified." The ways and methods of wisdom, as well as her judgments and counsels, are all "justified of her children."

This chapter, together with a part of the following one, gives us an account of the Apostle's voyage from Syria to Italy, and his short journey onward from the seashore to Rome. The simple fact that great space is given to this in the history of The Acts of the Apostles, alone might lead us to judge that the Spirit has a mind or purpose in it beyond the mere acquainting of us with a fact; and so we shall find it.

It is true that the whole chapter is morally valuable in this sense, that it gives us a strong view and impression of Christianity to be found in all the ordinary circumstances and casualties of life; that the palpable, tangible world in which we find our present life and exercise, is the very scene in which the Spirit had His witnesses.

But we may expect to find in this chapter even more than these things - more than either one fact in Paul's history, or this moral instruction to which I have referred.

The company had been removed from the ship in which they had sailed from the coast of Syria into another that was bound direct for Italy (v. 6). But shortly after, dangers began to threaten, and Paul gets an intimation that the voyage would be with damage and hazard (v. 10).

This he had, I judge, by the Spirit. He does not gather it from the winds and waves. It is only the authority of the Holy Ghost that could have warranted a stranger, a landsman, a prisoner too, to speak on such a subject with authority, opposing the judgment of "the owner," and "the master," and "the more part." The rest, on the contrary, were directed by providence, so called. The south wind blew softly, and they supposed that they had obtained their purpose (v. 13). And so they sailed on. But a Euroclydon quickly followed the soft southern breeze, unexpected by those who looked around, but confirming the witness of him who learned his lesson from the Spirit (v. 14).

But the Euroclydon seems only to drive the Apostle into his harbor more closely. He learns the mind of God, and comes forth laden with the glorious harvest that he had gathered (v. 21). He rebukes them for not having heeded his former word; but, in the abounding grace of Him whom he served, and for whom he now witnessed, he pledges the safety of all who sailed with him in the ship (vv. 22-26).

The prisoner is thus the savior. He who was on his way to appear before the power of this world, and in chains, is the vessel for bearing the truth, the grace, and the power of Him that is above the world. This is after the pattern of the crucified One being the life of the world. This is weakness made strong. This is praise perfected in the mouth of babes and sucklings. This is the mystery of God's salvation in a world that has destroyed itself. Paul the prisoner is the savior. The lives of all

are given to him who was in chains. The most despised one is the one whom the Lord of life, and light, and glory owns. And such a one gets all God's secrets. "Howbeit," lays lie, "we must be cast upon a certain island." He knew the detail, as well as the mere fact of safety. And he believed, in spite of all appearances, and with confidence pledged the truth of the divine promise and grace.

Here indeed was God and His saint. Paul, after this, allows much to be done in the vessel. There was a sounding, a casting of anchors out from the stern, and a lightening the ship ( vv. 28, 29). And he gives great encouragement and cheer of heart (N, v. 33-38). But he will have nothing to be trusted but the promise. If the boat be resorted to, confidence is at once placed in other resources, in provisions of safety independent of God, and then the promise will be rejected, and death must follow. The waters will swallow all who are not in the ark of the promise. But according to the same promise, the ship goes to pieces. It is worth nothing - never to be used again. But the lives are spared. Not a hair of the head of any perishes. Some swim, some float on planks, but all get their life according to the promise that they who were in the company with Rome's prisoner, but God's witness and treasurer, should be safe. "And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land."

In all this, further notices of the divine mystery show themselves. There is a voice in it all, which may be heard. We have already noticed the prisoner as the savior - the despised and bound one in the scene being the only vessel of all the true glory and blessing that was there. How sensibly, how visibly, how audibly, all that meets the eye, and the ear, and the heart of him that is taught of God. It needs no interpreter. It is full of God's way, as I have already observed.

But here we have even more than that. The vessel goes to pieces. The lives of all are preserved. But it was not the vessel, but the promise that preserved the travelers. They had been committed to the ship; but the ship breaks asunder, and the promise is their ark in the waters again. All stewardships fail, and prove unfaithful. The church as the witness or candlestick, is broken and removed in the end; but that which is of God Himself - His truth, His love, His promise - survives as fresh and perfect as ever. None who trust in Him, and in Him alone, shall ever be confounded. The voyage may end in complete wreck. The dispensation may end in apostasy; but all who hang on the promise, all who trust the word of man's Prisoner, God's Messenger, survive. Some swim, others float on planks. Some may be strong and work their way more in the solitary strength of the Spirit, others weaker may hang about fragments that float around on the surface here and there, inviting the timid and the

unskilled; but whether they swim or rest on the planks, all, strong and weak together, reach the shore; they cannot perish, for the God of the promise has them in His hand, and no wind or wave can dash them thence.

Is there not then, I ask, a parable or mystery in all this? This is not Paul's voyage only, but ours. It is the safety of wrecked mariners, the safety of all believers who trust in the promise, and the God of the promise; it is the security of a poor, helpless, and tossed soul who has by faith found his way, and taken refuge in the sanctuary of peace, though all props and stays here fail him. Cisterns may be broken, but the fountain is as fresh and full as ever. Chorazin and Bethsaida may disappoint the Lord, but the Father does not. Hymenaeus and Philetus may disappoint Paul, but God's foundations do not. "All men forsook me," says he on a great occasion, "notwithstanding the Lord stood with me." And the psalmist in triumph exclaims, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The LORD is in His holy temple." Yes; the way to magnify our security is to

see it in the midst of perils and alarms. The very depth of the waters around honored the strength and sufficiency of the ark to Noah; the ruthlessness of the sword in passing through Egypt, glorified the blood that was sheltering the firstborn of Israel; and the solemn terrors of the coming day of the Lord will but enhance the safety and the joy of the ransomed, whether with Jesus in the heavens, or as the remnant in their "chambers" in the land.

## The Pentateuch

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Genesis gives us the election, Exodus the redemption, Leviticus the worship, Numbers the walk, and Deuteronomy the moral government, of the people of God.

## Peter's Lessons

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Peter in Satan's sieve learned that the flesh profits nothing. He had yet to know the profitlessness of law for blessing - powerful only to curse. The esteem of his brethren, the influence of numbers, the fear of men, the propagandist zeal of an accredited party, prestige of leadership, weight of authority, grandeur of systematized religion, and place covertly given to man in the flesh, all combined in the hand of Satan to induce a dissimulation by which even a Barnabas was carried away. Yet, beloved servant of the Lord! the voice of reproof reaches his obedient ear.

Grace learned through failure becomes an everlasting adornment, and the word that brought it to the soul is valued as a memento of love. Experimentally known, it is as apples of gold in pictures of silver. It is man's honor indeed not to fail, but in confession and restoration the glory is all God's own.

## The Epistle to the Philippians

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The epistle to the Philippians has a peculiar character, rather distinct from the other epistles. There are indeed traces of the same in Timothy. Taking it characteristically, it is the epistle of Christian experience. We do not find much doctrinal teaching in it, but rather the experience of Christian walk - not the experience of one who is going wrong, but of one who is going right - the experience which the Spirit of God gives. The Apostle is perfectly clear as to his position, yet here he accounts himself not to have attained; he is on the road to the glory; he has not yet reached it, but Christ had laid hold on him for it (3 :12) .

When I speak of my place in Christ, as in Ephesians, it is in heavenly places; but as to matter of fact, we are here on earth, going through it - a place full of temptation and snares. Philippians gives us not, of course, failure, but the path of the Christian, salvation being looked at throughout, as at the end of the wilderness. Paul had no doubt that Christ had laid hold on him for the blessedness, but he had not got there. Salvation is looked at as at the end of the journey:

## Power Not a Guarantee of Order: Difficulty and Disorder Among the Saints

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There is often a disposition to consider that difficulties and disorder among the saints of God are due to a want of government and ministerial power. But no amount of gift, in few or many, can of itself produce holy spiritual order. Disorder is never the result of weakness alone: This, of course, may be taken advantage of, and Satan may tempt men to assume the semblance of a strength they do not possess. No doubt assumption would produce disorder; but weakness simply (where it leads souls, as it should, to spread out their need before the Lord) brings in the gracious action of the Holy Ghost, and the unfailing care of Him who loves His saints and the assembly. It was not so at Corinth. Theirs was rather the display of conscious strength; but at the same time they lacked the fear of God, and the sense of responsibility in the use of what God had given them. They were like children disporting themselves with not a little energy that wrought in vessels which altogether failed in self judgment. This was a source, and a main source, of the difficulty and disorder at Corinth. It is also of great importance to us, for there are those that continually cry out for increase of power as the one panacea of the Church. What reflecting spiritual mind could doubt that God sees His saints are not able to bear it? Power in the sense in which we are now speaking of it - that is, power in the form of gift - is far from being the deepest need or the gravest desideratum of the saints. Again, is it ever the way of God to display Himself thus in a fallen condition of things? Not that He is restrained, or that He is not sovereign. Not, moreover, that He may not give, and liberally, as suits His own glory; but He gives wisely and holily so as to lead souls now into exercise of conscience and brokenness of spirit, and thus keep and even deepen their sense of that to which God's Church is called, and the state into which it has fallen.

At Corinth there was a wholly different state of things. It was the early rise of the Church of God, if I may so say, among the Gentiles. And there was not wanting an astonishing sample of the power of the Spirit in witness of the victory that Jesus had won over Satan. This was now, or at least should have been, manifested by the Church of God, as at Corinth. But they had lost sight of God's objects. They were occupied with themselves, with one another, with the supernatural energy which grace had conferred on them in the name of the Lord. The Holy Ghost in inspiring the Apostle to write to them in no way weakens the sense of the source and character of that power. He insists on its reality, and reminds them that it was of God; but at the same time he brings in the divine aim in it all. "God," says he, "is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Immediately after, he alludes to the schisms that were then at work among them, and calls on them to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, informing them of the tidings which had reached him through the house of Chloe, that there were contentions among them, some saying, "I am of Paul," others, "I am of Apollos"; some, "I am of Cephas," and others said they were of Christ Himself. There is no abuse to which flesh cannot degrade the truth. But the Apostle knew how to introduce the Lord's name and grace with the grandly simple but weighty facts of His Person and work.

## Power of the Vatican: the Editor's Column

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The nomination of General Mark W. Clark by President Truman to be United States Ambassador to the Vatican points up significantly the growing temporal power of the Catholic Church. This is true even though United States Senate approval may not be forthcoming at the next session of Congress. The trend is definitely in that direction throughout the Western world. At present there are forty-three nations that have diplomatic relations with the Vatican; only the United States of the major noncommunist nations is without representation at the "Holy See."

In the same perplexing and almost frantic efforts to contain Russian communism within certain bounds both the governments of the Western world and the Roman Catholic Church find themselves grasping at any plan, scheme, or device that might accomplish their ends, which are basically those of self-preservation. They therefore find themselves arrayed on the same side in the constant and growing struggle. This gives the Vatican more leverage for exerting force and influence on the "kings of the earth" than anything that has happened in many centuries, if ever before. Vatican circles have for some time been displeased at the lack of United States representation, and when the president named an ambassador to the very small temporal State of Vatican City (a territory of only a fraction over 108 acres in the heart of Rome, but which has its own postal system, currency, newspaper, and radio) they let it be known that the ambassador should be appointed to the "Holy See" instead. It might be said that there is very little difference in fact - and that is true - yet it is recognition of the Roman Pontiff's temporal power as a religious leader that is desired by them. It is this that the Roman ecclesiastical system is bent on obtaining.

While the Roman Church has lost control of countries behind the "iron curtain," they have greatly increased their standing and power in many Western nations. Spain is practically theirs, and they have great power in Italy, Portugal, and Belgium; in England there is less antagonism toward them than for centuries (so that English Royalty have found it advisable to get an audience with the Pontiff); Latin America is becoming more and more dominated by them; and they are gaining in numbers, wealth, and political influence in the United States. Rome is on the march again, and recently word went out from there that Protestants should rally behind a united front against communism, but it was emphatically stated that the only ground for any union with Protestantism was their bowing to the Roman Pontiff. Nothing short of this will ever be acceptable to them.

The Roman Church's rising power is but another sign in a long list of striking evidences that we are at the very end of this dispensation. The Christian with his true perspective should neither be discouraged nor alarmed at the spectacle of a religious system reaching out for temporal power, for his portion is the coming of the Lord, which is not and cannot be far off.

Since many things point to the near revival of the Roman empire as prophesied in Scripture, and the Jews are in their land again as they must be for the end, and Russia and the Middle East are in preparation for the end, surely Rev. 17 and 18 must also be near to fulfillment. These two chapters of the book of Revelation describe in some detail the relationship that will exist between the Roman Church and the Roman Empire during the first 3 1/2 of the 7 years that precede the coming

of the Son of man to reign - all of those years are after His coming to call His saved ones to meet Him in the air.

In that period now so near at hand there will be the culmination of two evils, corruption and violence - corruption in what is left of Christendom under the leadership and dominance of the Roman Church, and violence in the Roman Empire. These two evils are expressed in the corrupt woman, the harlot, and the rapacious beast.

That a false religious system is meant by this harlot should be evident to any careful reader. The Apostle John was given the vision of this corrupt woman sitting upon the beast; he was also shown the pure and spotless bride of Christ - the true Church. That the two are placed in direct contrast should be seen from the way the two visions are introduced: John was called by "one of the seven angels which had the seven vials" to "come hither" in both instances - compare Rev. 17:1 and 21:9. For the one view he was taken to "the wilderness" (a place devoid of anything for God), and for the other to "a great and high mountain" (a place above this earthly sphere). All is contrast between the two - one clothed in gaudy apparel and given over to all uncleanness, and the other the bride of Christ in all purity. They are also contrasted under the metaphor of cities - the one as the licentious and idolatrous great city of confusion, "Babylon the Great," and the other the heavenly and pure and peaceful "holy city of Jerusalem."

What religious system is meant by this corrupt woman should be easily apparent: (1) she is seen sitting upon the scarlet-colored beast which is beyond doubt the revived Roman Empire - sitting there she is portrayed as guiding and directing the Empire; (2) she is also said to be sitting upon "seven mountains," and this can mean nothing less than that her headquarters are at the city of Rome, the well-known "seven-hilled city"; (3) she is also said to sit upon "many waters," and these are described as "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" - sitting upon many waters she controls the streams of influence to many nations, and this is in perfect accord with her claim to universality, as the word "Catholic" implies.

Now in keeping with the growing practice of secular representation at the Vatican, Rev. 17:2 says, "With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication"; that is, the professed but false church of Christ has prostituted her profession to gain worldly advantage with the various nations; she calls it the "Holy See" but engages in all manner of barter to accomplish her earthly ends. It is a case of religious power pandering to political power, and vice versa.

This mysterious woman is also seen with a "golden cup in her hand full of abominations" (a word used in Scripture for idols). And the question may be asked, Would a heathen coming from a benighted land where idols abound find any great difference if he investigated the Romish system? The only difference would be the nature of the idols, from strange looking creatures from his own land to forms of the cross, Mary, saints, and angels. It is useless to plead that these images are not idols but only forms to bring to mind certain personages, for the heathen philosophers pleaded the same thing for their idols. They excused their superstition by asserting that no one thought the idols were gods, but only visible tokens to remind them of certain beings.

John saw the name upon her forehead: "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth." It is not only that certain evils have marked this system, but it is the mother of other lesser systems which have imbibed the same sins. He further saw the woman

"drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," and he wondered with great astonishment. He would not have wondered if the beast the civil power of the Roman Empire - had been described as guilty of the blood of the saints, but to see it in that which professed the name of Christ was astonishing. But who that has read church history can have a doubt as to its truth, and it is generally believed that those souls under the altar in Rev. 6:9 who were slain for their testimony will be those who will be martyred by the religious power during those first 3 1/2 years of the tribulation period.

The Church of Rome naturally seeks to explain away these scriptures, but a brief quotation or two from two of their own priests of some years ago show that there have not been wanting those within her own pale who confess that the Romish Church is intended. Emanuel Lacunza, a Spanish priest, said in part, "Rome, not idolatrous, but Christian, not the head of the Roman Empire but the head of Christendom, and center of unity of the true church of the living God, may very well ( without ceasing from this dignity), at some time or other, incur this guilt, and before God be held guilty of fornication with the kings of the earth, and amenable to all its consequences... And this same Rome, in that same state, may receive on herself the horrible chastisement spoken of in the prophecy." (Tomo 1, par. 2, fen. 3 \*14. Londres, 1826.) A French priest, le pere Lambert, wrote in 1806, "Either one must boldly give the lie to the Apocalyptic oracle on the terrible catastrophe reserved for Rome, or accept in good faith that its threats look to Rome Christian, and that their execution belongs to a future for which we are waiting."

Surely everything abroad should remind us that the coming of our Lord is very near. May the realization of this lay hold of our souls, not merely our minds, so that we shall walk with lamps burning and loins girded (our affections not allowed to flow out to things around, but our minds set on things above) and our hearts burning with loving anticipation of that blessed moment when we shall actually gaze upon that One who died for us, and gave Himself that we might live. Lord, haste that moment when we shall behold Thee as Thou art, and Thy full likeness bear!

## The Prayers of Saints

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"And when He had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints." Rev. 5:8.

That latter clause is very peculiar, as connected with the grace of God in His own proper eternity. There are things His people suffer from, and that He never forgets. All their prayers are treasured up before God - their tears are put in His bottle, and treasured up. What! the sorrow I have forgotten, has God put that down? Is that one of the things that will shine? He can use all for His glory; but can the prayers and groans of a saint be kept and have a special place, be an odor of a sweet savor to God? The sinner does not know this; but a poor broken one can say, "Not only does God remember my prayer, but He puts it by on His own throne, like the pot of manna which He liked to be laid up, to be remembered as a trophy of the way He carried His people through the wilderness." And so will their prayers tell there what their special need of His presence was here. "Golden vials." Gold marks the divine character of that by which they are kept; the odor, a fragrant incense going up - the fragrance ever the same. Is that said of the prayers of saints? Yes; not one of them is lost. The Lord Jesus knew them all; they were ever before God.

## Pressing on to the Goal: the Editor's Column

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In these days, when there is considerable talk about corruption and bribery in certain governmental positions, both in the United States and in other countries, and certain analogies are being made to the decadence of the old Roman Empire, it is well that we should keep our own bearings as Christians. We should not expect to see righteousness ruling today; that is reserved for the day of the Millennium. Neither should we look for high moral standards in government in a day when moral standards generally are being either lowered or shattered altogether. Governments, generally speaking, are neither better nor worse than the people governed, but rather reflect the moral condition of the nation or world.

Corruption in government is nothing new. Consider what it was in the blessed and favored kingdom of Judah and Benjamin. The words of Micah, who lived at the time of Isaiah, graphically describe the condition: "That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up." Mic. 7:3. It was not merely that they did evil, but did it with both hands, and that earnestly. The prince and the judge sought bribes; they asked for a reward. Then the great man was there to seek concessions; he was the one who could pay for special privilege and so accomplish his mischievous design. So after the judge and the prince had made known their price, and the great man his scheme, the prophet concludes, "so they wrap it up"; in other words, their dishonest deal was consummated.

Perhaps Scripture gives us a glimpse of dishonesty and bribery in the day of the Roman Empire. Felix the procurator or governor of Judea in the days of the emperors Claudia and Nero kept a -known innocent man in jail for two years; and during that time he sent for him often to converse with him, even about faith in Christ, but all the while he was seeking a bribe to release the prisoner - the Apostle Paul. Then when he went out of office he left Paul in prison to curry a little favor with the Jews who had accused him before Nero. (See Acts 26.) Little did that man think that his dishonesty would be recorded, and read by many generations.

There is little doubt but that the Roman Empire - people and rulers alike - became very corrupt, and that its dissolution was hastened by disintegration from within more than from foes without. But as the light of the gospel spread, especially since the re formation, there was a cleaning up of many things, for people do not do everything in the light that they would do in the dark. Little as the unbeliever, yea, even the professed atheist may think, he is indebted to the light of Christianity for many benefits he enjoys. But as the true light of the gospel becomes obscured, and infidelity parades under the banner of modernism and liberalism, so the breakdown of public opinion and moral restraint is returning as sure as the flood tide follows the ebb tide.

It is to this time and to these conditions that 2 Tim. 3 refers: "This know also, that in the last days perilous [or, difficult] times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce despisers of those that are good,

traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more [or, rather] than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." vv. 1-5. (This description of the last days differs but little from the state of things in the old heathen world [described in Romans 1], except that in the last days of this age they are combined with "a form of godliness.") It is not "wars and rumors of wars" but moral conditions that make for the difficult times of the last days. It is difficult for the Christian to go on his way in total separation from the spirit of the age; it meets him at many turns, but yet he is warned of these days that have come, and exhorted to go on faithfully even though he may suffer persecution (v. 12), and these blessed words ring out above all the scandal, corruption, and false profession - "But continue THOU" (v. 14).

We are here neither to improve nor to reform the world; we are simply to pass through it as "strangers" (those away from home) and "pilgrims" (those on their way home), not being surprised or alarmed at what we see or hear, but waiting for that blessed moment, now so near at hand, when we shall hear our Savior's voice and be caught up to meet Him in the air. In our period of transit through the world we are to thank God for the governments, for they are ordained of Him (Rom. 13:1); we are to pray for those in authority, for this is according to His Word (1 Tim. 2:1-4), and we are to render due respect to the authorities (Rom. 13:7), knowing that they are the ministers of God to us for good (Rom. 13:4).

"Then let us, brethren, while on earth,

With foes and strangers mixed,

Be mindful of our heavenly birth.

Our thoughts on glory fixed.

"That we should glorify Him here

Our Father's purpose is:

Whene'er the Savior shall appear, He'll fully own us His."

Note - It is not our thought to occupy Christians with conditions, but rather with Christ and heavenly things. We do not attempt to evaluate all the thoughts of the day, nor to sift the charges and counter charges that are being hurled, but rather to encourage us all to press on to the goal without being distracted by the babel around.

## The Purpose and End of Chastening

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And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." Heb. 12:5.

Suppose the Lord's hand is upon you; the great principle is that He is doing it for your good. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Love would not do it if not needed. Do not despise it. God loves you too well to punish you for nothing. You say, "Oh, I don't despise it; my heart is sinking under it!" Not so either. Do not faint; it is love that does it, and love will bring good out of it.

Mark too, we are to expect chastening; there is a great deal to correct. You may be as sincere as possible and, as to the purpose of your heart, single-eyed; but is there nothing hindering you? You may not know what. Would you wish God to leave it there? He knows the thoughts and in tents of your heart when you do not; and He is not a physician for nothing. No child is without chastening, bringing us nearer to God. We must all know how easily we get out of God's presence; and He does it for our benefit, that we may be partakers of His holiness, that holiness which is in God Himself.

Mark how thoroughly this is grace. He calls us according to His holiness, and then sets about making us partakers of it; and when all is done, there is "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." Like Paul's thorn in the flesh, our very service and devotedness may bring us into suffering for His sake, and at the same time into that which humbles the flesh. The thorn was something that met him in his service, made him despicable, and was a correction to the tendency to be puffed up. God may give it the character of a trial for Christ.

## Redemption before Holiness

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We get in Exod. 15 the deliverance founded on chapter 12, and God takes, as to His dealings, an entirely new character.

In chapter 12 He was a judge, acting in that character, and He is met by the blood. He does not meet the sin; the blood meets the judgment, and He passes over, but the people are left in Egypt, safe from judgment. That is not all that God does; it is the foundation of all blessing, but they had not got actual deliverance yet. There is not only the value of what Christ has done meeting the eye of God, but He is active in delivering us and bringing us out. Christ went down to the condition we were in, and by the grace of God tasted "death for everything." He came into death where Satan's power was. He could not be holden of it, but in coming down He put away the sin. He came down in the power of divine life - He was God Himself - and He not only put away sin, though He did that in order to deliver us, for it could not be done righteously if the sin had not been put away; but now He is up out of it sitting at God's right hand in glory, and the worth of His work is such that it sets man, in His Person, but as our Forerunner, in the glory of God. There is complete deliverance for us.

God was a judge in chapter 12. Here in chapter 15 He is a deliverer in virtue of that blood.

The Israelites got to the Red Sea and found they could not go any further, and that is very humbling. It is a much more humbling thing to learn you are without strength than that you are a sinner. God says, Trust Me and go forward. God is a deliverer, and there was this much sea that it protected them on the right hand and on the left. The very thing they dreaded was deliverance to them; they walked through it. We dread death and judgment, but it is through them we are delivered - the death of Christ.

Then they have to go through the wilderness, but they have come to God first. Death is gain, and judgment is gone for the believer.

He guided them in His strength (when they had none) to His holy habitation. "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself." Then there is peace.

We are brought to God by His power and righteousness, and the life that was manifested in Christ's resurrection from the dead; and from that there is a reckoning on divine strength for the way. Divine power has come in to deliver. Then what is Satan's power? There is perfect present deliverance from Pharaoh and Egypt, and the people are brought to God Himself by God's own strength. Then that work forms the ground for reckoning on God for the rest.

We see in verse 17 that God has an inheritance for His people. We have not got that ( the glory) yet; but what we have got enables us to reckon on Him for it. He brings us to Himself and now dwells among us, consequent on redemption (see chapter 29:45, 56).

The moment I get there, I say. -Holiness be com et h Thine house." You cannot speak of holiness to a person before he is redeemed; he has nothing to do with it except to say he has none. The

Lord is "glorious in holiness," and now He has brought a people to Himself, and He must have them holy.

In the cleansing of the leper, the blood was to be on the tip of the right ear, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the great toe of the right foot. No thought is to go into our mind, we are to do nothing with our hand, and there is to be nothing in our walk unfit for the blood of Christ.

## The Rejection and Death of the Lord Jesus

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Of the four accounts of the Lord's death, in the four gospels, we would invite the reader's attention for a few moments to that given us by the inspired Apostle Matthew, as far as he recites the events which took place from the arrest in the garden to the death on the cross. It is in his narrative that we have the most complete exhibition of what man is, beginning with the disciples and ending with the thieves; and there also we have detailed how God acted after the Lord had died.

The chief priests and scribes and elders of the people were holding a council in the palace of the high priest. What was the purport of their deliberations? Were they desirous to stir up the populace to demand the just execution of Barabbas? Were they making arrangements for a due observance of the approaching feast, or framing regulations for the more effectual putting away of leaven from the midst of the people? Neither righteousness nor holiness prompted their conference. They were taking counsel together how they might capture and have put to death the Lord Jesus. True children of their father the devil', they hesitated not to commit murder and, following the example of the serpent, would effect their purpose by subtlety.

While their plans were as yet unformed, and uncertainty prevailed in the palace, Satan was preparing an instrument in the company of the disciples. Judas, rebuked by the Lord about the ointment, six days before the Passover, became the ready tool for His betrayal. Satan entered his heart, and he repaired to the chief priests. And, to show the real character of the rulers in Israel, this agent of Satan finds his natural place to be in their midst, volunteering his services, yet bargaining for his price. The betrayal, effected by the defection of one disciple, resulted in the desertion of all, and the subsequent denial of acquaintanceship even with the Lord by Peter, confirmed by curses and oaths. Such is the picture, at this juncture, of that company selected by the Lord to be His attendants on earth, as drawn by one of themselves. They were weighed and found wanting. For, though John was subsequently found at the cross, he, with the rest, had first forsaken Him.

What of the chief priests and scribes, versed professedly in the law of God? The Lord stood before the council presided over by the high priest himself. There surely justice would be administered, and the forms of law be duly observed. But the spirit of justice had fled from the hall of judgment, for the judges became advocates to ensure His condemnation. They sought for false witnesses to put Him to death. To have listened to such knowingly would have been a crime. To seek for them was a heinous crime. Failing to find two witnesses that agreed, they condemned Him for speaking the truth; and, professing a zeal for God, they forgot the decency and decorum which judges should exhibit; they spat in His face, and buffeted Him, and allowed the servants to smite Him.

From Caiaphas He was taken to Pilate who had the power of life and death in his hands; while declaring His innocence, to pander to the popular will, he pronounced the sentence of death. He knew He was innocent - he affirmed it again and again - yet set free a notorious robber and murderer, and gave over the Lord to be crucified. Not content with this, he had Him scourged, whom he had most solemnly pronounced to be righteous.

From the hall of judgment to the common hall was another step, which the Lord in His condescension was willing to take. Here fresh indignities were offered Him. Stripped of His own clothes, and arrayed in the mock emblems of royalty, the Roman soldiers, the whole band of them, bowed the knee before Him, and hailed Him as King of the Jews. With a reed for a scepter, thorns for a crown, and a scarlet robe covering Him, they mocked Him, spat on Him, and smote Him on the head. As King, they deridingly hailed Him, yet as King they will one day see Him. With a vesture dipped in blood, a rod of iron where they placed a reed, and with many crowns on that head they wounded with the crown of thorns, will He appear, followed by the armies of heaven.

From the common hall to Golgotha was the next change, Simon of Cyrene being compelled to bear His cross. Nailed to the cross, He endured the railings of those who passed by. Who stopped to revile the thieves? None! Yet the passers-by reviled Him. The chief priests too mocked Him, with the scribes and elders. Industrious in procuring His condemnation, eager too for His death, their enmity pursued Him even to the cross where they taunted Him with being forsaken of God. It was true He was for a time forsaken, and we can give thanks for it. But which of those who said, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. 27:43), knew the value of their words? It was the bitterest taunt that was leveled at Him, and suggested surely by the devil. Matthew alone records it. If any who joined in these words discovered afterward why He had been forsaken, what must their sorrow have been as they remembered what they had said. He was forsaken that we might know evermore the joy of being in the Father's favor. Low indeed had He come down, but He would go lower, for "The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth."

Such was man, as Matthew sets him forth. We read in Luke of the confession of the repentant thief. Matthew tells of the boldness of Joseph; and John of the devotion of Nicodemus, but testified after His death. Of man, before the Lord died, Matthew has nothing good to relate, whether of the disciples, the Jews, the Romans, or the thieves. Till He died, God allowed man to act as he would. During the three hours of supernatural darkness, man seemed overawed, for we read of nothing done to the Lord till, at the close, when He cried out, the sponge full of vinegar was given Him to drink. Before that darkness supervened, man's enmity was fully displayed. The vinegar tasted - this was the last act of indignity submitted to - the last scripture to be fulfilled while He lived received its elucidation and accomplishment, and He died. Beyond this world, man could not pursue the Lord.

Jesus yielded up the ghost, and God immediately began to work; but - let it be pondered over as it deserves - to work in grace. "Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened." No house that we read of was destroyed by that earthquake; no one of that guilty company was killed; Jerusalem was not engulfed; not an animal, not a dog was hurt. All must have felt the earthquake, but in the temple a wonder was to be seen - the veil was rent. Who witnessed it? It took place at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer, when the incense should have been offered up on the golden altar in front of it. Mysterious it must have seemed as the holy of holies was disclosed to one who had never seen it. From the top to the bottom, from heaven downward, the veil was divided, betokening a divine act, and that immediately on the death of Christ.

From the days of the sojourn at Sinai to the hour of the Lord's crucifixion, a veil dividing the sanctuary into two parts proclaimed man's inability to enter into the holy presence of his God. Adam in the garden after the fall felt this; God at Sinai confirmed it, though teaching by the ceremonial He Himself had appointed that a way might some day be opened. The Lord died, His body was broken, and the veil was rent. God, with His own hand as it were, tore down what He had commanded Moses to put up, and that while the Lord was still hanging on the cross - a witness to the universe of man's guilt. This was the first act of God after the death of His Son.

One sin was enough, had no sacrifice been found, to shut out man forever from the presence of God. That one sacrifice, when offered up, was enough to open a way into His presence for the vilest of the vile, and even for the perpetrators of that terrible crime. Had God then come forth from the thick darkness and vindicated His Son by the destruction of His murderers, who could have accused Him of injustice or of haste? Instead of that, He then opened a way for the sinner to enter the holiest. None at that moment could have understood the significance of a rent veil. None in the present day should stand for one moment in ignorance or in doubt about its meaning; for the Holy Ghost has declared it, and Hebrews 9 and 10 are divine comments and explanations about it.

But further, the rocks were rent. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all speak of the rending of the veil. Matthew alone tells of the earthquake, the riven rocks, and open graves. And this is in keeping; for as we have in this gospel the darkest picture of man's sinfulness, in connection with the cross, we have also the fullest details of the actings of God in grace after the death of Christ. The rocks were rent - no unnatural accompaniment of an earthquake. But on this occasion there was something unusual, for the graves were opened, and from them (but after His resurrection, as the Evangelist is careful to relate) many bodies of the saints which slept arose and entered the holy city. As first-begotten from the dead, He rose first; but the graves were opened before the stone had covered the mouth of that new tomb, and had been sealed with the seal of authority. The graves were opened, but only bodies of the saints arose. The general result consequent on His death was shown in the opened graves; the special result for God's saints was manifested when saints arose from the dead.

But why this seeming haste? Why was no interval allowed between the giving up of His spirit into the hands of His Father, and these manifestations of what His death had effected? Because the work was a finished work, and God would have sinners believe this. It is true if Christ had not risen we should be yet in our sins. Had the grave retained His body, it would have been because He was not spotless and able to make atonement. We have likewise been quickened with Him, and raised up with Him. But ere the sun sank that day beneath the horizon, some fruits of His death were made apparent. God's own hand, we may say, rent the veil; God's own power opened the graves. The sacrifice of His Son offered up, He waited for nothing more. No prayer of man was needed ere He could act. No supplication arose from earth to heaven praying that the results of a finished work should be announced. Before the Lord was taken down from the cross, before the Roman governor knew He was dead, God by His acts declared some of the blessed consequences of Christ's sacrifice; for what took place inside the city, within the temple, and what was seen in the rocky chambers of the tombs outside Jerusalem, spoke clearly and loudly of the finished character of that work.

## Rejoice With Me

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These touching words unfold to us the deep joy of the Lord Himself in the matter of our salvation. This is not sufficiently seen or thought of. We are apt to forget that God has His own especial joy in receiving back to His bosom of love the poor wanderer - a joy so peculiar that He can say, "Rejoice with Me" - "Let us eat, and be merry" - "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad." He does not say, "Let him eat and he merry." This would never do. God has His own joy in redemption. This is the sweet lesson taught in Luke 15. The Shepherd was glad to find his sheep. The woman was glad to find her piece of silver. The father was glad to embrace his son. God is glad to get back the lost one. The tide of joy that rolls through the hosts above when a sinner returns finds its deep, exhaustless source in the eternal bosom of God. "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15:10. No one has such deep joy in the salvation of a soul as God Himself.

The thought of this is most soul-subduing and heart-melting. Nothing can exceed it. It gives a full, clear, and convincing answer to Satan's lie in the garden, and to all the dark suspicion of our hearts. Who could listen for a moment to those accents, "Let us be merry," issuing from the father's lips - the father's heart - and continue to doubt his perfect love? How could the prodigal have had a doubt in his heart when he saw that there was not one in all the house so glad to get him back as the father himself. Surely the words, "Let us be merry," must have fallen upon

his heart with peculiar power. He could never have presumed to hope for such a reception. To be let in at all, to be made a hired servant, to get any place in the house, would have fully equaled his highest expectation. But oh! to hear the father say, "Let us be merry!" This truly was beyond all human thought. Yet these were the father's veritable words. It was really true that he was glad to get back the poor undeserving spendthrift. The prodigal could not tell why, but it was so. The father had embraced and kissed him, even in his rags. Without a single upbraiding word, he had received him to his bosom. At the very moment when he was full of doubt as to whether he would be let in at all, he found the father on his neck. And, as if to crown all and banish every trace of doubt and every shadow of fear, he hears the father's cry, "Let us eat, and be merry."

Reader, pause and think of all this. Think deeply of it. Remember, God is glad to get back to Himself the very vilest of the vile. A returning sinner makes God happy. Wondrous thought! profound mystery of love! A poor sinner can minister to the joy of God! Oh, who can cherish a doubt or harbor a fear in the presence of such grace? May the sense of it fill my reader's heart with sweetest confidence and peace.

## Repaid With Compound Interest: the Lord Repays

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While Fenneburg was living with Gessner, a poor traveler, having spent his money sooner than he expected, one day came to the door asking to borrow three dollars to help him on his journey. As he asked in the name of Jesus, with importunity, Fenneburg loaned him three dollars - all he had, even to his last penny.

Some time after, being in great straits, the circumstances of the three dollars was brought to his mind while he was on his knees, and with childlike simplicity and faith he said, "Lord, some time ago I loaned Thee three dollars, and Thou hast not given them back to me, though Thou seest how urgently I need them. I pray Thee return them to me without delay."

The same day, Gessner brought him a letter containing money, and as he gave it to him he said, "See, here is the money you advanced." The letter was found to contain two hundred dollars, sent him by some rich man at the solicitation of the poor traveler. Fenneburg, overcome with surprise, exclaimed, "O Lord, there is no saying a simple word to Thee without being put to shame!"

## Responsibility Recognized

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"Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Phil. 1:1.

The Apostle Paul sends his greeting and love to all saints, but recognizes among them those who stood in a special position of responsibility - the overseers and deacons. In other words, the Church of God is not a democracy where one man's word is as good as another's. It is not a free-for-all. God owns authority in that way in the local assembly. As to its being official, that it cannot be, owing to the broken state of the Church; but that there are those who are in a recognized position of responsibility in the local assembly, no one can deny. At least, if he knows anything about Scripture.

"Esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake." The tendency of the day is to throw off restraint - every man have his way, and each one have as much right to a say as the other. That spirit gets in among the saints of God. In the book of Revelation, when the Lord stands in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, He addresses the angels of the churches; that is, He recognizes those who are in a position of responsibility, and whom He will hold responsible for what He finds in those different churches. That is an important principle. The reducing of everything to a dead level in the Church, generally or locally, leads to chaos.

God is not the author of confusion. God is a God of order, and He would have us recognize that there are those that He has placed over us, whom He recognizes as being in a position of responsibility and authority among us; and if we are wise, we will recognize it, and give them their due place. It is not official, we must confess, but that it does exist, we must also recognize and confess.

## Resurrection

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There is a word uttered by the Lord which we do well to remember: "Take heed what ye hear," and "Take heed... how ye hear." (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18.) The Corinthians had been listening to someone who said, "There is no resurrection of the dead." The Apostle gives seven reasons for the faith of it (1 Cor. 15:13-19).

Many learned men and scientists cast doubts upon the Bible today, but there are three letters which for me answer all the questions of scientists - they are G-O-D. This Book, I grant, is full of improbabilities and impossibilities to man, but not to God. These men say, "How can dust be raised? The bodies of martyrs have been burned in the fires and scattered to the winds, or gone to corruption. Their dust has passed through ever so many changes; it has become blades of grass, and passed into the bodies of animals." Only last week I was thinking of the world as a vast casket which contains precious dust belonging to God.

## Saul, David, and Jonathan: the History of Three Men

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This deeply interesting book gives us an eventful period in the history of Israel. The sad page recorded in the book of Judges had led to a change in the ways of God toward them. After the successive relapses which always followed the deliverances of the judges, God was pleased to raise up Samuel who commenced the line of prophets by whom God addressed Himself to the conscience of the people, with a view to recall their hearts to Him; and the prophet henceforward superseded the priest as the medium of divine communication, in consequence of the utter failure of the priesthood in the person and family of Eli.

Another change too takes place ere long in the mode of government of the people; namely, the anointing of a king. Hitherto God had kept the immediate government in His own hands; but the people, restless and dissatisfied - always ready to complain at the ways of divine goodness - ask for a king, that they may be like the nations round. Alas! they had lost the sense of what Jehovah was to them, and of their own peculiar calling, or they never would have coveted to be like the surrounding nations. But the Lord, who always answers faith, is pleased at times to answer unbelief as well, as in the case of the quails; and so here He gives them their desire, and sets over them Saul, the son of Kish, the man of their desire, and who was so soon to represent the actual state of their hearts. Raised by God to a position of dignity and honor, Saul sits upon the throne of Israel, the head and representative of the people. But what is his conduct in this place? Object of divine favor, he disobeys the word of the Lord who had thus blessed him, and by disobedience forfeits all. Chapter 15 records his fall; and Samuel, who had been the instrument of his anointing, is now sent to express God's judgment. "And Samuel said unto Saul,... thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel."

But no sooner have we this rejection and judgment of the disobedient man, than we read (chapter 16:1): "And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided Me a king among his sons." This shows us that God has counsels, and provisions by which to accomplish them, entirely outside and independent of the fallen and disobedient man. There is one of whom it is written, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfill all My will"; and a little lower down in chapter 16 we have the anointing of this chosen one, his setting apart for the great mission of fulfilling God's will.

In chapter 17 the scene is changed. Israel, with its fallen king, stands face to face with the Philistines and their champion, Goliath of Gath; and all the host, from Saul the king to the meanest soldier, are full of fear and trembling, and none dare meet the foe, for God is not with them, and they have no confidence toward Him, as the apostle John speaks, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." No; their heart did condemn them, and moreover God was against them in judgment. The Philistines were His scourge for Israel's unfaithfulness; otherwise none of the inhabitants of the land could have stood before Israel. Who now can be for them when

God, their only Refuge, is against them?

Now comes the occasion for unfolding and accomplishing the purposes of His grace. From the solitude of the sheepfold David is called by God to fulfill the great object for which he was anointed; and, as the obedient one, at his father's bidding, he carries the message to the camp. There he discovers the terrible strait of the people and, impelled by holy zeal and fearless faith, he voluntarily offers to meet the dreaded foe, single-handed. With a fixed heart and a firm step he descends the valley alone to grapple with the power of the enemy, and returns victorious, carrying back the giant's head - witness of his triumph. It is worthy of notice here, that while it is God's judgment that lay on the people for their sin and disobedience, it is God alone who can raise up and send the one who could meet that judgment, and deliver the people from under it. Nothing is now left but for Israel to pursue and gather up the spoil.

One more word as to the type. When David returned from the conquest, all Israel celebrated his praise, and then hastened for the spoil; but in chapter 18 we have something as instructive as it is beautiful. Another heart and eye had watched with deepest interest the stripling David go forth alone to the conflict. Tremblingly he had marked each step; and when David returned with the witness of his victory, what characterized Jonathan was not so much elation at the victory as that his heart was arrested by the person of the one who had achieved it; and as he meditated on him, his affections were drawn out toward David. The thought of one who, unknown and unasked, could step into that terrible breach and face all the power of the enemy for him, so deeply affected him that it is said, "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." This draws him near to David to seek his acquaintance, and the nearer he draws the more his heart is attached, for he finds his love responded to, by his benefactor and so they make a covenant together.

Jonathan feels he would like to unite his interests with those of David; he wished to have nothing separate from him; and if he had anything, as the king's son, which distinguished him in the eyes of others, he stripped it from him to adorn David, "even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." David evidently had not only won a victory over Jonathan's enemy, but also over Jonathan's heart, whose object now is to exalt his benefactor in the eyes of others. If we turn to Philippians we find a man in a very similar state, for Paul had been so captivated by the glory of the Person of his Savior, that he drops everything that once distinguished him in the eyes of others (chapter 3), and declares (chapter 1) that his earnest expectation and hope are that Christ may be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death.

May the Holy Spirit, whose mission it is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, so present Him to our hearts that we may be like Jonathan in this first attachment to David, but unlike him when he left his friend and savior, and preferred the ease and comfort of his palace home, but only to perish with his disobedient father on Mount Gilboa.

## The Secret of Blessedness

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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, not 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 conformably 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 are 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."

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."

## Self-Judgment

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I do not believe true self-judgment ever stops at the act which necessitates it. About the act, it may be, there can be but one judgment; namely, that it was utterly wrong, unjustifiable, and inexcusable. But how came the act to be committed? It was not committed while the soul was walking in the presence of God, but when not so walking. The act itself, therefore, is but the index of a previous departure. The moment the soul is out of God's presence the door is open for the action of that flesh which is within - Satan works, the flesh acts, and practice dishonoring to God is the result.

Self-judgment, therefore, when true, pauses not at the act, though taking full cognizance of it, nor at the opening of the door which led to the act, though marking that likewise most fully. It goes back to the point of departure from the presence of God which led to the opening of the door for flesh's action, however far back that may be; and it is not thorough until that point has been reached and confessed before God.

As the word itself implies, it is self (not "act") judgment. Then the question arises, Who is the "self" upon whom this judgment is exercised? It is sometimes thought it is on the old man, the old nature that is in the believer; but I do not think so. I doubt its being correct to speak of self judgment (in the sense in which we now speak of it) as being the judgment of the old Adam nature that is in me; that, if I am a believer, and have known redemption, I have already accepted God's judgment about, both as to its character and deserts, recognizing by faith its judicial end in God's judgment of it on the cross, where sin in the flesh was condemned. This judgment is, or ought to be, a forever settled matter.

Before that full redemption was known by the soul, the old Adam nature did for that soul constitute "myself" according to the judgment of conscience; but for the believer who knows and enjoys redemption, it no longer does so. I doubt, therefore, the correctness of the statement that self-judgment by the believer is his judgment of the old Adam nature that is in him. A believer, in the sense in which I now use the term, is one who has a new nature as being born of God, has Christ as his life, is a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and has the Spirit of God dwelling in him. He has, no doubt, still the old nature within; but, as I have written, his settled judgment of that is that it is utterly bad, so much so that God has already dealt judicially with it on the cross.

In this new relationship in which he has been set, in this new nature and life he has been given, the believer is responsible to manifest the characteristics of the nature he has from God, and the relationship in which he is set with God. If I, as a believer, have failed to do this, and have manifested the old nature, the flesh, who has failed? Not the old nature, for it never was responsible for this (I mean this manifestation' of new nature, divine life); and upon whom is self-judgment to be exercised? Not on the old Adam, for its action has been quite consistent with its own character. Who then has failed? Who is to exercise self-judgment? and upon whom is he to exercise it?

"I," the responsible believer, have failed; "I," the responsible believer, have to exercise self judgment; and upon "myself," the responsible believer, have I to exercise it.

In a word, I do not judge the bad nature and character which I have manifested, putting the blame on it (that nature and character I have through grace a fixed judgment about); but I judge "myself," a believer who has not only failed to manifest the character I ought, but has manifested a very different one.

Such I believe to be self-judgment, such the person who exercises it, and such the person or individual on whom it is exercised. It is not an old Adam nature we have to judge when it has acted, it is ourselves, believers, we have to judge for having opened the door to that old nature so that it could act.

There is, I believe, great comfort, and not only comfort, but positive power for exercising self judgment thoroughly when this is seen; for in thus judging oneself one does it with the consciousness that one is passing judgment on an individual (a believer) on whom God has no judgment to pass, save in a governmental sense, and then only with a view to produce that judgment of self which may have been neglected.

## **Shall We Sin That Grace May Abound?**

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Can one conceive a thing more dreadful morally than a real weakening of the sense of sin in those brought nigh to God? It may seem so, where there is only a superficial acquaintance with God. Where the truth has been hastily gathered and learned on the surface, it is quite possible to pervert the gospel to an enfeebling of the immutable principles of God, ignoring His detestation of sin and our own necessary abhorrence of it as born of God. Whatever produces such an effect is the deepest wrong to Him, and the greatest loss to us.

## Shoes of Iron

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"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Deut. 33:25.

There is probably no scripture quoted more frequently than this for comfort and encouragement to the feeble and aged; but the question has often been raised as to its application to the saints of this dispensation. More attention to its place and context would soon give the rightful answer. It occurs in the blessing of Asher, and it contains therefore for him - that is, for the tribe what it could not contain for us. But, like the infinite fullness of the Word of God, it contains for us what it could not bestow on Asher. It runs, "Let Asher be blessed with children [that is, have a fruitful progeny]; let him be acceptable to his brethren [be in their favor or esteem], and let him dip hi: foot in oil"- a desire doubtless for his wealth in the produce of the olive. Then follows the promise at the head of these notes. Now it is precisely in this connection, between the last clause of verse 24 and verse 25, that the truth for Christians is to be found. Oil is a well-known type of the Holy Spirit. Taking it thus, all is plain. Let the believer walk (dip his foot) in the power of the Holy Ghost, and then it may be said to him, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so' shall thy strength be." So understood, the promise is exceedingly beautiful. It points out that the only power for walk is the Holy Ghost, and that His strength, however our natural powers may decline, will never fail. As thy days - long or short -so shall thy strength be, if thou dost but dip thy foot in oil.

## Slow Travelers: 11 Days Journey Required 40 Years

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"There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadesh-barnea." Eleven days! And yet it took the children of Israel forty years! How was this? Alas! we need not travel far for the answer. It is only too like ourselves. How slowly we get over the ground! What windings and turnings! How often we have to go back and travel over the same ground again and again. We are slow travelers because we are slow learners. It may be we feel disposed to marvel how Israel could have taken forty years to accomplish a journey of eleven days; but we may, with much greater reason, marvel at ourselves. We, like them, are kept back by our unbelief and slowness of heart; but there is far less excuse for us than for them, inasmuch as our privileges are so very much higher.

Some of us have 'much reason to be ashamed of the time we spend over our lessons. Our God is a faithful and wise, as well as a gracious and patient teacher. He will not permit us to pass cursorily over our lessons. Sometimes, perhaps, we think we have mastered a lesson, and we attempt to move on to another; but our wise teacher knows better, and He sees the need of deeper plowing. He will not have us mere theorists or smatterers. He will keep us, if need be, year after year at our scales until we learn to sing. Now while it is very humbling to us to be so slow in learning, it is very gracious of Him to take, such pains with us in order to make us sure. We have to bless Him for His mode of teaching, as for all beside - for the wonderful patience with which He sits down with us over the same lesson again and again, in order that we may learn it thoroughly.

## The Smitten Shepherd: His Work and Some Results

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If you will read Psalm 22, you will find detailed there the sufferings of the Lord Jesus as the smitten Shepherd in the day of His great sorrow. It is a psalm of the crucifixion.

The prophecy of Zechariah, uttered centuries before Christ came, was at length fulfilled - "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd." Zech. 13:7.

There was no voice to arrest the uplifted arm as there had been in an earlier day when Abraham, on Mount Moriah, lifted up his hand to slay his son.

It was a solemn hour - an hour that stands alone. There had been none like it, nor will there ever be. To that hour the eye of the redeemed shall look back unwearyingly. At the remotest point to which our thoughts can carry us in the far-off eternity of the future it shall be as an event of yesterday. It shall stand alone in its solemn glory as long as eternity lasts. Never shall it be forgotten, and every remembrance of it shall fill the heart with adoring wonder.

Many sorrows were in the smitten Shepherd's cup, which human hands placed there. Great sorrows which He felt as no fallen child of Adam ever could. The violence and rage of brutal men pursued Him. Strong bulls of Bashan, as He terms them, beset Him round. They gaped upon Him with their mouths as a ravening and a roaring lion. There dogs compassed Him; the assembly of the wicked enclosed Him; they pierced His hands and His feet. On these we linger not, but hasten on to speak rather of that greater sorrow, and of those profounder sufferings which dwarf all others - sufferings which were the result of God's hand being against Him on account of sin - atoning sufferings, without which the whole human family would have been forever lost.

Men of genius have assayed to paint Calvary on canvas. Their assaying such a task shows how poor and far astray their thoughts of Calvary must have been. A cross, an agonizing form thereon, a dying thief on either side, the mocking priests, the weeping women, and the watching crowd, these they may depict. But where is God? They have left Him out, and He it was who dealt with Jesus there. How could pencil picture Him, or the darkness, the desolation, the spiritual agony of the blessed Lord, when all God's waves and billows went over Him, and when high Above the shouts of mingled hate and triumph arose the piercing cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Into those solitudes we may not enter. Shrouded in eternal mystery the deeper sufferings of the smitten Shepherd must remain; fathom them no mortal can. Standing like children on the shores of that dark, lone sea we may look across the wide waste of waters, but what is beyond we know not; it is hid from our eyes.

From the horns of the unicorns the smitten Shepherd was heard (v. 21), and then we see Him on resurrection ground, and hear Him speak of "My brethren" and of "Thy name."

Then by Mary of Magdala, who stood weeping at His empty tomb, the risen Savior sent that wondrous message - "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." John 20:17: Mine and yours.

And this message in its blessedness far exceeds mere clearance from guilt, and our being sheltered from judgment by the cross of the smitten Shepherd. Thank God, our sins have been put away, and so put away that in every respect of them God has been glorified. Let no one question that. He who doubts it, doubts the efficacy of that Precious blood shed in death for us at Calvary. On that work alone our eternal hopes depend. How fully God has been satisfied therewith is shown in the resurrection and glorification of Christ. And when the Lord appeared in the midst of His disciples on the evening of the day on which He arose from among the dead, He saluted them with words of peace - "Peace be unto you," and He showed unto them His hands and His side. Peace was their portion now, and it is ours no less than theirs - peace made by the blood of His cross. Can anyone bring up the question of our sins again here or hereafter? He who would do so must first impeach the Savior's finished work, and disprove its atoning merits. "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified"; and our sins and iniquities, God declares, He will remember no more.

But "My brethren" and "Thy name" disclose a wider range of blessing, and speak of a place and love which had been His alone, but which He would now share with others. Never had He so spoken of them before. But now that the work of redemption had been accomplished in His cross, He, as Man risen from the dead, associates them with Himself in the closest and tenderest way. Beautifully is this expressed in Heb. 2, where the Spirit quotes from this psalm of suffering: "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee." And in the day of glory that is coming, He will take His place as firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29). How this tells of our present and eternal identification with Christ the Son of God's love.

How powerfully it appeals to our affections; and what an estimate it gives of that atoning work in virtue of which the exceeding riches of God's grace can be thus displayed.

And not only are we before the face of His God and ours as His brethren, standing there in Him, the last Adam, in all the infinite worth of that work which He wrought as the smitten Shepherd, made, as it is said, "the righteousness of God in Him"; but He has declared unto us the Father's name - "My Father, and your Father." How far beyond deliverance from judgment this carries us, those whose hearts have by the Spirit entered into it alone can tell. It cannot be learned from books; it must be experimentally known. Interesting it is to observe that the very name of "Abba, Father," which the blessed Lord used in Gethsemane, is that which the Spirit puts in the mouth of each believer now (Rom. 8:15). Brethren, what nearness to God is ours! What a place! Ourselves too the objects of the Father's love - loved as Christ is loved ( John 17:23, 26).

But let us not forget that if His place is ours, His relationship as man to the Father ours, the love wherewith He is loved ours, and ours too His glory by-and-by, let us not, I say, forget that He it is who has brought us into it, and that we owe it all to Him who gave Himself for us. His was the toil, His was the shame, His was the suffering, His was the death. If we are the redeemed, He is the Redeemer; if we are saved, He is the Savior; if we are the sheep, He is the Shepherd; if we are the

many brethren, He is the First-born. The glory then of Redeemer, Savior, Shepherd, First-born is His, and His alone. Who can share that glory with Him? None. We love to think that it must be so. Who that knows Him would pluck a laurel from His brow to grace his own? Were anyone so base, all heaven would cry him down.

Other streams of blessing follow in this psalm as the fruit of the smitten Shepherd's work. The seed of Jacob shall fear and glorify Him, and all the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord. It is sweet to think of this. In the day of Israel's restoration, Jehovah "will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Zech. 12:10. Then they will know that He was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities; that the chastisement of their peace was upon Him, and that by His stripes they are healed (Isa. 53). And then will be fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet.

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the LORD: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jer. 31:31-34.

From among restored Israel, God will raise up His messengers who will declare His glory among the Gentiles (Isa. 66:19). Their mission shall be fruitful in blessing. "Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Loan of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD." Zech. 8:22. But we refrain from entering into this deeply interesting subject, as it would carry us beyond the limits of our present paper. Our psalm describes these widening circles which find their center in the cross of Christ, "My brethren," "the seed of Jacob," and "the ends of the world." Each shall have its appointed glory; for the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. In them all the Lord shall be glorified, and the sufferings of the smitten Shepherd shall be a subject of wonder and praise throughout eternity.

## Something for the Lord

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Many years ago a young man in Canada heard the clear gospel of the grace of God, and believed it to the saving of his soul. It was a deep work, producing repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Out of this exercise came a real desire to please the Lord, with the result that he felt he could not go on using tobacco, so he gave it up definitely and finally.

Sometime later a friend asked him if he had ever been tempted to return to his tobacco. This dear brother S. quietly replied, "The odor of it does sometimes awaken old desires, but then I am thankful that there is something I can give up for the Lord." He remained a faithful and devoted follower of Christ, and for many years was used in blessing to others, until that happy moment when the Lord called him to be with Himself.

## The Spirit Filled the House

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It is said, "It filled all the house where they were sitting." Now what filled it, the sound or the Spirit? The sound, of course. Are you sure of this? Read the verse, Acts 2:2, and you will be assured of it too. No reader of the English New Testament need have a doubt about it. The Spirit was there.

Three things are named in this important passage:

1. A sound came suddenly from heaven. This addressed their ears, and was like the bell of a signal that tells of the coming in of a fresh train. The promised Spirit was now come.

2. "Cloven tongues like as of fire" appeared unto them, and sat upon each of them. This addressed their eyes as the sound had addressed their ears. Besides, they were seen in their distribution; "it sat upon each of them."

3. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak," etc.

This was something internal and invisible. The Holy Ghost had been symbolized in the sound like "a rushing mighty wind," as a power that would carry everything before it, while it was shown to be intelligent power in the light of the fiery tongues; and that it sat on each of them was indicative that these humble disciples were now endowed as personal witnesses with the power of the Holy Ghost, and made His instruments in giving testimony to a rejected, crucified, but now risen and exalted, Lord and Christ.

## The Storm and the Pilot

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If God sends the storm, He will also steer the vessel.

## Strength and Courage: Service and Conflict Require It

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Nothing could be plainer to one conversant with Scripture than that the gospel is antagonistic to all the principles of this world, and that, carrying with it as it does the authority of God, it must call forth the resistance of Satan and of men in alienation from God. And this necessarily puts the gospel in the place of conflict, and entails suffering in this world on those who will stand with and for the truth of the gospel. Paul was "the prisoner of the Lord," and suffered many and varied afflictions and persecutions for the sake of the gospel which he preached as an ambassador of Christ. And so has it ever been when any have stood for God and His truth in this evil world of which Satan is the prince and god.

Man has fallen under Satan's power, and is in a state of complete alienation from God. The cross was the full witness of this. "This is the heir," they said; "come, let us kill him and possess his inheritance." Matt. 21:38; N. Trans. Man has fallen under the power of one who has usurped the place of God in this world; and so whenever God has been pleased to assert His rights in this world, or to exercise His sovereign prerogatives, man has resisted; as Stephen said, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Pharaoh, Amalek, the Canaanites, all resisted Jehovah in the fulfillment of His purposes as to Israel. And even the Israelites forsook their own Deliverer; and when He sent them prophets, they beat, and stoned, and killed them; and when He sent His Son, they nailed Him to the cross. Jews and Gentiles united in putting to death Jesus the Son of God; and the full character of man's wickedness was thus manifested.

But it was by "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" that He was delivered; and by His death, redemption for guilty man was accomplished. In His death the foundation of eternal salvation was laid, and the ground for the display of greater and higher glories than those of the kingdom of Israel. God raised up Jesus from the dead, and exalted Him to His own right hand, and sent down the Holy Ghost to gather out from Jews and Gentiles a people to His name.

This work is being accomplished through the preaching of the gospel. But it is the gospel preached in the name of the despised and rejected Jesus, and in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that so runs counter to all that is in the natural heart of man, and calls forth resistance from both man and Satan.

The instruments God uses are only poor, weak, defenseless creatures without any carnal weapons to carry on their warfare. Yet the charge was given them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark 16:15.

It is easy to see that for the carrying out of this charge some unseen strength was needed. We see, for example, a few fishermen preaching the gospel, and thousands bowing to the authority of that name which they preached, while the world power sought to silence them and stop their work. Yet undismayed these poor, despised fishermen go on with their work. What was the secret? God was with them. The rulers lay their hands on them and put them in the common prison, and the next morning they are found again standing in the temple and preaching to the people "all the

words of this life." God was with them, and bonds and prison bars were nothing to Him if He saw fit to exercise His power. And even though the apostles might be bound, the gospel could not be bound. It was when bound with a chain that Paul preached the gospel before kings and rulers; and even when in the lion's mouth, he was strengthened so that by him the preaching might be fully known, and all the Gentiles hear. And he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion (2 Tim. 4:17). Here was true strength and real courage, but it was strength in the midst of utter weakness, and courage when there was no hope in human resources.

It was the power of God. The creature instruments were in communion with Him, and hence courage which nothing could daunt filled their hearts. It was all of God who wrought in them effectually for the carrying out of His purposes.

There are many instances given us in the Word of God in which we see the display of this power and courage in carrying out the will of God. But the first chapter of Joshua is important as giving us the conditions governing these things. Three times over the Lord exhorts Joshua in that chapter to "be strong and of a good courage " There was the work to be done, the principle on which it was to be done, and the ground of strength and courage for it.

The work to be done was the dividing of the land among the tribes of Israel. "Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them." The land to be divided was a land in which there were nations mightier than Israel - a land of "giants," and "chariots of iron," and cities great and "fenced up to heaven." These nations must be overcome in order to divide the land, and for this great work strength and courage were needed.

Obedience was the principle on which this work was to be carried on, and the condition of success. "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Here we can see there was no way to succeed but by obedience. Joshua was not to turn from the law to the right hand or the left. The words of the law were not to depart out of his mouth: he was to meditate upon them day and night; and the result would be a prosperous way and good success.

The importance of this cannot be overestimated. If we have to do with God, His will must be everything. It is His to command; it is ours to obey. We may say we are not under the law as Israel was, which is quite true, but we are none the less called to obey. God has indeed revealed Himself to us in grace, giving His beloved Son, and in Him all blessing; and by faith we partake of the benefits; but while the blessing is by grace and through faith, it also commands the obedience of the heart.

Paul, as an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, received grace and apostleship "for obedience of faith among all the nations" (N. Trans.), for Christ's name; and the mystery kept

secret since the world began was also "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." There is indeed no other way of going on with God. Our blessing is inseparably bound up with lowly submission to His will.

Now God has made known His will to us in His Word. His will, His purposes, His counsels, are all unfolded there. And if we would know His will, and be obedient, we must attend to His Word. The Lord said to Israel: "Therefore shall ye lay up these My words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the doorposts of thine house, and upon thy gates." Deut. 11:18-20.

Such were God's commands to Israel. And if the words of the law had such importance for Israel -if those words were to fill their hearts, and occupy their thoughts day and night, in the house and by the way, lying down and rising up - if Joshua was not to turn from the words of the law, to the right hand or to the left, but to have them in his mouth, and meditate upon them both night and day, in order to prosper and be successful - how much more ought the revelation God has given us to command the obedience of our hearts, since our whole blessing is bound up in this revelation! It is in the reception of the truth, and as the truth forms the heart and the conscience, that we receive and enjoy blessing. God's Word is bread to the soul, as it is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It is thus that we grow spiritually, and learn God's mind so that we may do His will and have communion with Him. In this way the life, ways, actions, words, motives, desires, and affections of God's people are formed, and in a practical way become a testimony to the truth and grace of God. And God will manifest Himself with and for those who are thus practically governed by His Word.

#### Strength and Courage: Service and Conflict Require It

3. The ground of strength and courage is the fact that God has commanded, and is with the one who obeys. "Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Josh. 1:9.

The difficulties might be like mountains, the enemy might be great and powerful, but Jehovah was greater than all, and was with His obedient servant, so that he had nothing to fear. He had delivered Israel out of Egypt and brought them through the Red Sea, the wilderness, and the Jordan; and He who had done this could lead them on to victory. He could give strength and courage against which no foe could stand.

This same strength and courage we need. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," it is said, where it is a question of Satan's power and wiles. And when Christianity began to decline, and Timothy was losing heart, the Apostle Paul encouraged him in these words, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God"; and again, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Timothy needed this encouragement, and we need it; and what is more, God is able to give it, and will give it to those who go on in dependent obedience to His will.

But we need to have faith in God. There is a maxim of this world which says, "Knowledge is power"; but with the believer power is rather connected with "faith." Faith brings God in, and to His power there is no limit. Heb. 11 gives us many examples of this faith which acted with God, and in which His power was displayed. Moses "endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." "Through faith" they "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." In the midst of weakness faith made them strong. As Paul also said, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

"Have faith in God," Jesus said to His disciples, and then adds, "for verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith." And how could it be otherwise if there is the faith that brings God into the matter? He who created the mountains can surely remove them also if He be pleased to do so. The real question is, Are we walking with Him? Have we the knowledge of His will so that we can act with confidence? Can we bring Him into what we are doing? Are we standing with Him and for Him in the carrying out of His will and His purpose, so that we can connect His name with our service? If this be so, no difficulty can be too great. We can go forward in the name of the Lord with strength and courage of heart, and undismayed by all the power that Satan may raise up against us.

And here let us observe that diligence of heart is needful, and I may add, as of equal importance, prayerful dependence. "Meditating day and night," and "praying always," is what the warriors of Christ are called to. Joshua was to meditate on the words of the law day and night, and the Ephesian saints were to pray always with all prayer and supplication for all saints. Paul says to Timothy, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." Oh, if we were more diligent as to the Word of God and prayer, how different our state would be! What fervency of heart in all our service, and what devotedness to Christ and His people, there would be; and how much greater blessing would be enjoyed!

How much we lack this diligence of heart! How many moments every hour, and hours every day, are wasted-time that might be given up to prayer and meditation on God's blessed Word, in which we should find the Holy Ghost refreshing our souls, and filling them with that which flows down from the heart of Christ in glory. Hours spent in foolish talk and idle gossip, grieving the Spirit, blighting spiritual growth, and drying up the springs of divine love in the soul, might be spent in holy, edifying conversation about Christ and His things. "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name." Mal. 3:16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another." Col. 3:16. In this we need diligence of heart so that the Lord may be honored, and our blessing and the blessing of others secured.

I may add also that strength and courage are needed more in a day of decline than when all is going well. There is the enemy to contend with, and instead of having the support of our brethren, we may meet with that which chills the heart and fills it with sorrow. Here the heart is tested, and God only can sustain.

There is not only conflict with a common enemy, but there is the state of the saints to be borne as a burden on the heart. Will you bear this burden? Will you cleave to the saints in the power of divine love when they turn away from you as all in Asia did from Paul? Will you seek to serve them when you are misunderstood, misrepresented, or even maligned, as Paul said to the Corinthian saints, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you: though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved"? The state of the saints with whom we have to do will often be the means of testing the state of our own hearts. It is easy to love my brethren when they love me and heap their favors upon me. But do I love them just the same when they turn against me or forsake me? Do I still cling to them when they have given me up? Do I intercede for them night and day when perhaps they are only speaking evil of me? The real question is, Have I got the heart of Christ about the saints? And do I see Christ's glory bound up in them? Then I shall act toward them according to His heart, and seek His glory in connection with their state, regardless of personal rights or present advantage. Paul could appeal to God as his witness, how he longed after all the Philippian saints in the bowels of Jesus Christ. It was wholehearted devotion to the saints for the sake of Christ, and as having the heart of Christ about them. And this too we need to have; but it requires strength and courage to persevere in it, and the more so if the saints are in a low and carnal state. And we need to be continually cast on God who alone can give strength amid weakness, and lead us on to victory. Diligent seeking of God's face, and patient waiting on Him for His will, His help, and His guidance, are indispensable. Why have we no strength? Why is there decline among us? Why breaking of ranks, and scattering of the saints? Is it not because we have not lived close to Christ, and gone on in humble dependence on God? And God's Christ, God's truth, and God's people have not had their rightful place in our affections. We have seen one growing careless, and another going wrong, and we have perhaps talked about them, and criticized them when we ought to have been on our faces interceding for them.

But will we now lay to heart our own state and that of our brethren? Will we own our slackness of soul - our guilty. carelessness - and with diligence of heart seek God's face, and walk with Him? Then we might expect His blessing and the enjoyment of His favor which is better than life (Psalm 63:3). There is no time for loitering, no time for idle gossip, no time for pampering the flesh and feeding it with the vanities of this world. "Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Eph. 5:14-16.

The blessed Lord give the writer and the reader strength and courage in this evil world to live for Himself and for His own, serving Him and them in lowly grace until we are taken out of the scene of conflict and service to rest in the eternal brightness of His own presence, and in the joy of His unchanging love.

## Suffering for Well Doing

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It may be that God may see it good that we should suffer. If so, it is better that we should suffer for well doing than for evil doing. The Apostle gives a touching motive for this; Christ has suffered for sins once for all: let that suffice; let us suffer only for righteousness. To suffer for sin was His task; He accomplished it, and that forever; put to death as to His life in the flesh, but; quickened according to the power of the divine Spirit.

## The Suitable Expression of Our Relationship: "Abba Father"

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In the book of Genesis we find a father's affections displayed and gratified. It is the book of the patriarchs, and the affections of a father are exercised there very beautifully.

Abraham, as well as others in this book, desired a child, and though his house might have been established in a servant - a loved and trusted servant too, Eleazar of Damascus - this would not do for him; so long as he went childless, his heart was unsatisfied.

He made a feast when his son Isaac was weaned (Gen. 21:8); this was his joy; he could hear himself addressed as father. Sarah would also have the house cleared of the bondwoman and her child.

Jacob adopted the sons of Joseph, giving them the place and inheritance of the first-born, and welcoming them with full affection.

These are among the instances which we find in the early patriarchal days of the counsels and affections of our God and Father, shadowed or expressed in these His representatives in the book of Genesis. I may add, there is no law, no Moses, no schoolmaster in Genesis; God has the elect immediately under His own hand and eye, dealing with them by a home method, so to express it, and not as by the intervention of "tutors and governors." The law came afterward, and then the elect were carried to school and put under rules and ordinances foreign to the home of their family, treated rather as servants than as children. The head of a school is a schoolmaster. But the dispensation of the Spirit has now come, the Son Himself has been manifested; He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. The elect are now put on the ground of His accomplished redemption, and in the acceptableness of His beloved Person.

Now this condition of things is the Father's delight; there was a need of the schoolmaster for a season. But that need has been answered, and the Father has His child home again. This is not the age of infants, the children that cannot speak, but the age or dispensation of sons, the elect who have the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, "Abba, Father," filling the house with that music. It is the time of the weaned Isaac, and all that appertains to the bondwoman must leave the house. This again, I say, is the Father's delight; the affection of the Father finds occasion now to indulge itself to the full.

But the Galatians were disappointing this affection; they were returning to ordinances. This is contrary to the spirit of adoption, taking the elect from the Father's house again to put them under tutors and governors as before, and destroying the free, gracious, confiding communion of children with their Father. They were bringing back Hagar to the house; and it is this which the Spirit so earnestly resents in this part of the epistle to the Galatians; it is this grieved and wounded bosom of the Father that speaks in this fervent epistle.

Sarah had expressed this resentment in the book of Genesis when she said, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son." That word is quoted here, for here in like manner the Spirit in behalf, so to speak, of the Father, expressed the like resentment; Paul would act the part of a parent in this chapter (Gal. 4:19).

By faith we are justified (Gal. 3:24); by faith we are made children (3:26). A return to ordinances or works of law therefore reproaches Christ as though He had not accomplished our justification; it also silences in our hearts the cry of adoption, and this disappoints the love of the Father, and it is that which the chapter with some indignation resents. I do feel that this gives this part of the epistle a very affecting and beautiful character. No condition of things as between Him and them would satisfy His heart but the relationship of Father to those who not only are but who know themselves to be children, who are weaned, like Isaac, from the milk of ordinances, and brought home to the food of the Father's table.

## The Sympathy and Power of Jesus

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The narratives of the gospel by John are fewer in number than those of the other gospels, and for the most part are given in much more fullness of detail. In the other evangelists the incidents recorded are like pictures in miniature; but in John there is a greater stretch of canvas, and larger pictures are presented to the eye - pictures of profound interest, in which the varied glories of the Lord Jesus are strikingly displayed. Our chapter is an illustration of this.

The scene is laid in Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha who, with Lazarus their brother, were the objects of the Lord's tender love. Simple and touching are the words in which this is expressed: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." It is worth the while to linger for a moment over this sentence, and to note that each one is separately mentioned as being loved by Him. The love of Jesus individualizes its objects. "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me," said Paul. And who does not know that there are times and seasons when the soul of the saint of God specially needs to remember the Lord's love to him individually, and finds comfort and strength in remembering it. You, Christian reader, though you are but one among the many thousands of God's redeemed, have your own special place in the affections of Christ. He loves you as if there were not another in the wide world on whom His love rested. It is written that He calls the stars by name - how much more His sheep! He knows each one - the circumstances of each, the smiles and tears, the joys and sorrows, the sunshine and clouds, the greetings and the partings; and He who knows all about all, loves each one with a mightier love than has ever been associated with the tenderest of earthly ties.

But though thus loved, they were not sheltered from circumstances which awakened many a fear and burdened their spirit with a weight of sorrow. Lazarus fell sick. Beautiful indeed, and so worthy of our imitation, was the action of the sisters at this juncture. Sweet too their confidence in the Lord's love, and strong their assurance of His interest in them. They sent to say, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." No urgent request that the Lord would hasten to their relief accompanied this statement of their case; enough for them to tell Him all, to lay their burden on the bosom of infinite love.

It was not in vain that the Lord had tarried under their roof, and that Mary had sat at His feet and heard His word (Luke 10:39). Knowing His love, they turned to Him in the first blush of their sorrow; and if their expectations were not answered in the way they had thought, it was only because the love of Jesus was too great not to suffer the trial to go to its utmost length, that they might know Him better and reap a richer harvest of blessing than could otherwise have been theirs. Let us ponder this, that we may profit by their example. Child of sorrow, hast thou told thy griefs to Jesus? Thy anxieties, thy fears, hast thou spread them out before Him whose love for thee individually is so deep and true? Go, speak to Him about them; and if for a while there be no answering voice, let not thy faith in His love on that account give way.

And when the message of the sisters reached the Lord, He abode two days still in the same place. Was He then indifferent to the dark shadow that had fallen across the beloved family at Bethany?

Did He not know that Lazarus was at the door of death? Such questions need no answer. But the Lord tarried till the fitting moment came; for Son of God though He was, yet was He ever subject and obedient, never taking a step without the full knowledge that it was His Father's will. Easily we may imagine the feelings of the sisters watching by the side of their brother, their hearts alternating between hope and fear, as they earnestly looked for the Lord, and yet He came not. Thus the weary hours passed, and Lazarus grew worse, till at length the flickering flame of life died out. Lazarus was dead. Had then love been doing its very best for them? Yes, indeed! Better for Martha, better for Mary, that Lazarus should die than that the Lord should have interposed before. Had He done so, they might have been spared the heartache, the blinding tears, the bitter pang caused by the dying of their brother; but God would not

have been so greatly glorified. They would not have witnessed the resurrection power of the Lord, and still more, they would never have seen His tears, for Jesus wept.

And those tears and groans were but the index of what was passing in the heart of the Lord at that moment. The knowledge of all that He was about to do did not make Him less sensible to the desolation of the scene around, nor lessen His sympathy one degree. "In all their affliction He was afflicted." The tears of Jesus appeal to us more powerfully than the manifestations of His might. These astonish, but those touch the tenderest chords, and show us that every pang in our hearts has its counterpart in His.

Wonderful it was when He who is the resurrection stood at the grave's mouth and cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." Obedient to that voice of power, he that was dead came forth wearing the garments of the tomb. What a display of the glory of Him whose Spirit by the ancient prophet said, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction" (Hos. 13:14). It was a sample of that which shall be more fully and perfectly seen at the coming of the Lord, when "they that are Christ's" shall be raised from among the dead in incorruption and in glory.

Thus Lazarus was restored to them again, and the broken ties were formed anew, but not forever. In resurrection our loved dead who have died in the Lord shall be given back to us once more, not to be known after the flesh - for the former things have passed away - but to be known in those divine relationships which shall endure to everlasting. Yes, mourner, you shall see them again, not in a body of sickness and suffering but in a body of glory like the Lord's, and be together with Him in that home where there is fullness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore.

Many are the lessons that will suggest themselves as we read and meditate on this narrative so rich in moral beauty, and fraught with heavenly comfort. Here we may learn that if the answers to our prayers are slow in coming, it is better that it should be so if such be His will; or if the power of the Lord is not exercised on our behalf as we would have wished, it is because He has a more excellent way. Let us trust Him then; let us rest in His love. Could we but stand where He stands, and view our life from the beginning to the ending, as He views it, we should see that the dark threads and the bright have been skillfully and lovingly woven together. We should bless Him for unanswered prayers, and adore the love that has ordered everything for us so wisely and so well.

Are we in spirit near enough to the Lord to know and understand His interest in us? Can we each say, There is one heart I know better than any other; it is the heart of Jesus, who loves me perfectly and who, in the glory of God and at the right hand of power, is leading me by a right path

on to the rest beyond?

## The Tears of Joseph

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There are many lessons which we may learn from the life of Joseph; but for the present let us see what we can learn by the Holy Spirit's leading from the tears of that one whose life stands out so specially as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ at the beginning, when Joseph saw conviction awakening in the conscience of his brethren, he wept. These were tears both of sorrow and of joy. He felt for them passing through the agony; but he must have rejoiced to see the needed arrow reaching its mark, and the bleeding of the wounds that followed.

He wept again when he saw Benjamin. The son of his own mother, her only child besides himself, whose birth too had been her death, and the only one in the midst of his father's sons (who were all then before him) who had not been guilty of his blood - such a one as this was at that moment seen by him in Benjamin. These tears, therefore, nature could account for.

He wept again as he saw the work of repentance going on in his brethren. In his way, he greatly longed after them in the bowels of Jesus Christ, till at last Judah's words were too much for him; conviction of conscience had then ended in restoration of heart. "The old man" and the "lad" again and again on the lips of Judah had eloquence which prevailed, and Joseph could no longer refrain himself. He sobbed aloud, and the whole house of Pharaoh heard him. But these were more than the tears of nature. This was the bowels of Christ.

Each of these weepings was beautiful in its season, but we have more still. He fell on his father's face and wept, as his father had just yielded up the ghost. This was as the grave of Lazarus to Joseph, and there Jesus wept.

And again he wept when, after his father's death, his brethren began to suspect his love. He was disappointed. An unworthy return to the ways of a constant, patient, serving love, made him weep in the spirit of Him, I may say, who wept over Jerusalem. For years he had been doing all he could to win their confidence. He had nourished them and their little ones. Years had now passed, and not one rebuke of them do we find, either in his life or in his ways. Grief over their departed father had just freshly given them to know what common affections they had to bind them together. He had supplied them with every reason to trust him. And yet, after all, they were fearing him. This was a terrible shock to such a heart as Joseph's. But he did not resent it, save with his tears, and renewed assurances of his diligent, faithful love. And have not such tears as these, I ask, as fine a character as tears can have? They were as the pulses of the aggrieved spirit of the Lord. "How long shall I be with you?" "Why are ye fearful?" "Have I been so long time with you, and yet halt thou not known Me?" These were kindred pulses of an aggrieved heart in Jesus. Jesus has sanctified tears, and made them, like everything else that went up from Him to God, a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savor; Joseph and David and Paul, yea, Jonathan and Timothy too, have made them precious, and put them among the treasures of the Spirit in the bosom of the Church.

## Television: the Editor's Column

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In response to numerous requests, the contents of this column in August, 1951, have been printed in pamphlet form ( with slight alterations) under the title of "Television-Should it have a place in the Christian's home?" These are now available from the publishers.

In recent months we have received clippings and notes regarding the dangerous and crime provoking character of television programs. These have not been based on any religious scruples, but solely on the moral question. One clipping, supposedly from a Los Angeles newspaper, says that a certain survey counted "127 murders, 101 'justifiable killings,' 357 attempted murders, 93 kidnappings, 11 jail-breaks," and many other crimes in just one week from the seven Los Angeles stations' programs. Another clipping, dated April 29, 1952, says that 70 percent of all children's programs depend on crime and violence for their appeal. Still another clipping, from another state, dated May 14, 1952, quoted a certain survey which said they had counted 91 murders and scores of lesser crimes in one week, only between the hours of 6 and 9 p.m.

The results of such crimes being enacted constantly before the eyes of the youth of the land will produce either a frightened, unhealthy state, or a cold calloused indifference - a cheapening of the value of human life, and a reckless disregard for all virtue. Will anyone dare say that Satan is not behind all this? He is leading the so-called Christian nations down the road trodden by the antediluvian earth, at an accelerated pace. Corruption and violence filled the earth in that day until God had to bring in the flood "upon the world of the ungodly"; corruption and violence are now being taught and demonstrated hour upon hour right in the homes. A liberal, visual education in sin and lawlessness is being broadcast day and night. The seeds of crime are being sown now in abundance; the reaping time will bring a harvest that men will not know how to handle. Everything is being readied for the final scenes of man's lawlessness. The red horse of Revelation 6 will bring in a time of bloodshed - peace shall be taken from the earth, and they shall kill one another.

Christian parents have a greater task today than ever before in seeking to bring up their children in "the right ways of the Lord." They need to seek special grace from on high for wisdom and help in this responsibility that is theirs. The word still is, "Bring them tip in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This is obviously impossible if television is allowed in the home, for how can one teach the ways of the Lord to children under the same roof with the world teaching visibly all sorts of crime and moral corruption.

Perhaps the children will beg for a TV set, but the parents, not the children, are responsible for what comes into the home. Should they not be instructed that it is not pleasing to the Lord? It calls for exercise and much dependence on the Lord to instruct them so that they will understand; but understand or not, the parents are responsible.

Let us suppose a case in a home where television is allowed: the children have been drinking in all the hair-raising, breath-taking excitement of a telecast, when the father says, "Turn off the television set and let us read the Word of God." Now, we ask, are those children capable of sitting

quietly and listening to the calm reading of the Word of God? To say that they are would be to display a complete lack of understanding of human nature. They may have to turn off the switch of the set, but it will not turn it off in their minds, be assured.

Christian parents, to bring television into your home is like planting the most noxious and poisonous weeds among your choicest flowers and plants, and then hoping the weeds will not grow. Some people may reply that their children will see these programs elsewhere; perhaps this can be greatly reduced or eliminated if they are properly instructed in what is pleasing to the Lord. You cannot always shield them from evil in the world, but if through the grace of God they desire to please the Lord, then they will turn away from it there. But in any event they can learn that you do not approve and will not allow it in your home. If your neighbor keeps rattlesnakes in his yard, it is no reason for you to do so. It would be folly to keep the venomous reptiles so the children would learn to handle them.

We would add the same word of caution spoken before in this column - even the better things of the world shown on television are still the world that lies in the wicked one ( 1 John 5:19; N. Trans.). The programs are designed by the god of this world to keep men in spiritual darkness, to blind their eyes. The lusts of the eyes and the pride of life are as much a part of the world rushing on to its doom, as are the lusts of the flesh -the corruption and violence. So if the breath-taking violence does not appeal to you, beware of the more subtle influence of the world in its better things. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15.

We have heard of a few who think they can control the monster. To all such we say, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." We do not believe it can be controlled, but suppose you can control deadly cyanide poison; are you willing to take a chance and have it laying around your house, perhaps on your food shelf? And do not forget, if you allow television in your home, it may be a snare to others to whom you set an example. Let no man set an occasion to fall in his brother's way (Rom. 14:13).

We have heard a few loose remarks to the effect that television is like all inventions that have come in - radio, automobiles, etc. - that though Christians at first hesitated to accept them, they finally were accepted by all. This is specious reasoning. The world has many inventions that the Christian should not use.

Take the theater or the picture show; they have come of age, and are accepted by Christendom generally as fitting and proper; but are they suitable for a child of God? Would you want either the Lord or your brethren to see you entering these places? would you take your family to them? Then why bring them into your home? Television is worse than either of those mentioned, for it brings the same things in where they can be secretly seen, and where they can be watched hour upon hour.

To those who would liken television to radio, we say, The misuse of radio has been bad enough. It has done no little damage to spiritual growth; but the demoralizing potential of this later invention which conveys scenes as well as sounds is frightfully worse. Through this medium immodesty, indecent dress, actions suggestive of improper conduct, to say nothing of murder and other crimes, are visually reproduced in the home. It is true that "the eye takes in more than the ear." It also remains more indelibly impressed on the mind. May God graciously forbid that television

should ever be accepted among the saints of God. It would be the sign of general and grievous departure from God.

"Be astonished, O ye heavens; at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jer. 2:12, 13.

We trust our readers will not weary of our repeated pleas against television. We feel duty bound before God to "cry aloud" and "spare not." The Word of God is plain, that if a watchman sees danger coming and does not warn others, then their blood is upon his head; if he warns them and they do not heed, then their blood is upon their own heads (Eze. 33:2-6). The Apostle Paul evidently referred to this when he said to the Jews at Corinth, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean." Acts 18:6. He also said to the elders of Ephesus, "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Acts 20:26, 27.

## The Testimony of John the Baptist: the Voice of One Crying

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"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness" (Isa. 40) is an evident allusion to John the Baptist who was "sent from God" to bear witness of the True Light and prepare a way for the Messiah. In the midst of his testimony he was slain. Messiah too came, and in the midst of His testimony He was slain. Master and servant, they were both cut off by wicked hands. Thus God's work was, as far as man could see, nipped in the bud; and hence the world is yet in misrule and confusion, in sin and misery. When God really fulfills for the earth what He has at heart, there will be the manifest power of ordered blessing to His glory.

But look up, not down, and read in the risen and glorified Christ the proof to faith that the cross, the very thing that seemed the total ruin of all the counsels of God, is in truth their solid basis and justification, by which He is and will be forever glorified. The cross of the Lord Jesus is the triumph of grace, as the resurrection and ascension are its righteous answer; but it is a triumph known only to faith. The world sees not heaven opened nor Him glorified there; it saw in the cross One who suffered to death.

In The Acts of the Apostles man's rejection of Christ is constantly contrasted with God's raising Him from the dead. There we see that man and God are in complete opposition. The cross is thus looked at in the light not of God's purposes, but of man's wickedness. In the epistles the truth chiefly insisted on is the cross, not so much as the extreme point of all man has done against God, but as the deepest exercise of the grace that God feels toward guilty man. Not that love was created by the cross; it was in God before the coming of Christ, and because of it He sent His Son. The propitiation is the fruit of God's grace, not its cause. Propitiation vindicates it, judging and putting aside all the sin on man's part, which otherwise would have proved an insurmountable barrier. But the love was on God's part from everlasting. We must bear this in mind in looking at propitiation, which indeed is the strongest possible proof of His love, while it equally proves His holiness and necessary judgment of our sins.

John's testimony was a call to repentance in view of Messiah's advent; his baptism therefore was a confession both of sins and of Him who should come after himself. It was "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." v. 3; N. Trans. It was not the person nor the work of Israel's hope in power. For Israel as a whole was blind and deaf; the testimony was interrupted, the Messiah refused. There was therefore but a partial application, the people's unbelief thus intercepting and breaking off the thread of God's ways, while His counsels abide irrefragable and accomplished, through their unbelief, in the cross as they never else could have been. The way of Jehovah was not yet prepared, nor was there a straight highway in the desert for God. Man was put on his responsibility and heard the cry, only to sin; by-and-by God will make all good in grace by His own power. Then "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the

LORI) [ Jehovah ] shall be revealed, and all flesh [not Israel only] shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD [ Jehovah] hath spoken it." vv. 4, 5.

Thus plainly we have, as far as its scope goes, the sure purpose of God. Every difficulty, depths, heights, rough or crooked, all must disappear; for God yet means to make this earth the scene of His glory. A most blessed prospect it is, that the sin, misery, and weakness of man, the groaning of all creation around, the wiles and power and presence of Satan must vanish and give place, not to the revealed grace of God in Christ, which has shone (we know) in the despised Nazarene, but to the revealed glory of Jehovah, when all flesh shall see it together. It cannot refer to the day of the judgment of the dead, because it will not be "all flesh" nor any flesh whatever, but the dead raised before the great white throne. But here it is a question of man living in his natural body on the earth. The Jew was apt to overlook the judgment of the dead at the end of all dispensations; the Gentile is just as negligent as to the judgment of the quick, though it be confessed in the commonest symbols of Christendom. As infidelity increases, the rejection of this truth is perhaps more complete now than ever since the gospel was preached to the Gentiles.

In the dark ages people at least believed enough to be panic struck from time to time; but now Christians are accounted fanatics if they testify of these coming judgments. But none the less God will cut short the course of this world, and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed so that all flesh shall see it together. This John the Baptist had to announce; only the first word committed to him, and already accomplished in its measure, was the preparing the way of Jehovah.

"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry?" Here follows the substance of John the Baptist's testimony, though it may be still more manifest in the end of this age. "All flesh is as grass"; it is man morally and universally. "And all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." v. 6. Could a man use this to think well of himself? Verse 7 cuts down all boasting - "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit [or, breath] of the LORD [Jehovah] bloweth upon it." Not its beauty but its frailty God refers to. The moment you have God testing its character, if it were only by the breath of His nostrils, all flesh comes to nothing; and this too in Israel, not in Gentiles only; "surely the people is grass." Nor is this all; He utters its sentence again and again. The reason for the first repetition seems to be the emphatic judgment of "the people"; that is, the Jews. The second is particularly connected with the resource for faith. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever." v. 8.

Thus the reception of the Messiah and His reign over Israel by-and-by are conditioned by their repentance, a work wrought in their souls by the Word of God applied by the Holy Spirit, as Nicodemus had to learn from our Lord in John 3 - so the Christian proves yet more profoundly under the gospel, and receives eternal life in the Son of God - so must the Jew in due time for the future world kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. These two truths are of no less importance at the present moment, as we know how Peter used them for the Christian Jews from the first. They will be urgently needed when God begins to work in the Jews once more, when they painfully learn, feel, and prove the utter worthlessness of man as he is in divine things. Even now the men of the world are making no small strides; but they will do greater things. And the devil will mature and display his plans as they have never been witnessed in the world before. What then will be the security of faith? "The word of our God shall stand forever."

It may seem a weak thing to confide in for eternity; but in truth it is more stable than heaven and earth. So in 2 Tim. 3 the Apostle, anticipating the ruin of Christendom, casts the man of God on this unfailing resource.

## A Thorn in the Flesh

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The thorn for the flesh was needed when Paul came down from paradise, so it was not that the flesh had got any better. The thorn was something to hinder sin, something that made him outwardly contemptible in his ministry. Every one would probably have a different thorn, according to his need. There is no change in the flesh, but the power of the Spirit of God is such that the flesh is kept down. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" would not be necessary if the flesh were any better. It is not that there is any uncertainty as to salvation or acceptance, but that we should so walk through the wilderness that the flesh should be shut up, as it were.

God looks at us as dead with Christ, and we are called on to reckon ourselves dead. I have a title to do it because Christ has died, and I am crucified with Him. It is not only that we are born of God, but we have died with Christ.

In Col. 3 you find God seeing us dead. In Rom. 6 I reckon myself dead. In 2 Cor. 4 it is "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." This is going very far indeed. Death to Paul was so realized that the life of Christ only worked in him.

## Thou Shalt Find It After Many Days: a Word of Encouragement

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"Thou Shalt Find It After Many Days"

A short time ago I was traveling in a bus when a young person sat down beside me. She made several remarks and I thought seemed anxious to get into conversation. I wondered if the Lord might have a message for her through me, so I looked up to Him for guidance.

She told me that she had been visiting a friend who was in a hospital, and then remarked, "I don't suppose you remember me. but I shall never forget you." I looked surprised, so she explained that she had attended some children's meetings which we had held when she was quite a child.

She went on to tell me that one evening at the close of the meeting I had asked her when she was going to accept the Lord Jesus as her Savior. "Those words stuck to me," she said, "and I never see you without thinking of them."

I then asked her if she had done this, and was pleased to find out that she had been saved for twelve years, and so we were able to rejoice together. The incident she referred to had passed from my memory, but no doubt the Lord used those words as a link in the chain of blessing to her soul.

How often we find that the Lord uses the personal word to bring souls into blessing. We notice this especially with the children, and oh! what wisdom we need to speak the right word at the right time.

In these days when so many around us are turning away from the gospel message, may we be more earnest than ever in seeking to win the dear children for the Lord.

"Have you not a word for Jesus?"

Will the world His praise proclaim?

Who shall speak if ye be silent?

Ye who know and love His name.

You, whom He hath called and

chosen, His own witnesses to be;

Will you tell your Gracious Master,

'Lord, we cannot speak for Thee'?"

## The Throne of Grace

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"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4:16.

We may come boldly to the throne. Still it is a throne (not a mediator), but all grace. If I go to the throne, instead of the throne coming to me, so to speak, it is all grace; I get help. I never can go to the throne of grace without finding mercy. He may send chastening, but it is a throne of grace and all mercy - "grace to help in time of need." If you have a will, He will break it; if a need, He will help you. Do you feel that you can always go boldly, even when you have failed? humbled, of course, and at all times humble, but humbled when you have failed.

## Thy Servant Heareth

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In every age the servant character is marked by the Holy Ghost as one of special value. It is in fact the only thing that will stand in times of general declension. Of this we have numerous examples in Scripture. When the house of Eli was about to fall before the divine judgment, Samuel occupied the position of a servant whose ear was opened to hear. His word was, "Speak, LORD; for Thy servant heareth." When all Israel had fled from the face of the Philistine champion, the servant character again stood prominently forth. "Thy servant will go and fight," etc. The Lord Jesus Himself had the title of servant applied to Him by Jehovah in the words of the prophet, "Behold My servant." Furthermore, when the Church had failed - when it ceased to be "the house of God," and had become the "great house," "the servant of the Lord" was told how he ought to carry himself. And last, it is mentioned as one of the special features of the heavenly Jerusalem that "His servants shall serve Him." And now, when a carnal and worldly spirit threatens to swamp so many, what is the remedy? A little of the mind of the servant. A little of that spirit which would lead us to say, "Speak, LORD; for Thy servant heareth." The Lord grant us more of this spirit!

The intelligent reader will, of course, understand that the foregoing observations are not designed to interfere with the Christian's privilege of sonship, but merely to awaken a more earnest desire to be used for Christ and

## To Him That Overcometh

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"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Rev. 2:17.

It must be joy to anyone who loves the Lord Jesus, to think of having His individual peculiar approbation and love, to find that He has approved our conduct in such and such circumstances, though none know this but ourselves who receive the approval. But beloved, are we really content to have an approval which Christ only knows? Let us try ourselves a little. Are we not too desirous of man's commendation of our conduct? or at least that he should know and give us credit for the motives which actuate it? Are we content so long as good is done, that nobody should know anything about us? even in the Church to be thought nothing of? - that Christ alone should give us the "white stone" of His approval, and the "new name" which no man knoweth save only he that receiveth it?

Are we content, I say, to seek nothing else? Oh, think what the terrible evil and treachery of that heart must be that is not satisfied with Christ's special favor, but seeks honor (as we do) of one another instead! I ask you, beloved, which would be most precious to you - which would you prefer - the Lord's public owning of you as a good and faithful servant, or the private individual love of Christ resting upon you, the secret knowledge of His love and approval? He whose heart is specially attached to Christ will respond, The latter. Both will be ours, if faithful, but we shall value this most, and there is nothing that will carry us so straight on our course as the anticipation of it.

## Traps and Snares: Beware of Sheep's Clothing

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Many Christians would go to a so-called "sacred" concert, who would not attend a "secular" one; they would not listen to a play of Shakespeare's or be seen at the opera, but would go so far as to persuade themselves that in hearing "The Messiah" or "Elijah," or seeing a motion picture produced for a prominent so called "fundamentalist," they are attending a religious service, or performing some religious rite. Thus does Satan delude those who listen to his voice. To a godly Christian, the recital of the agonies of our Lord by professed and paid stage players is an awful thing. In any way to make the Word of God a means for raising money, of pleasing the senses, is utterly abhorrent. "Sacred dramas" are being revived, and we would warn our readers against them, and against the folly of supposing that in any way they can be pleasing to God. The end in no way justifies the means. The devil knows he cannot get a devoted Christian to the play, so he makes the play "religious," and seeks to bring it to the Christian.

Never then, dear young believer, allow yourself to be led away with his devices. Leave the theater and the concert room to the world: you have Christ and heaven; but above all avoid those horrible mixtures of Christ and Belial, of Scripture and stage plays, of the Church and the world, that would either beguile the Christian to the concert hall by their appearance of respect for religion or, more daring still, would seek to intrude themselves into the very places where God is worshiped.

## From a Letter on Trials

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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."

## Two Mines: With Poetry About His Experience

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About 100 years ago a young man set forth from home and friends in all the excitement of a "gold rush." He was attracted by stories of the gold that was being found, and was determined to get some for himself. In due time he reached the scenes of many a "rich strike" and set to work with earnestness and enthusiasm; nor was he to be disappointed in achieving the object of his search - he found gold, lots of it. But he had to learn what Scripture would have told him - that riches do take wings and fly away - for he was robbed of all he had gained.

His great disappointment at his loss, together with the severe hardships he endured in his diggings, brought on an illness which made rapid progress, and he returned home. In all this the Shepherd was seeking that lost soul, and before long the dying man was brought to know his sins forgiven and have peace - "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Shortly after, he was taken from this scene to be with Christ. The following lines which he had composed were found among his papers.

I once deemed that contentment was bought with gold,  
And I went to the land where the rich tide rolled,  
And I eagerly sought 'mid disease and death  
To grasp it; nor feared I the withering breath  
Of the damp chilling mine,  
When I saw it shine.  
Nay, I laughed when I thought of what wealth was mine.  
But it fled, and it left me diseased and worn;  
And I grieved 'mid a night which might know no morn.  
But I was not deserted, for Jesus came  
His suffering blood-bought one from Satan to claim.  
And He opened the mine  
Of His love divine,  
And His word bade its gems round my heart to shine.  
Oh! how softly He whispered, 'Tis Mine to roll  
The mountain of sin off thy laboring soul."  
How full was her freedom, relieved of her load!

And He gave me a name; 'twas "a son of God."

And He said, "In its mine

Leave earth's gold to shine,

The riches of grace are eternally thine."

## The Unequal Yoke: Not Plow With Ox and As Together

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An important principle lies here, inattention to which has caused hundreds of children of God to go astray. The passage speaks of the unequal yoke. Lev. 11:3 teaches that an ox is a clean animal, and is thus a type of a true believer who is made clean through the precious Word ( John 15:3). The ass, being an unclean beast, typifies an unbeliever, as we read in Job 11:12, "For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." In Exod. 13:13 too we find the first-born son and the firstling of an ass must alike be redeemed with a lamb, for the unregenerate sinner is as stiffnecked, stubborn, and rebellious as this brute beast.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" 2 Cor. 6:14, 15.

The children of Israel had been separated from the nations by God. Four times Balaam sought to curse them, and when this failed he succeeded in getting them to mingle with the Moabites, and to join themselves to Baal-peor (see Numb. 22-25), and thus ruined the people who had been called out to be a living witness to the one true God.

Many Christians who once were bright, earnest, separated, and devoted children of God, have been ensnared by Satan, formed an unequal yoke, had their testimony spoiled, and they are today total wrecks, and a danger to all who come near. Satan ever seeks to get the thin edge of the wedge in first, and few see where it all leads until too late.

You, my true fellow believer, have been marked off from the world and bound with indissoluble ties to every child of God, but as surely separated from the unbeliever as Israel was from the nations. Christ has won your heart, and you can only know this world as the place where He was crucified. Grace has taught you that you no more belong to it than does your rejected Lord, and to be a friend of the world is to be false to Christ. An unbeliever has taken his side with the world and against Christ for "he that is not with Me is against Me."

Of all the evils, the saddest consequences come from the unequal yoke. Young Christians sometimes become engaged to unconverted persons, and often deceive themselves by the fact that they are very moral and upright, and thus seek to persuade themselves that they are not doing wrong; but the truth is that in such a union the child of God is being joined to an enemy of God, a hater of Christ, and a child of wrath. There is no middle path, and bitterest sorrow is the only harvest that can be reaped, for "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Useful lives have been ruined, and much dishonor has been brought upon the name of the Lord Jesus through this unequal yoke. It is neither faithfulness to Christ, love to them, nor justice to yourself to continue for another moment in such an unholy path. Oh, "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy feet from evil." Pro. 4:26, 27.

The enemy may also allure the Christian by many clubs where the unequal yoke is formed under the plea that (1) "Recreation is needed"; (2) "What harm is there in this?"; (3) "May I not by joining be an influence for good?"

Then again there are religious associations where believers and unbelievers are joined together, and some alas! go so far as to include every parishioner, regardless of new birth, and oftentimes immoral persons are allowed to take the sacrament professedly in remembrance of the Lord's death. This is the very worst kind of evil. How can they remember a Person they know not? God says to His own people who thus mix with what is so false, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." 2 Cor. 6:17. Again, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins." Rev. 18:4.

Dear fellow believer, ponder these things well. They are not small and insignificant matters. Not only your blessing, but the glory of Christ is at stake. The unequal yoke includes every association, religious, commercial, or otherwise, where believers and unbelievers are joined together by common ties. 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.

## Vessels of Mercy

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What is a vessel? Suppose you placed one on the table at your side; have you not two thoughts in your mind as to its use? You place it there to hold what you put in it; this is one thought. Then the other is, that it may be held by the hand of another. Had it a will or a motion, these uses would be hindered. And so with God's vessels of mercy; they must be will-less and motionless too; they are to be filled with that which He puts in them, and to be held and used by His hand. It is only in the measure that our wills, our motions, our thoughts, are set aside, that we are really vessels, and, as such, fitted and meet for the Master's use.

## The Vision of the Almighty: Balaam's Prophecies

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(Read Numb. 23 and 24)

In these remarkable chapters we are called, as it were, to pause and hearken while Jehovah tells out in the ear of the enemy what He thinks about His people. Balak, the King of Moab, terrified by the sight of "all that Israel had done unto the Amorites," hired Balaam to curse them, but the Lord made use of the tongue of the covetous prophet in order to tell out His thoughts about Israel. He will not allow anyone to curse His people. He may have to deal with them in secret about many things, but He will not suffer another to move his tongue against them.

This is a grand point. It is not what the enemy may think about God's people, or what they may think about themselves, or what they may think about one another; the real question is, what does God think about them? He knows exactly all that concerns them, all that they are, all that they have done, all that is in them. Everything stands clearly revealed to His all-penetrating eye. The deepest secrets of the heart, of the nature, and of the life, are all known to Him. Neither angels, men, nor Satan, know us as God knows us. Hence, it is not with "the vision" of angels, or "the vision" of men, or "the vision" of Satan, we have to do, but with "the vision of the Almighty."

This gives sweet peace to the heart. God sees us, thinks of us, speaks of us, and acts toward us, according to what He Himself has made us and wrought for us according to the perfection of His own work. Thus it is we appear in "the vision of the Almighty" - thus are we seen "from the top of the rocks." When God looks at His people, He beholds them in His own workmanship; and it is to the glory of His holy name, and to the praise of His salvation, that not a blemish should be seen on those who are His - those whom He, in sovereign grace, has made His own. His character, His name, and the perfection of His work, are all involved in the condition and standing of those with whom He has linked Himself. Hence, the moment any enemy or accuser enters the scene, Jehovah places Himself in front to receive and answer the accusation; and His answer is always founded, not upon what His people are in themselves, but upon what He has made them through the perfection of His own work. His glory is linked with them and, in vindicating them, He maintains His own glory.

This tranquillizing, purifying, and elevating truth shines with uncommon luster in Balaam's four parables. Humanly speaking, we never should have had such a glorious view of Israel as seen in "the vision of the Almighty," "from the top of the rocks," by one "whose eyes are open," had not Balak sought to curse them. Jehovah can very speedily open a man's eyes to the true state of the case in reference to the condition of His people. He claims the privilege of setting forth His thoughts about them. Balak and Balaam with "all the princes of Moab" may assemble to hear Israel cursed and defied - they may build "seven altars" - they may offer a bullock and a ram on every altar - Balak's gold and silver may glitter before the covetous gaze of the false prophet; but not all the powers of earth and hell combined, in their dark and terrible array, can evoke a single breath of curse or accusation against the people of God.

As well might the enemy have sought to point out a single flaw in that fair creation which the Lord God had pronounced "very good," as fasten an accusation upon the redeemed of the Lord. Oh! no; they shine in all the comeliness which He has put upon them, and all that is needed in order to see them thus is to mount to "the top of the rocks" to have the eyes "open," so that we may see them in "the vision of the Almighty."

Having given thus a general view of the contents of these remarkable chapters, I will briefly present to my reader the special point contained in each of the four parables. He will find in the entire subject a rich mine of instruction.

1. In the first of Balaam's parables we have the absolute separation of Israel distinctly set forth. "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." (The way to "die the death of the righteous" is to possess and exhibit the life of the righteous.) Here we have Israel singled out to be a separated and peculiar people - a people who, according to the divine thought about them, were never at any time, on any ground, or for any object whatsoever, to be mingled with or reckoned among the nations. "The people shall dwell alone." Let the reader ponder this deeply, both in its application to the literal seed of Abraham, and also to the people of God now. Immense practical results flow out of this great principle - results which we do not attempt to unfold in an article like the present. We merely ask the intelligent reader to follow this point as it is traced for him in the Word. "The people shall dwell alone."

2. But if Jehovah in His great grace be pleased to link Himself with a people - if He call them out to be a separate people, in the world - to "dwell alone," and shine for Him in the midst of those who are still sitting "in darkness and the shadow of death," He can only have them in such a condition as suits Himself. He must make them such as He would have them to be - such as shall be to the praise of His great and glorious name. Hence, in the second parable, the prophet is made to tell out, not merely the negative but the positive condition of the people. "And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; He hath as it were the strength of a unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he shall eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." Numb. 23:18-24.

Here we find ourselves on truly elevated ground. This is in truth "the top of the rocks" - the pure air of "the hills" where the people of God are seen only in "the vision of the Almighty." In this parable, Israel's blessedness and security are made to depend, not on themselves but upon the truth and faithfulness of Jehovah. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent." This puts Israel upon safe ground. God must be true to Himself. Is there any power

that can possibly prevent Him from fulfilling His word and oath? Surely not. "He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." In the previous parable it was, God "hath not cursed." Here it is, "He hath blessed." There is very manifest advance.

As Balak conducts the money loving prophet from place to place, Jehovah takes occasion to bring out fresh features of beauty in His people. Thus it is not merely that they are a separated people dwelling alone, but they are a justified people, having the Lord their God with them, and the shout of a king among them. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." The enemy may say, There is iniquity there all the while. Yes, but who can make Jehovah behold it when He Himself has been pleased to blot it all out as a thick cloud for His name's sake? If He has cast it behind His back, who can bring it before His face? "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"

God sees His people so thoroughly delivered from all that could be against them, that He can take up His abode in their midst, and cause His voice to be heard among them. Well, therefore, may we exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" It is not "What hath Israel wrought!" Balak and Balaam would have found plenty to do in the way of cursing, had Israel's work been in question. The Lord be praised, it is on what He hath wrought that His people stand, and therefore their foundation is as imperishable as the very throne of God.

3. In the third parable, we have another step in advance. The Lord's people are not merely separated and justified, they are actually "goodly" in His sight. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." Numb. 24:5-9. Thus it was better and better for Israel - worse and worse for Balak. He had not merely to stand by and hear Israel "blessed," but to hear himself "cursed" for seeking to curse them.

But let my reader specially mark the rich grace which shines in this parable. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" If one had gone down to examine those tents and tabernacles in "the vision" of man, they would have appeared "black... as the tents of Kedar." But, as looked at in "the vision of the Almighty," they were "goodly," and whoever did not see them as such, needed to have his eyes "open." If I am looking at the people of God "from the top of the rocks," I shall see them as God sees them, and that is, as clothed with all the comeliness of Christ - complete in Him - accepted in the Beloved. This is what will enable me to get on with them, to walk with them, to have fellowship with them, to rise above their points and angles, blots and blemishes, failures and infirmities. If I do not contemplate them from this lofty ground, I shall be sure to fix my eye on some little point or other which will completely mar my communion and alienate my affections.

In Israel's case, we see in the very next chapter what terrible evil they fell into. Did this alter Jehovah's judgment? Surely not. He is not "the son of man, that He should repent." He judged and

chastened them for their evil, because He is holy and can never sanction, in His people, aught that is contrary to His nature; but He could never reverse His judgment. He knew all about them. He knew what they were, and what they would do; but yet He said, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob." Was this making light of their evil? The thought were blasphemy. He could chasten them for their sins; but when an enemy comes forth to curse or accuse, He stands in front of His people and says, in substance, "I see no iniquity" - "How goodly are thy tents." Precious, adorable grace! May we drink more deeply of it, and manifest its purifying, elevating influence.

4. In the fourth and last parable, we reach, as it were, the very loftiest crag of "the rocks," from whence we can discern the beams of the glory gilding the horizon. "And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: he hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty,... I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." Num. 24:15-17. This gives great completeness to the entire scene. The topstone is here laid upon the magnificent superstructure. The thoughtful reader of these sublime parables must be very sensible that, as he reads, he is mounting upward. In the opening parable, the people are seen in separation, dwelling "alone"; and then as Balak continues to shift the corrupt and covetous prophet from place to place, with the fond hope that the glittering pile may yet evoke the desired curse, we find ourselves conducted from height to height until, at length, we stand upon the very summit and survey the plains of glory in all their length and breadth, stretching away far beyond the limits of mortal vision. We hear the lion's roar. We see him pouncing, in crushing power, upon all his enemies. The Star of Jacob rises to set no more. The true David seizes the scepter and ascends the throne. Israel is preeminent in the earth, and all his enemies are covered with shame and everlasting contempt.

Christian reader, may we abide, in spirit, on "the top of the rocks"; may we ever have our "eyes...

## The Voice of God to Me

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God never intended Scripture to be taken apart from Himself; over and above the Bible is God Himself. Not that God can ever be against His Word, but He is the only power of entering into the application of it. For the Bible is not only for me to look down into; I must look up to God. I am not intended to read it merely as a book of true stories or, good sermons, still less of enigmas to solve by wit or learning, but as the voice of the living God to my soul. When one reads it in true subjection to Him, the relation and attitude of the soul is totally changed; you are delivered from the danger of bending the Word of God to your own mind and will. Whereas, when the Word leads you out in prayer to God, then it is neither the Word without prayer, nor prayer without the Word, both of which are exceedingly dangerous, one leading to rationalism, as the other does to fanaticism. Hence, says the Apostle, "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace." We need to wait upon God that we may gather profit from His Word, and ever to lean on Him for His grace that we may with simplicity and faithfulness carry it out in the Spirit.

## Waters of Jealousy

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In Numb. 5 there is a case where there was not a trespass, but a suspicion of evil, and this too in the nearest relationship - the husband about his wife. Now Jehovah had His eye on this. He would not have one hardened. What is more dreadful than to be carrying suspicions? We ought to watch against it. Still there may be circumstances that bring a sense of evil, and yet we can hardly give an account of it. We may struggle, fearing that we are wrong as to the person; still, somehow or another, there is the sense of something wrong against Jehovah. What then is to be done? In this we see Jehovah making a special provision for it. He ordered that there should be the administration of the waters of jealousy. The wife was to be brought to the priest; everything was to be done in a holy way. It was not human feeling, but connection with God Himself, and a judgment of that which was unsuitable for His presence.

"Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it is an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance. And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD: and the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water: and the priest shall set the woman before the LORD, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse."

Then the charge is given to the woman, after which he says, "The LORD make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the LORD doth make thy thigh to rot," etc. The priest was to write the curses in a book, and blot them out with the bitter water, and cause the woman to drink the water. The effect of this would be that, supposing the woman was innocent, all would go on so much the better in the family. She would have the manifestation of God's blessing upon her.

This I do not doubt to be a type, whether of Israel or of Christendom; but for moral profit individually it is all-important. It may be very painful for us to be suspected, but when we are, let us never resent it in the pride of our hearts. Alas! evil is possible, and it is a good thing to evince by the very patience about whatever may be that which is laid to our charge that we are above it. It is always a sign of weakness at the least, very often of guilt, when there is a restless desire to extenuate and deny; and the fiercer the denial, the more certain the guilt, as a rule. But there may be weakness which sometimes gives an appearance of wrong where it does not really exist. Where flesh is not thoroughly judged, there will be a tendency to resent the smallest imputation. Now here it is where we have this bringing in of the water of death. What is there which so admirably meets everything as the taking the place of death to all that is here below? It is very evident a dead man does not resent an injury. It is the bringing in the practical power of death into the soul which enables one then to bear it. Whatever it may be, let it take its course; let us humble ourselves to have, as it were, bitter water administered to us; and most assuredly, where the heart, instead of refusing or in a fleshly way merely repelling an insinuation out of the pride of our nature,

is willing that all should be thoroughly tested in the presence of God, the result is that the Lord espouses the cause of the one causelessly suspected, and makes all to flourish as never before. Whereas, on the other hand, if there is a trifling with God, with His name, with His nature, then indeed bitter is the curse which falls on such a one.

Thus we see it was an invaluable thing, and it is as true now in principle as ever it was in outward type. I do not hesitate to say it is true in a deeper and better sense now than it was then; only it needs faith. It needs self judgment however; nothing less will carry us through. For although there may be the most genuine faith, still if there is not the willingness to be nothing, the willingness to take the bitter

draft, the waters of separation or waters of jealousy, it is because there is a power of flesh hindering us - a want of faith to take the place of death. Where we are upright, yet submit to it, who can measure the fruitful blessing which results through the grace of God?

## We See Jesus

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(Heb. 2:9)

It is very instructive to observe that in reading the gospels we find presented to us not a system of doctrines but a living Person, even the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:14. In the simple, but vivid and exquisitely beautiful narratives of the evangelists, He lives and moves before us. We hear His words of grace, and see His acts of love. The disciples were drawn to Himself, and were occupied with Him. They were ignorant of much truth, but they knew Him who is Truth incarnate, and who was then manifested as the living Truth and Grace come down among men. Thus Peter says, for himself and the rest ( John 6:68, 69), "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Even so it is now. True, the Lord Jesus has "died for our sins," but He is "risen again." "For 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." Rom. 5:10. The eye of faith fixes itself not on a dead Christ but on a risen, living, glorified Savior.

The constant effort of Satan is to draw away our thoughts and our hearts from Christ. How easy it is to have the mind engaged about ordinances, doctrines, or even our service for Christ, instead of cultivating direct fellowship with Christ Himself. Yet the true blessing of the soul is ever found in steadily contemplating, with the eye of faith, the glorious Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3:18.

## What Is Regeneration? a Reader Inquires

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ANSWER: The word "regeneration" is often used loosely when "born again" is meant, but a careful examination of the subject will show that it is an incorrect usage of the word. They are not the same words in the Greek any more than in the English.

New birth is that sovereign act of the Spirit of God producing a new life in a soul that has been dead - dead in sins. It is obviously impossible for a dead person to do anything; if anything is done it must be done by another. Therefore we read in James, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (chap. 1:18). In John 3 it is spoken of as being born of water (the Word) and of the Spirit; so also in 1 Pet. 1:23 we are told that we were born again by the Word of God. So then new birth is the act of the Spirit of God using the Word of God to produce an entirely new life. The soul thus born again will lack peace until by faith he sees that the precious blood of Christ was shed for him. Cornelius in Acts 10 and 11 is a good example of this.

Regeneration, however, is only mentioned twice in Scripture: once in Matt. 19:28, and again in Titus 3:5. In neither case is new birth the thought, but rather a complete change of condition.

In Matthew it says, "in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory." We might ask, When will this be? Matt. 25:31 will shed light on it - "When the Son of man shall come" (or, shall have come) "in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations." This is plainly an earthly scene for there will be no nations in heaven; it is the time when the Son of man will set up His throne on earth - the Millennium.

Thus we see that "the regeneration" is the glorious day of the Son of man on earth - "the days of heaven upon the earth" --those days foretold all through the Old Testament prophecies. Satan will have been bound, the forces of evil destroyed, nations will not lift up sword any more, death will be rare and only for overt wickedness, sorrow and tears shall vanish, the earth shall then yield her strength and there will be no more hunger, righteousness shall reign, "the wolf... shall dwell with the lamb," and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Our poor minds which are so accustomed to the condition of things in this sin-defiled and suffering world cannot comprehend the great change that will be ushered in by the Son of man in His day; this new scene is called "the regeneration." Truly it will be a new condition for the whole animate creation.

Now let us look at the other place where the word "regeneration" is found:

"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." Titus 3:5, 6.

First we are told that He has saved us, not because of our works, but according to His mercy, and that through the washing of regeneration. The one who is saved was born a sinner and at a

distance from God; then that evil nature bore its own fruit; but God has come in and brought about a complete change. He who was in the kingdom of darkness has been translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. God is not satisfied merely to have one saved from hell; He brings such a one into a whole new sphere. He has not left us where we were, nor what we were. This is more than being "born again" which is the communication of life; it is the whole new order of things into which we have been brought, but of course a new life was necessary to it.

Of this great change baptism is the outward sign, or symbol. We have been baptized unto Christ's death (Rom. 6) and now are to walk in newness of life. Baptism is unto death, but then there is the manifestation of life a new life. It is to be feared that the real import of baptism is often lost sight of, for it is not a meaningless sign. In order for us to be brought out of that wherein we were held, death was necessary - the death of Christ and also resurrection - the resurrection of Christ. Christian baptism was instituted to set forth this great truth; not that baptism ever has, or ever will, save anyone, but it does have a special significance for us which should not be overlooked.

In 1 Pet. 3 we are reminded that the world in Noah's day perished, but "eight souls were saved through [not, by] water" (N. Trans.). The ark was a type of that which saves the soul, even of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He bore all the storm and judgment, so that all who take refuge in Him are saved through His death, and of course resurrection. Then the Spirit of God by Peter goes on to say that "the like figure... even baptism doth also now save us." Baptism is a figure of that which now saves; it is the figure of the death of Christ. Baptism does not save, but it is the symbol of that which does, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God." (See vv. 20-22.)

And where did the ark that saved those "eight souls" leave them? Not in the old scene of corruption and violence, but on a cleansed earth. All this was but a type, for that cleansed earth was soon spoiled, but now if any man is "in Christ" he is a new creation where all things are of God. Blessed place into which we have been brought! and brought there not through our works, but by the death and resurrection of Him who is now in heaven. God must have moral conformity to Himself in those brought to Him.

In Titus 2 it says, "Our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." It does not say that He gave Himself for us to deliver us from the pit, but that He might have a people who are suitable to Himself.

Another has said, "God has saved us by purifying us; He could not do otherwise. To be in relationship with Himself there must be practical purity."

This is the "washing of regeneration." It is the cleansing that brings us into a state where everything is new, everything of God. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5:17.

If "the regeneration" is that new state of bliss which will be ushered in by the Son of man, Titus 3. the Christian of this day is in it already morally. He does not have to wait for "the regeneration" to be brought into a condition and sphere of conformity to the mind of God.

There is a somewhat similar thought in what is said about the day that is coming. We read that the Millennium will be the time of the shining forth of the "Sun of righteousness" (Mal. 4:2); it will be the glorious day for the earth. Now the earth is shrouded in moral darkness; it is night here (although "the night is far spent, the day is at hand"), but does the Christian have to wait for the day to come? No, he is already there; "We are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Thess. 5:5), for we are already of the day that is coming (v. 8). While we are living upon the earth that is veiled by the night, we are of the light (Eph. 5:8) and belong to the day that will soon dawn.

Thus we have been saved, and washed, and are already of the regeneration - even in a better way. God has made us clean and new, before the day of the regeneration dawns upon the earth. How blessed is our place now! May we enter more into it by faith, and thus we shall manifest it more before the world which is still lying in darkness (Rom. 13:12, 13).

Another thing that is added in Titus 3:5 is the "renewing of the Holy Ghost." This is different from that which is found in the 6th verse: "Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior" - the blessed fact of the sealing of the Spirit. Yes, everyone who is saved, also has the Spirit of God dwelling in him - shed on him abundantly -but there is more. That blessed heavenly Guest is not only the seal of what we have, and the earnest of what we are to get, but He is the energy and power of all in the new creation. He maintains us by His power in all that into which we have been brought. There is not, and never can be, any lack, for we are maintained in all the strength of God the Holy Spirit - the "renewing of the Holy Ghost." His work is continuous, as we read, "He shall take of Mine, and show it unto you," "He will guide you into all truth," "He will show you things to come," and "He maketh intercession for us." ( John 16:13-15; Rom. 8:26.)

Dear reader, the reviewing of these things as before the Lord so as to 'answer your question suitably (which we trust has been done) has caused our hearts to rise up in thankfulness to God for all that He has wrought for us and in us. He not only gave His beloved Son for us, but He by His Spirit gave us a new life when we were dead; then He gave us to trust in the work and shed blood of Christ, and gave us peace in believing; but more, He has cleansed us from all that we

were by nature and brought us into relationship and conformity with Himself; and then He keeps us in that place by His own power by the Spirit - the Holy Spirit whom we have already received. How little do our poor hearts enter into what has really been wrought for us, and what is constantly being done for us and in us. To God be all the praise! It was all of His own will, and by His grace and mercy!

## Where Art Thou? What Is Your Answer to the Question?

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God made man upright, and put him in the garden where was everything that was pleasant and good. Everything was to be subject to man, and he was to have dominion over all. And God brought the cattle and fowls to Adam, and he named them. Man was the head, center, and ruler over all, put in the place of perfect earthly blessing. But all this could only be held and enjoyed in dependence on God. But alas! how soon all was let go. The work of the enemy, the wretched distrust of God in man's heart, in spite of all the blessings that surrounded him, the working of lust and pride, followed so quickly by that dreadful act of disobedience, had a direct consequence. Man became a coward, and could not stand before the conscience he had acquired; he fled from God, his kind gracious benefactor.

But God is love, and it was love that put man there in that garden of delight at the first; and He is the unchanged and unchanging One: "The same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." The man, changed and terrified, fled from God; God in the energy of divine love pursued, seeking the lost. But "God is light," and everything must be brought to the surface - no keeping back, and why should there be the holding back? for He knows all, and with Him is the remedy.

"If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." 1 John 3:20. Adam's heart condemned him, but God saw further into the depth of the ruin than Adam and, blessed be His name, He saw the remedy too - the source of all the evil judged and crushed under the heel of the woman's seed."

"Where art thou?" Man must come out from his hiding place; as the leaves could not satisfy the conscience, so now the tree cannot hide man from God. And how many trees there are that men are hiding behind today. Men are hiding, and in restless activity are seeking to stifle the conscience which condemns and says, "not fit for God." It is God that asks, "Where art thou?" And He furnishes the answer, both for the sinner and the believer. The former is in his sins - that awful, lifeless condition, "in the flesh" (Rom. 8:8), and thus unable in anything to please God. In the far country where the famine is, without Christ, without hope, without God in the world, unclean, an enemy - the sword of judgment hangs over his head.

But believer, "Where art thou?" And God's Word again furnishes the reply; and what mind, however great, could have given birth to such a thought - it would have been blasphemy to have expressed it - but God has spoken, and shall we not hear? The believer is not in the first man where all is ruin, but in the second Man where there is naught but blessing in Christ Jesus, where there is no condemnation. He, blessed be His name, bore it all on that tree, and now it can never touch the one in Christ. "Accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6), not merely in Christ, though that is true -but "in the beloved," the One so dear to the heart of God. His place now is in the Father's house, seated at His table, having on the best robe, which is surely none other than Christ.

"Now we see in Christ's acceptance

But the measure of our own;

Him who lay beneath our sentence,  
Seated high upon the throne.  
"Quickened, raised, and in Him seated,  
We a full deliverance know;  
Every foe has been defeated,  
Every enemy laid low.  
"Soon, O Lord, in brightest glory,  
All its vastness we'll explore;  
Soon we'll cast our crowns before Thee.  
While we worship and adore."

## Where Do We Look?

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Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went; and when he came into the land, all he got of it was a grave into which he put the dearest object of his heart. Do you say, Is that all I am to have? [here is something besides; God turned the gaze of Abraham to heaven. He showed him a city, the heavenly one; and he saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced. God shows us, not a city, but a heavenly Christ, "all things that the Father hath"; that is, Christ. If you seek the things above, you will be supremely satisfied. God was not ashamed to be called their God. He would be ashamed to be called the God of some people. Oh, if you are like one who tries to hold these heavenly truths in one hand, and this world in the other, you will never know what fellowship with the Father and the Son is, the infinite blessedness of the Father's delight in the Son. A Christian who does this is always miserable because, being a Christian, he is spoiled for this world, and yet is not in the enjoyment of what belongs to the other. We need to have our hearts' affections engaged with the living Man at God's right hand.

## Where Sin Abounded: Accuracy in Quoting the Word of God

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### "Where Sin Abounded"

The Word of God differs essentially from any human book. We may take up the loftiest efforts of man's genius, and with care and application may master their contents. With "the oracles of God" it is, however, far different. Like the mighty ocean, they contain depths that will ever remain beyond our sounding; as the receding rainbow eludes the grasp of the child who thinks to reach it by crossing over a field or two, so the infinite God, though brought so near by His revelation of Himself in Christ, dwells ever in light unapproachable.

In the "Scripture of truth" we feel the impress of the divine mind, and are under the gaze of the all-seeing eye. Here only is the truth told as to man's condition - truth which, once told, the natural conscience must needs bear witness to, but which all the religions of ancient and modern days dared never aver. Here too is the love of God as expressed in the mission and death of the Son of God, to the conception of which no merely human mind ever rose; but when the priceless secret that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" ( John 3:16), is imparted by those divine yet human lips, we instinctively feel that this is a worthy and incomparable exhibition of the benevolence of the eternal God toward fallen and perishing man.

But not only in its plan but in its detail is the Book divine. "The words of the LORD are pure words." Psalm 12:6. "Every word of God is pure." Pro. 30:5. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life," said the Lord Himself ( John 6:63). "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" echoes Paul the Apostle (2 Tim. 3: 16). Herein lies the deep importance of the allegiance of the Christian to the very words of Scripture, and to every scripture contained in the blessed volume. Sometimes well intentioned friends of revelation forget that even in the nicest detail the Word of God should not be altered or adulterated, else is the whole structure dislocated. We heard a preacher repeat more than once in a discourse from Rom. 5:20 that "the law entered that sin might abound," instead of "the law entered, that the offense might abound," an alteration, it is true, of but a word, but one which nullifies the reasoning of the Apostle, and indeed states of the blessed God that which is untrue and derogatory, as we may see when we examine the verse a little in detail (compare Jas. 1:13, 14).

As is well known, in the doctrinal portion of this most important epistle the Apostle treats of two subjects - "sins" and "sin" - the acts that render me guilty, and the nature that produced them. Rom. 5:11 concludes the first subject. The next verse commences the examination of "sin," the root of the tree that had borne the terrible fruits alluded to in the first part. "Sin" entered by one man, Adam; and the penalty, death, passed universally upon the human family. From Adam to Moses - a period of something like five and twenty centuries - according to the graphic language employed, "death reigned." In undisputed sway "the king of terrors" wielded his grim scepter, rendering men "through fear of death... all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15).

Then came the law. It is not here to our purpose to consider the circumstances under which it was given, but merely to notice what God says was His object in permitting its entrance into the scene of man's responsibility. "The law entered, that the offense might abound" (Rom. 5:20); "it was added" says the same writer elsewhere, "because of transgression" (Gal. 3:19). Now when definite prohibitions were given within the circumscribed limits of the people of Israel, sin took a new character, that of "offense" or "transgression"; that is, a perverse will was discovered which worked by disobedience to a known commandment. Clearly this is far worse. Man is proved under law, not only to have a weak and sinful nature prone to wander, and proclivities toward that which the holy nature of God cannot approve, but he is discovered to be at enmity with God, and as a result obtains from the law the curse that it pronounced upon every infringement of its precepts.

So that we have brought together the two distinctive companies of mankind - the Jew with "the offense" abounding inheriting the curse (Gal. 3:10); and the Gentile "under sin" with death reigning still, "having no hope" and being "without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). How thankful we well may be that it was not only where the offense "abounded" that grace has super-abounded. This would have left out the poor Gentile, hopeless and helpless to his doom. How blessed and admirable is the change as embodied in the sentence, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Where did sin not abound? Universal as its presence and power is in this creation, the free and undeserved favor of a Savior-God has been more abundantly manifested.

Free as the air we breathe, wide as the open canopy of heaven, "grace" now reigns "through righteousness." Another has now the throne and the crown, and in Him - the blessed glorified Savior - grace reigns triumphant through righteousness unto eternal life. Not yet has He taken the throne in this world; this would be to crush the rebels. Now He lives to be their Savior, and it is your happy portion, dear fellow believer, to tell of such a reversal of the havoc that the first man wrought when he by his sin bequeathed such a solemn heritage to his posterity. "For as indeed by the disobedience of the one man the many have been constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous." Rom. 5:19; N. Trans.

## Who Are the Fearful?

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"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Rev. 21:8.

It should not be hard to see who are meant by the "fearful, and unbelieving" - the two classes that head the list of those whose end is here solemnly described. The unbelieving are those who have never drunk of the fountain of the water of life, so freely and graciously offered to "him that is athirst" (see v. 6), while "the fearful" are the very opposite of the overcomer mentioned in verse 7. To overcome requires courage, and courage is the fruit of faith; but "the fearful" conjure up difficulties, and suffer themselves to be frightened from a course that involves confession of Jesus as Lord, and the setting of the face against the whole current of evil. Thus, instead of overcoming, they are overcome, and reap the eternal consequences of their sinful fear. O that "the fearful, and unbelieving" would give heed to the solemn words of warning which Infinite Love has written in view of the awful end of all who continue in that state.

## 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

## Wisdom and Strength

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"Be strong in the Lord." You have no strength and no wisdom, but Christ is made unto us of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30).

Satan works in two ways - to get us to confide in our own strength, or in our own wisdom. The first of these is seen at Ai (Josh. 7:3, 4). The spies said, It is only a little city; do not let all the people go wearying there; a few hundreds will do. The Gibeonites demonstrate the second ( Josh. 9:3-27). "They did work wilily" -like it says in Ephesians 6, "the wiles of the devil." They came and spread their old garments and moldy bread before the princes, and they were deceived. Had they laid them before the common people, they might have said, Let us ask the Lord about it. But the princes believed them, and a source of mischief was introduced which lasted until the days of Saul.

We need to have on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand (Eph. 6:11), for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but our conflict is with the universal lords of the darkness of this world - against wicked spirits in heavenly places. Why do we often feel depressed? Why are we often cast down? It is the pressure of what is above. What are we thinking about all day? Satan is seeking to draw us off by occupying us with the things around us; but God did not mean our minds to be a playground for Satan. It is an evil day we live in - a sad, sorrowful day - whose special character is. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

The armor is not against God, but against Satan. The first thing in the armor is "Truth." The loins are the place of strength. The Truth is to be the girdle for the motives, the affections of the soul. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Heb. 2:11. "As He is, so are we in this world." 1 John 4:17. Do you believe that the Father's love rests on you as it does on His Son?

"The breastplate of righteousness" is next. This is practical righteousness - a good conscience. Paul said, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." Acts 24:16. He could look up to heaven and say, "I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He who judgeth me is the Lord." 1 Cor. 4:4; Revised Version. Beloved, we do not want to go on covering up sin. Have you little tricky ways in your business? If so, Satan will succeed in shutting your mouth. He will make a coward of you, and put you out of the conflict altogether.

"Having... your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." We are to let the peace of Christ preside in our hearts, and to have the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeping our hearts and thoughts. If we look at Christ in His life down here we see Him always at peace, come what may. Should any one of us be a trial to our brethren? No; we should rather be full of graciousness and gentleness. We ought to be the best husbands and wives, the best parents and children, the best masters and servants.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth He was surrounded by a little company among whom were discontent and murmurings, envyings and strifes. On one well-known occasion they were walking

by the way, and seemed to have lingered somewhat behind from following Him. I have no doubt He in His blessed grace waited for them, and when they came to Capernaum He said sweetly to them in the house, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" They were silent for they were ashamed; they had been disputing who was greatest among them, as they did afterward in Luke 22. And then He taught them such a blessed lesson - that the way to go up was to go down, even as He was doing Himself, going down to the darkness of the cross, and God has exalted Him.

"The shield of faith" - what is this? It is not the faith that saves; it is trust, confidence in God, which is one element of faith. The fiery darts are infidel thoughts, but falling on the shield of faith they are quenched. "And take the helmet of salvation."

Then there is one offensive weapon, "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The Word of God can only be wielded in the power of the Spirit. Cleverness will not do, nor intelligence. Satan will come to us with his "ifs" as he did to Eve in the garden of Eden. When Satan came to the Lord in the desert, and took Him up and set Him down on a high part of the temple, and said, "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee," He said, "It is written... Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." What a lesson to us! How often souls twist that passage.

The last thing is prayer. Do we pray not only for individuals, or for meetings near us, but for all saints throughout the wide, wide world? Paul said he had great conflict for the saints - "agony" is the word. When we are in our agony, is it not generally about our own little troubles and trials?

## Words of Man's Wisdom: True Wisdom

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"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. 1:18-31.

The most familiar and most forgotten of truths is that the flesh in the believer is just the same as the flesh in the unbeliever. This was doubtless known, but certainly neglected, by the saints at Corinth; and as the evil which the flesh brings into the Church always resembles that prevailing in the world around, so here we see the vices of Greek society penetrating into the Corinthian assembly. License of walk and license of speculation distinguished the world in which these new converts dwelt, and license of walk and license of speculation were the evils which soon appeared in, the Church. The license of walk showed itself in their tolerance of moral conduct such as was not even "named among the Gentiles," in their drunkenness and indulgence at the Lord's table, and in the disorderly and lawless character of their meetings. The license of speculation showed itself in their skeptical reasonings about the resurrection, in their lax thoughts about identifying themselves with idol worship, and in their readiness to divide into schools of doctrine according to their preference for certain teachers.

They did not, in fact, see man's ruin. They believed, of course, as Christians do now, in the fall as a fact; but they failed, as these also do, to grasp the consequences it involved. They would have allowed that it alienated man from God, but that it so utterly blinded his moral nature as to render him incapable of seeing the truth of God, they do not appear to have understood; and this is just the error of our own times. Many indeed think that the flesh wants mending, and is susceptible of improvement. Others again admit its moral ruin, and confess the need of a new nature; but how few see the total incapacity of man's natural wisdom to judge rightly in the matters of God. The Corinthians, overlooking this truth, brought their own fleshly wisdom to divine things, and the inevitable result was confusion and division. They were splitting into schools of doctrine, the germs

of sects like our own; and the Apostle declares that they were carnal, and walked as men.

It is for the purpose of meeting this tendency to exalt, or rather to allow, man's wisdom, that the passage before us was written. Paul says that Christ sent him "to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." How solemn this is in the light of what we see around us! In how much of the preaching of the day is human wisdom not only allowed, but demanded? Preachers are sought after for their eloquence, their logic, their talents, rather than for the fidelity with which they present the truth of God. Simple subjection to Scripture is not up to the level of modern thought - shows that the preacher has not kept abreast with the progress of the age. But God's Word is clear. The cross of Christ and the wisdom of man cannot go together. If the cross of Christ is to be exalted, man's wisdom must be brought low. If man's wisdom is to be magnified, the cross of Christ must "be made of none effect."

The reason is simple; "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." So widely do man's thoughts diverge from God's, that even in the most marvelous display of God's saving power man can discern nothing but foolishness. No wonder, for if God is to be known at all, He must be known morally. But men's consciences shrink from looking at God in His moral character. Therefore, long ago, "even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." The very wisest became fools in the things of God. The most learned and philosophical people in the world owned their ignorance by raising an altar "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." Others groped in idle speculations, but all were equally blind as to what God was. This was according to God's wisdom, for as He is holy and righteous, these are the first things that a sinner must learn, and these are just the truths to which natural wisdom can never attain. God must be known, not as fallen man can understand Him, but as He has revealed Himself; and this, only the soul taught by the Spirit can comprehend. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2:14.

But when "in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." For God's salvation must address itself to man's moral ruin, and this is just the fact which the pride of human wisdom will not and cannot recognize. Hence the cross becomes the scoff of the wise, the stumbling block of the worldly-minded. Power and wisdom are the two things which man admires, but they must be power and wisdom suited to his own thoughts. The Jews looked for a Messiah arrayed in worldly majesty and glory; the Greeks sought after a god suited to their philosophical speculations. How could either, then, recognize or receive a Savior who came clothed with humility and weakness? "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

It was impossible for the Jew, with no sense of the moral ruin of his people, to recognize the power of God in the One whom he had seen scorned and spat upon, scourged and crucified. It was impossible for the Greek, with no consciousness of sin or need, and seeking only for the gratification of his intellect, to discern the wisdom of God in the death of an obscure Galilean peasant who had been crucified between two thieves. To perceive the wisdom and power of God

in such a scene, there must be the complete giving up of all human pretension, the submission of heart to God's righteousness, the consciousness of need as a lost, ruined sinner. It is only "unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks," that the power and wisdom of God can shine out from such a background.

But to them, what marvels of power and wisdom are here disclosed! Where was victory so complete and so far-reaching as that which was achieved when this Man of sorrows bowed His head and gave up the ghost? The iron bondage of sin and Satan was forever broken; the veil which hid God from man, and kept man from God, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; the righteous judgment of God was borne by the spotless sacrifice, and the fountain of His grace and love set free to flow out in streams of richest blessing to a ruined world. Such was the display of God's power in Christ crucified; nor was His wisdom less conspicuous or less adorable.

If it is in the Church that God now displays His manifold wisdom to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, where would that Church have been but for the hours of darkness passed by the Holy One upon the cross? There it was that the cunning and craft of Satan were turned to his own confusion, his seeming victory changed to defeat, Christ's seeming overthrow converted into triumph. Thence, from that lowest depth, it was that He ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men; for truly "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

And this is always God's way, that "no flesh should glory in His presence." So it was when Jesus was in this world, for then the things of God were hid from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes. So it was of old. It was by the foolishness of blowing rams' horns round a powerful fortress that "the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." It was by the weakness of Shamgar's ox goad, Gideon's three hundred, Samson's jawbone, that Israel was delivered, and the armies of the aliens were turned to flight. Everywhere we see God choosing "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise," and "the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

Such is, and ever has been, God's way. That man's natural wisdom is corrupted and useless in the things of God, and that God has poured contempt upon it, and chosen to work by that which the world's wisdom despises as foolish, is plain wherever we look. He would strip fallen man of all glory in order that He may make Christ Jesus to be to the believer "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

How worse than useless then to bring in the thing which God has discredited to the preaching of the gospel, the teaching of God's truth, or the ordering of His Church. When brought into the preaching of the gospel, its effect is to make the cross of Christ of none effect; when brought into the teaching of God's truth, its effect is to cause strifes and sects, to substitute "philosophy and vain deceit" for that mystery in which "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; when brought into the ordering of the Church, its effect is to displace the directions of Scripture for rules and forms of man's devising. Whether it takes the form of wisdom or ceremonial, of rationalism or ritualism, it is, as we see in the epistle to the Colossians, an intruder and disturber, from which those who are dead with Christ should know their deliverance.

There is but one rule for the new man, and that is the Word of God; but one interpreter of Scripture, and that is the Holy Ghost. Here we have God's wisdom, and not man's; and if we would rightly understand it, we must do so by discarding man's wisdom altogether and taking the place of learners in God's school. If any man "seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." In an age when man's wisdom and science are exalting themselves against God, and even true believers are beguiled by their pretensions, it is well to see clearly the utter worthlessness of these things in helping us to understand the mind of God, and to grasp with firmer hand the truth of the all-sufficiency and sovereign authority of that Word which "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

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